

SURVEY OF THE METHODS OF CACAO PREPARATION IN TRINIDAD.

1) INTRODUCTION.

The cacao industry of Trinidad dates back many years to 1702. Shephard (1) gives a good historical survey from this date until 1932. During this period, cacao rose to be the most important agricultural industry in the Colony. The quantities exported (Fig.1) increased each year and up to 1918, the price remained fairly constant (Fig.2). After the first World War, the price rose to an all time high and under this stimulus, planters replanted much of their estates. Immediately afterwards, the depression years arrived and cacao was severely hit. The price dropped to as low as \$5 per fanega* which caused all the marginal areas to go out of production and necessitated a great saving on all unessential cultivations. In other words, nearly all the cacao in the island was neglected.

To protect the industry, the Government imposed a cess of 3c. per lb. on all cacao exported in 1932 and subsequent years. (1) With the money thus obtained, the industry was to be subsidised until such time as the prices again rose. In 1940 the Department of Agriculture started a rehabilitation scheme using vegetative cuttings from certain of a selection of 100 trees each of which had to conform to a certain standard. These trees had been selected by Pound (2) purely on yield factors. To obtain benefit from the scheme, the planters had to follow certain conditions which were laid down from time to time. In 1945, the first of the cuttings were distributed. They were known by the

* A "fanega" equals 110 pounds and is equivalent to one flour barrel of wet cacao.

letters I.C.S. followed by a number and have since been widely distributed around the cacao growing areas of the world. At present in Trinidad an estimated total of 2-3000 acres is planted with I.C.S. clones which are distributed in the proportion I.C.S.1 50% I.C.S.95 25% and I.C.S.12 12%.

The cacao produced by Trinidad has always commanded a premium on the World markets as a "fine" cacao. It is used to supply the flavour in the best quality chocolate in admixture with other cacaos which supply the bulk, Trinidad at the present time only supplying 1.1% of the total World production. As far back as 1921 a change in the proportion of "fine" to "ordinary" cacao was noted, dropping from 40% in 1913 to 27% in 1921.

Wadsworth (3) also notes a drop in quality of Trinidad cacao about 1935. Nothing much was done about it until after the end of the war when the manufacturers started to complain about the poor Trinidad cacao which was still demanding a premium over the West African cacaos which had improved enormously due to better fermentation techniques. The Imperial College was asked to cooperate in determining what might be the cause of the decline in Trinidad cacao and the B.W.I.C.R.A.S. was set up in 1950 for this purpose. After a visit by Mr. Vyle of Terry's, the College was asked to assist by carrying out a survey of the methods of preparation of cacao in the island and it is for this reason that this report came to be written.