

INTRODUCTION

The subject for reports in part requirement for the D.T.A. (Trin.) is usually one which will give the writer experience in the survey technique he will be expected to apply in his colony as an Agricultural Officer.

The writer of this report, however, is in a somewhat different position in that he has been sent overseas for the expressed purpose of studying certain short term crops which should be of nutritional or economic value in the development of New Guinea.

At present the majority of the natives of New Guinea live at the subsistence level. This means that most of their time is taken up with the combined production of food.

With the exception of those with access to abundant marine foods, it is generally conceded that this diet is deficient in protein. This is due to the limited amount of game available for hunting.

The first step in their progress from the subsistence agriculture is then to improve the value of their diet and to grow high yielding crops which can be stored, e.g. rice, and thus permit time to be given to commercial production.

The second step is the introduction of cash crops. With the exception of certain food crops these cash crops must, at least in the first instance, have an export market. This is due to the lack of secondary industries in New Guinea.

The cash crops may be divided into permanent crops, such as cacao and coconuts, or short term crops. In the latter case the most obviously valuable tropical
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products are certain oil seeds and fibres for which markets exist in Australia.

The writer's job while overseas is to observe the methods of production and processing of short term crops of this nature prior to exportation or sale. In addition those crops which appear to be of high food value are to be observed and the methods of cultivation and processing noted.

It is not expected that any one method can be applied in its entirety to New Guinea. In fact the range of conditions available in New Guinea are such that many modifications of technique will eventually be practised. However, with a background of many systems under varying conditions satisfactory techniques will be able to be worked out.

The reader may wonder at the purpose of the foregoing. It is in fact providing a background by which it is hoped to reconcile the contents of this report with the title.

This report in itself will form but a section of the final report to be submitted on one's return to New Guinea. The title of the report was therefore suggested to the writer as one that would not interfere with the incorporation of any interesting information.

Under these circumstances a consideration of the permanent crops, cacao, coffee and coconuts has not been attempted in this report. Also sugar cane has not been treated as it is considered that on the basis of the history of the crop and with the threat of restricted production hanging over the industry now that many years will elapse before the industry may be established in New Guinea.

This has rather curtailed the scope of the report. In it will be found an agronomic, rather than economic, study of Rice, Cotton and vegetables together with some notes on minor crops which may possibly be of interest at some time.

Part I of this report is intended to give the reader some general background to New Guinea.

Part II is devoted to a study of the selected crops grown in the Eastern Caribbean.

Part III is devoted to the possible part the crops of Part II may be expected to play in New Guinea and also general considerations as to the methods of introduction.

No summary has been included as in a report of this nature the table of contents provides a reasonable summary.