

INTRODUCTION

1. A study of agricultural development in all civilized nations shows that grain growing is usually the first type of farming developed. The next stage in the history of agriculture is a decline in the fertility of the soil and in grain production - the result of continued cropping. This results in greater attention to livestock of all kinds, a stage which has now been reached in the West Indies.

2. It is generally conceded that the class of animal a country possesses depends on the class of feeding which is provided. Paterson (6) states, that the greatest potentiality for immediate improvement in stock rations lies in the better development of cultivated fodder crops. The importance of fodder crops has been stressed by many planters and authorities whose aim has been the improvement of tropical agriculture. Fodder crops must find some place in crop rotations, if good husbandry in the form of mixed farming is to be maintained. Faulkner (1) writing on West Indian systems of agriculture declares that "considerable saving in the peasant's time should be effected through his adopting a system of mixed farming which would essentially be based on feeding his cattle on cultivated grasses." He explains that these provide a convenient means of feeding cattle in the wet tropics, give high yields per acre, and can be effective in preventing soil erosion.

3. The aim of this investigation was to try to discover, if possible, by observation and experiment, the best methods of propagating and managing two promising fodder grasses, Elephant Grass (Pennisetum purpureum), and Guatemala Grass (Tripsacum laxum) and some legume and Elephant Grass forage mixtures. Various methods of propagation and management were compared.

4. The maxim of one authority (7) that "the immediate improvement in the quality of tropical forage will most easily be obtained by the cultivation of perennial tropical grasses, scientifically managed

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and manured and cut rotationally at the optimum stage of maturity for feeding to stock in the form of green fresh cut herbage", is a timely warning to the West Indies.