

INTRODUCTION.

This paper gives an account of work on the improvement of maize at I.C.T.A. conducted during the academic year 1955-56. This programme was initiated in 1953 by Mr. W.J. Badcock and Dr. W.L. Brown while the present phase is based on suggestions and selections by Agble (1955). Accounts of previous work in the programme are presented by Reed (1954) and Agble.

While maize is not of great importance in the diet of the local population, the Quarterly Economic Reports (Government of Trinidad and Tobago) show that imports of maize into the country are of significance while F.A.O. reports show that the yields obtained in the Caribbean islands, although comparable to those of Central and South America, are only 30-50% of the yields obtained in Canada and the U.S.A. Maize has only been a commercial proposition in these latter countries as a result of many years of painstaking breeding and, as maize is a crop of the tropics, it is logical to expect that by breeding and selection, provided cultural practices improve, yields in Trinidad can be considerably increased. With this end in view, a programme of maize improvement has been in operation at I.C.T.A. for several years and it is hoped that local mass-selected maize, which shows a high degree of variability, may ultimately be replaced by maize of a superior type.