

A SURVEY OF FOOD GARDENS IN THREE COUNTIES  
OF TRINIDAD

I. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural surveys are becoming increasingly important nowadays because any long term agrarian projects demand vital statistics regarding food supply and population increase, availability of land and its agricultural potentialities. Thus it is absolutely fundamental to have some idea of the yields of a produce from a country before its government can go ahead with the plan of erecting, say, a processing plant. Similarly, the government or a company would be very unwise to establish a beef canning plant before they have some knowledge of the number of beef cattle that would be forthcoming to the factory for slaughter.

Surveys in agriculture have been carried out for a number of years in the highly developed countries of Europe and America but they are comparatively new in underdeveloped countries. Their importance lies in the fact that they provide statistics which are necessary before efficient planning of improvements and new developments can take place. They are more difficult to carry out in the latter than in the former because of lack of trained staff, shortage of money, bad communications, lack of maps and perhaps lack of interest and understanding among the village and urban populations of Asia and Africa. Before a survey is carried out, its purpose must be precisely defined and explained to the people quite clearly before they are expected to answer questionnaires. This is not easy when one is dealing with ignorant and illiterate peasants who cannot understand and appreciate the importance of statistics and the part they play in planning say a Land Settlement Scheme. Cases are known in Africa where people have given wrong answers in a population census thinking that

probably the government had in mind the intention of increasing poll tax. Surveys on aerial measurements have aroused similar suspicions on taxation. Thus in Africa and Asia agricultural surveys are made more complex by the addition of sociological and political problems. For example it has been authentically reported that in cattle surveys carried out in the Soviet Union "Kulak" farmers never gave the right number of cattle they had because they suspected that the State government would force them to hand in the surplus cattle to the nearest State farm.

Complete surveys sometimes cannot be avoided, e.g. if the government wants to know precisely how many people and farms the country has then members of a survey team will have to visit every household and farm. This kind of survey undoubtedly demands a large number of staff, money and a great deal of travelling, and entails a considerable amount of office work. The follow-ups also present an arduous task. However with some kind of statistical information sample surveys can be used in place of a complete census for which some training is necessary. But these must be planned by experienced men in sample survey techniques and their application in the field. Otherwise results from them may be rendered worthless if they are carried out by inexperienced hands who may use inappropriate sampling design and who may carry out field work in a haphazard fashion.