

SECTION I.INTRODUCTION.

A group of three students, working as a team during the 1939 to 1940 session, made a critical study of the Agriculture carried out by peasants on small mixed farms in an area in the County of Caroni. The group was divided into an Agriculturist, Economist and Botanist.

The Agriculturist enquired into the characteristics of the soils of the area chosen for the survey and their erosion problems, noting any natural practices and customs which help to frustrate the latter. Enquires were made into the crops grown and their proportions, the methods of cultivation and times of operations, the number of stock kept and how handled, the implements used and dates of operation and the extent to which hand labour was relied on. The mixing of crops and rotations followed with the intercrop cultivation were enquired into as well as irrigation, labour problems and damage caused by pests and diseases to crops. The Economist studied the economic organisation of the area (markets, transport, labour and tenancy), the factors which influence the profitability or otherwise of holdings of various sizes, and social questions of economic importance. The Botanist studied the normal flora and how altered by cultivation, the plant succession in resting areas and the dominant weeds. He found out what plants, if any, could be used as cover and restorative crops, the advisability of seeding down land to them prior to abandonment and the reasons for the adoption of any particular varieties of a crop.

The dissertations of the group of students must be read together to obtain an accurate picture of the agriculture carried out by peasants on small mixed farms in the area studied. It must be emphasised that the information contained in the dissertations of the Agriculturist (the writer) and the Economist (P.R. Akehurst) must overlap; a clear picture of the agricultural and economic

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status of the farms can only be obtained by studying these together.

The agricultural information, as well as the economical, was obtained with the help of questionnaires. The difficulty of obtaining reliable agricultural information must be stressed. The statements of farmers had to be checked by observation in the field and where this was impossible by numerous questions approaching the point from all directions. The inaccuracy of the yield data secured must be emphasised, because no peasant kept any record of crop yields and in the case of 'Garden Crops' harvesting is carried out over a period of time (months in the case of Cassava and Pigeon Pea) for his own consumption.