

INTRODUCTION.

Maize is a crop which has a variety of uses. Its most important use is as a feeding stuff for live stock, in which case it is grown to maturity and the grain is kibbled or ground before feeding. The stems and leaves may be fed as chaff or used as litter in the stalls. On the other hand the crop may be utilised before fully mature for silage or for green manure. The grain is also widely used for human consumption in America, Africa, and Europe.

The range of conditions under which a given crop can be grown is more or less limited, but it is wider in the case of maize than of any other cereal.

In Trinidad maize may be said to be conspicuous by its absence. In view of the very high prices that have to be paid for imported maize it seems extraordinary that managers of estates do not include home grown maize in the concentrates ration for their working animals. When imported maize meal costs almost £20 per ton it must increase the feeding costs very considerably. In addition it could quite easily be grown for consumption by the labourers, for its food value is equivalent to that of Barley Meal.

The crop is very easy to grow, and it only occupies the land for $4\frac{1}{2}$ months, during which time it forms a very good cleaning crop.

Several suggestions have been advanced to account for the lack of interest taken in this crop, not only in Trinidad but throughout the British West Indies. It is argued that practically all the available land is utilised in raising more profitable crops such as Sugar, Cocoa, Cotton, and Coconuts. This may be the case, but on the other hand these crops are frequently planted

on land which is not suited to them and which only yields a profitable crop when prices are high. In Trinidad coconuts afford an excellent example; they are frequently planted on land which is too heavy for cocoa, and which is too heavy for the palms to develop properly. Maize will grow quite satisfactorily on fairly heavy land provided that it is well drained and well cultivated and contains a good supply of organic matter. It seems to us that maize would prove a more profitable crop than coconuts on some of these soils.

It is also argued that maize as a food crop has never been scientifically investigated to ascertain whether the climatic and soil conditions are suitable for its growth. The answer to this argument is that the local variety of maize grows quite well on some of the poorer soils of the college farm and produces a crop which with selection and improvement shows every chance of producing a hardy and good yielding strain. The local varieties have the primary advantages of being hardy and disease resistant so that it should only be a question of time before the yield is improved.

A third suggestion that is offered is that the price is so ~~very~~ low that the native prefers to produce a crop which, if it does not fail, will be more profitable to his family or his pocket; but with maize meal costing nearly £20 per ton and with the production of a high yielding variety it ought to become a very profitable crop, for the cost of milling is only a small item in the cost of producing maize meal.

Quite apart from a direct source of income, maize can be grown very profitably as a trap crop for the American Boll worm (*Heliothis obsoleta*) in cotton growing areas -, as we found to the detriment of our experimental plots this year.