

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

A wise agricultural policy, at both farm and governmental levels, depends on having numerous and varied facts available. When these facts are available and the problems enumerated, a policy of research and development can be formulated. In many tropical countries the collection of data on agriculture is extremely difficult due to the lack of trained personnel for the job. A large number of trained personnel would be required to undertake a survey of a large area, and so local agricultural surveys are done in some countries. Where large scale surveys are conducted, such as the World Censuses under the auspices of the United Nations Organisation, the amount of information that can be collected from any one area is necessarily limited. The local organisation of these and similar surveys is usually done by the Department of Agriculture whose officers should have some knowledge of the techniques to be used. This is one of the reasons why post graduate students at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture take part in a survey during their course.

In the past, surveys have been done on Land Utilisation (Castle et al, 1955; Buckler et al, 1956) Food Gardens (Currie et al, 1957), Citrus (Alexander et al, 1958) and Bananas (Auckland et al, 1959). In October 1959, at the first meeting of the present survey team, it was decided to conduct a survey of peasant cane farming, and in particular, of those farmers selling cane to Caroni Ltd. Comparatively little detailed information has been collected recently on cane farming, except as part of a general survey of Trinidad agriculture. This information is to be found in Land Utilisation - Agricultural Production (1956). The Soulbury Commission Report (1948) provided a comprehensive review of the sugar industry in Trinidad at that time, but commented on the general lack of information available about cane farmers. A more concise account of the industry is

given in the Caribbean Committee Report on the Sugar Industry of the Caribbean (1947).

Before proceeding further with this project, the team gathered background information on sugar cane farming in Trinidad from various sources. Meetings were held with the Executive Committee of the Trinidad Island Wide Cane Farmers' Association and with Mr. Smith, the Cane Farms' Supervisor of Caroni Ltd. These meetings gave the background to the development of the cane industry, the organisation of the cane estates and farmers and elucidated the problems facing the Company and the farmers.

Mr. Smith said that there were approximately 2,400 farmers supplying cane to Caroni Ltd., and their production during the 1959 season had been 172,000 tons of cane. The team was given access to the Company's Cane Farms' Register, which was essentially a list of farmers with contracts to supply cane to Caroni Ltd. Other information available from the Register included the home village of the contract holder, the scale to which cane was delivered and the acreage of cane grown. This Register was to be used as the frame for the survey and its defects will be discussed in Section 3.