

INTRODUCTION

Many observers and national commissions have reported on the need for conservation in the Northern Range. Flash floods have occurred in the low-lying areas at regular intervals and the flooding of watercourses and fields has been taking place to an increasing and alarming extent over recent years. The soil on the denuded foothills has been removed through erosion and shifting cultivation and fires have ravaged the natural vegetation so that no cover remains.

The purpose of this report is to look into the problem of erosion in the Northern Range and to decide how serious the situation really is with regard to present and future land use in the area. However this subject has been covered in several excellent D.T.A. reports in considerable detail. More time, therefore, will be spent in discussing the various approaches to conservation and the methods of getting the various methods implemented.

In many areas of the world conservation has been a vital part of national and agricultural policy. However difficulties have been encountered as to the best methods to bring it about and countries have varied in the emphasis they have placed on legislation and administration on the one hand and extension and education on the other. The final section of this report will endeavour to discuss the various methods available in Trinidad. It will conclude with some suggestions for the future development of a coordinated and far-reaching land use policy for the Northern Range based on a combination of administrative and extension methods.

Information for this report has been gained from a variety of sources. Soil conservation literature from Trinidad and other countries was consulted. Heads of Government departments were interviewed. Discussions were held with research workers and other officials. Finally visits were made to various areas in the Northern Range and land use methods determined and discussed with smallholders. Undoubtedly a full scale survey would have been the most valuable method for gaining the requisite information but time was not available for such a large undertaking. The report is thus based on a combination of past suggestions, experience from elsewhere technical and government officials, discussions with farmers and personal observation and reasoning.