

INTRODUCTION

The inability of the average peasant farmer in the tropics to compete with the wage earner in a satisfactory standard of living strongly suggests that the stage is reached where methods of peasant farming must be improved.

The most interesting line of improvement which is being pursued today in many states and colonies is mechanisation. This is being tried, to increase the output per man hour and to reduce cost of production. Varying degrees of success have so far been achieved, but the problems involved in it are many, and the question arises whether this method has sufficient merit to warrant its general adoption.

Some of the problems are those of size of holdings, land tenure, lack of machine mindedness of peasant farmers, suitability of equipment, the difficult working conditions of some tropical soils, and the maintenance of soil fertility in the tropics. Most of the problems are not insurmountable, and attempts are being made in many areas for satisfactory solutions. They are being accepted as a challenge rather than as arguments to engender a spirit of hopelessness.

This thesis reviews peasant agriculture as a whole, and presents attempts which have been so far made in its mechanisation. It also presents the essential factors which have to be considered in the tropics in making this mechanisation an economic proposition, and the advantages to be derived from it, if the problems were successfully solved.