

1. INTRODUCTION.

Authorities differ as to the place of origin of the sweet potato. Bretshneider in his "Study and Value of Chinese Botanical Works" identifies a plant with "roots which were said to be reddish and as large as a goose egg" as being synonymous with the present day sweet potato. (1). Boyer and Choisey support this statement whilst Humboldt, Meyer and Boissier (2) maintain that the sweet potato is of American origin. Their argument being based on the contention that all of the fifteen known species of the genus Ipomoea are found in America whilst only four of these occur in Asia.

It has been known for many centuries in the tropics and sub-tropics as a useful source of food for local consumption, being mainly a crop of peasant proprietors and share croppers. It may also be grown on a larger scale as an inter-crop or in crop rotations over limited areas.

Differing botanically from all other common tropical crops, it does not usually harbour insect pests injurious to them and is therefore particularly useful in crop rotations. It is, however, usually heavily attacked by insect pests of its own and these are of paramount importance to the peasant farmer, who with his small plot can ill afford to lose any of his crop as a result of insect attack.

Almost every part of the sweet potato plant is attacked. The roots, stems, leaves and even the flowers may be affected and partially or completely devoured by a myriad of insects, which, apart from a few universal pests, show great variation in different areas.

Trinidad being no exception to the rule, has many sweet potato pests in common with the South American Continent and the main object of this dissertation is to attempt to show the relative importance of the various pests and suggest possible means of control.

The insect pests of sweet potato may conveniently be divided into two classes, viz., major and minor.