

INTRODUCTION

Government, alarmed by the steadily increasing imports of milk and milk products (1), is now allocating very considerable sums for the improvement of the Dairy Industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Two recent developments, the introduction of a productive grazing grass and the establishment of a milk condensery, have opened the way for expansion under low-cost production methods and a ready market. Importations of high-grade female stock and pedigree bull semen form the basis of Government's policy for improving the national Dairy herd to meet these new challenges.

For some reason, however, the milk producers have been slow to respond to the incentive provided by the new developments. Producers give two explanations for this: first, land is not available for them to take advantage of the new pasture grass; and, secondly, the price paid for milk by the condensery is not a sufficient inducement for them to increase production. We believe that there are other more fundamental reasons for the failure of the producing section to respond to the new opportunities.

This report is not designed as an enquiry into the backwardness of the Dairy Industry in Trinidad, nor as an investigation of the efficacy of the Government's remedies. Instead, we are looking at the farmers themselves in order to see why some have difficulties while others are successful: we are going to see if those who have tried to change their ways are being rewarded for their progress; and we shall consider, too, how we might approach the less adventurous to encourage them to follow the same path of adaptation.

Any policy of improvement in the Dairy Industry must depend for its success not on the cows so much as on the farmers. We shall say something of the cows in this report but, more important, we shall try to show what are likely to be the most effective channels of communication between the planners and the farmer. Many of these channels permit only one-way

communication; but we shall see how important it is that this be supplemented by personal contact where thoughts can be exchanged and problems considered at a practical level.

We have not pioneered any new investigational or analytical methods in this report: and the deductions from the large volume of information we have gathered do little more than reinforce the opinions that must be formed from brief observation; but we hope that it will demonstrate to the reader how great the opportunities are for communication to farmers and how little these opportunities are being used. Our brief experience is that the farmer is hungry for information: it only remains to satisfy his appetite. It is most economic to feed him by the channels he prefers and so we have tried to define such channels in this report.

The reader will find a considerable amount of comment in the text but we make no apology for this as we feel that it is very important in a survey of this nature to reinforce the conclusions drawn from quantitative data with those drawn from observation. Just as we have included the quantitative data on which our thesis is based so we have tried to include the observations which support the comment: in this way the reader, should he wish, may reach his own conclusions from the information before him.