

PART I

INTRODUCTION

It is essential to emphasize, at this initial stage, the limitations placed upon the group by our own ignorance, and inexperience, of tropical agricultural conditions. Our inability to fully comprehend and interpret the significance of facts on tropical agriculture was further complicated by our lack of working knowledge of agricultural communities within the island of Trinidad. We were unsure of the extent of agricultural services, unknowledgable on national agricultural legislation and policy, and had little experience of such local farming communities as we found. Further, we tacitly assumed, in our early discussions, the existence of such utilities as maps, farm and field boundaries and ease of crop identification.

These initial limitations necessitated a definite first stage of preliminary investigations of a very general nature from which we could draw some definite line for a more intensive survey examination. Such early information came from very general sources. Discussion with the officers of local marketing organisations, introductory college lectures, and observation and discussion on local peasant farms and estates all formed part of a personal intercourse rather than a strictly academic enquiry. From this we were able to obtain an impression on which to base our choice of subject for investigation.

The following subjects were considered in greater detail as offering material suitable for the academic demands of the survey.

a. Investigation on recent plantings of clonal cacao under the cacao rehabilitation programme. Frame material was available from the Cocoa Board. This could quickly give the following information:

- i. Name of farmer in the scheme.
- ii. The address of the farmer.
- iii. The time and quantity of supply of clonal cacao material to these farmers.

b. Examination of the increased orange acreage due to recent plantings. The Co-operative Citrus Growers Association held ample frame material. For members of this Association, it could provide:

- i. Name of farmer.
- ii. The address.
- iii. Number of orange trees supplied in each of the recent years.
- iv. Individual contribution of oranges to the marketing organisation of the Association in each of the recent years.
- v. Similar information on grapefruit acreage and production.

c. Investigation of some aspect of the banana production by those producers contributing to the Marketing Board Banana Export Scheme. This organisation could supply material for a frame only as follows, without further computation:

- i. Contributor's name.
- ii. Definition of the broad area in which the contributor supplied, e.g. Toco area.
- iii. Number of banana stems supplied in any shipment.

Lack of suitable survey problems, and knowledge of the complex field conditions, precluded the cacao survey. The orange frame was thought, by other members of the group, to be an inadequate representation of orange producers on the island on which to base a survey. Consequently a banana investigation was adopted by the majority of the group. The investigation was accepted on the considered suitability of the frame material alone. No aim was given. The group chose to ignore the complexity of field problems involved, early indications of which I placed before them at this time as a result of my preliminary field enquiries. The wide limitations will be more apparent later in the report.

Our lack of tropical agricultural knowledge further handicapped us in that we were quite unable to define specifically an aim for a banana survey. The severe limitation of the frame material implied, with such a short period of time for the preparation of something more suitable, that we must fit any problem

to the frame, rather than frame to problem, the latter being more obviously essential in a practical sample survey. Such an approach, i.e. of undefined aim, is in conflict with practical statistical ideals. The need for an early definition of exact aim is emphasised adequately by Yates, (1957a), and indeed should be the basis of all work of an investigational nature. Data should be collected with a clear purpose in mind. Not only a clear purpose, but a clear idea as to the precise way in which it will be analysed so as to yield the desired information. The group failed entirely to appreciate the significance of a clear aim despite insistent comment.

Nor could we hope to carry out the procedure recommended, (Yates, 1957b), when limitations and conditions in the field are not fully appreciated. A pilot survey to establish the nature of field conditions and problems was ruled out by shortage of time, due to other responsibilities and the need to enumerate our main survey early in December.

Having elected to undertake an investigation into banana growing in Trinidad, it was necessary thoroughly to investigate conditions under which the crop exists, and is produced, on the island. This second stage of preliminary investigation was designed not only to further our understanding of the banana production, but also, more specifically, to observe features that offered themselves as fields of investigation. This investigation was approached from two aspects, firstly that of cultivation practices in the fields, and secondly that of marketing of the produce. This latter was approached through the officers of the government marketing organisation. Knowledge of field practices and conditions evolved from local enquiry and observation, Montserin, (1956), providing an excellent introduction. After the conclusion of the field work, Evans, (1957), was discovered to provide a very adequate account of the industry, although many of his generalisations are open to much criticism and debate.

The information obtained by this second stage of preliminary investigation provided a background from which to plan the details of the survey. Part II of this report is devoted to an outline account of our findings and the development of our problem.