

Abstract

This study reviewed various aspects of crop production on an area of Crown Lands estate, presently occupied by small farmers with no land tenancy, and offers indications as to the present status of crop production, the constraints upon this, and the potential for future development. The report further sought to define areas to which extension planning should pay particular attention, and to evaluate the current sources of information utilised by the farmers and suggests how these might best be utilised by an extension development programme.

The utilisation of agricultural land was found to be determined by three major physical factors - soil type, access and water; the cropping patterns were further dependent upon seasonal conditions in terms of climate and the availability of labour. The main problems associated with crop production included land tenure, the maintenance of roadways and drainage ditches, excessive fragmentation of the holdings, a shortage of irrigation water, short-term fluctuations in market price, a lack of co-operative groups, a shortage of labour, and limited inputs, both in terms of knowledge and materials. The potential for development was found dependent upon meeting these problems, and suggestions are made as to how this might be done. Of the major cash crops, tomato, pumpkin, cucumber, and okra were identified as having the greatest economic potential. Amongst the minor crops, cabbage and hot pepper were found to offer high returns.

The majority of farmers had very limited formal education, and none directly pertaining to agriculture. They have adopted new ideas and innovations with only a very limited understanding of their use, and there

remains a fundamental requirement for extension education in almost every aspect of their agriculture. The most used sources of information were found to be other farmers and Macdonald's Almanac; although many farmers listened to agricultural programmes on the radio, they were found to be a very irregular audience. The Extension Officer maintained most contact with the larger farmers, and the Farmers Association meetings encouraged this.

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