

INTRODUCTION

At the present time there is an increase in pigeon pea production in Trinidad and Tobago due partly to the development of a canning industry three years ago. Virtually all this production comes from small family farms and holdings using unpaid family labour. Large scale commercial production is now under consideration as part of a national plan designed amongst other things to increase the nutritional levels of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. There is, however, very little knowledge of the production costs which will permit an assessment of the profitability of commercial production.

Several varieties of pigeon pea have been selected and bred over the past eight years on the University farm, St. Joseph, but there is a lack of information on their commercial viability. The methods of cultivation generally are primitive and require a lot of hand labour so that there is also a need for improved agronomic practices.

The study attempts to provide more information on the production of pigeon peas. Its specific objectives are four-fold:-

Firstly, to examine the economic feasibility of pigeon pea production in Trinidad by considering,

- a) costs of production,
- b) marketing.

Secondly, to compare the profitability of the five varieties of pigeon pea grown at the Texaco Food Crop Demonstration Farm (TFCDF).

Thirdly, to consider the actual returns at the TFCDF and to compare them with the potential returns of a small farmer.

Finally, to examine the agronomic methods used at the TFCDF and in particular those related to

- a) improvement of yield,
- b) reduction of inputs,
- c) labour efficiency and crop layout,
- d) seasonality, and
- e) mechanisation.

In this study, the methods of cost of production and gross margin analyses have been used in assessing the feasibility of the pigeon pea production, and in evaluating the performances of the different varieties respectively.

Several avoidable problems occurred during the course of this investigation. For example, conflict between the experimental and commercial aspects of the pigeon pea project resulted in a premature cessation of harvesting the crop. The design of the farm records was poor, and consequently some of the measurements taken were inadequate for the specific purposes of this study. Some of the difficulties were due to teething problems during the first year of operation of the TFCDF. Others were due to the cumbersome nature of the management committee and the general lack of clearly defined objectives. No one was allocated the responsibility for all matters concerning the pigeon pea crop. In future this is regarded as essential.

These and other limitations have reduced the value of this report. Nevertheless, since it was only intended as a guide for further and more detailed study, it has covered much of the preliminary problems in making pigeon pea production viable.