GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The improvement of crop plants by scientific plant breeding may properly be said to be in its infancy in the tropics. Such work as has been done, has largely been confined to the staple crops such as Sugar Cane, Cotton and Rice, while the short term minor crops have received scant attention.

Nowhere is this generalization more true than in the field of vegetable crops. In the tropics the lack of green vegetables in the diet of the people has been widely noted and deplored. This lack may be traced to the shortage, almost, one might say, to the non-existence, of palatable green vegetables which are indigenous to these areas. As a result, such vegetable growing as is attempted is largely confined to raising those strains of the common temperate garden crops which have proved best adapted to the tropics. This is reflected in the poor yields, inferior quality and extreme susceptibility to the attacks of pests and diseases to be found in almost all tropical vegetable crops. In consequence, such vegetables as are produced are expensive as well as scarce.

It seemed likely that this might to some extent be remedied by the improvement in the strains of tropical garden vegetables grown. The field for a plant breeder is a wide one and largely unexplored. It was with the object of deciding how best the problem might be tackled, what obstacles were likely to be met and how overcome, that the work here described was undertaken.