

INTRODUCTION

An appraisal in 1944 of Trinidad's land resources based on an unpublished provisional soil map and other data (A proposed land Allocation Policy for Trinidad, 1944) concluded that only 37% of the islands total area was really suitable for agriculture. Of the land suitable for agriculture a large proportion is devoted to the production of the important export crops such as sugar and cocoa. At the same time it was estimated that 14% of the area that was being cultivated was definitely unsuitable for permanent agricultural use. Thus it appears that only a relatively small area of land is fitted for the production of food crops.

With the ever increasing population in Trinidad it is essential, therefore, that the best use of the available agricultural areas should be made. Suitable farming systems and practices, especially for small-scale farming, together with greater intensification of the present production of food crops in suitable agricultural areas should be encouraged. At the same time, attention should be paid to the possibilities of extending agricultural production to areas at present considered unsuitable for agriculture. A large area on the steep hill sides of the Northern Range is considered unsuitable for cropping due to serious danger of soil erosion and flooding. A permanent high water table at the mouths of certain of Trinidad's rivers gives rise to fairly large areas of swamp land. Furthermore, there are extensive areas of unproductive and semi-derelict land in central Trinidad which is mainly due to poor soil fertility.

Government has been investigating the possibility of draining and reclaiming the Nariva Swamp which would appear to be a very costly procedure to open up new land for food crop production. The author, however, feels that more emphasis should be placed, in the initial investigations at any rate, on the possibility of reclaiming land in the Northern Range and also the extensive areas of unproductive land in Central Trinidad. Soil conservation measures as practised in St. Vincent, for example, have shown that it is possible to make good use of the similar steep slopes. However, investigations under local conditions should first be carried out. Dr. Greene in his visit to Trinidad in 1956 posed the question whether it would not be more economical in the long run to invest capital in building up the soil fertility of the extensive areas in Central Trinidad rather than the Swamp Drainage Projects being considered by Government.

This project is a continuation of work started in 1956 (See Supervisor's note) by Orr (1957), Clark (1957) and others. The aims of this project were:-

1. To provide standards for the recognition of the different soil series to be found in San Francisco Land Settlement.

2. To map the topography and soil boundaries in the above area.
3. To determine and map the present land use of the above area.
4. To study Land Settlement Schemes in Trinidad with special reference to the San Francisco settlement.

It is hoped that when the complete land settlement is surveyed, the work may be of some use to those directing, and farming, the settlement. The project has provided the author with valuable experience of small scale settlement schemes.