

PART I.

1. INTRODUCTION.

On 3rd April 1964 it was announced that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had decided to restrict the importation of poultry meat to three million lbs. killed and dressed, of which 1.5 million lbs. were to be whole birds and more expensive parts and the remainder cheaper parts. A considerable public outcry, resulting in a number of articles appearing in local newspapers, followed this announcement. The Government was accused of increasing the price of poultry meat and of precluding it from the normal diet of some of the less-well-off sectors of the community.

In the draft of the second Five Year Plan for 1963-1967, it was stated that the dominant objective for the agricultural industry was to reduce the share of imports in the total food consumption in order to achieve a greater degree of self sufficiency and help the balance of payments situation. It was hoped that this would increase the productivity of agriculture and the number of workers employed in the industry. Poultry meat, together with eggs, milk, green vegetables, roots and the pulses were specially mentioned in connection with the proposed increases in output. The measures to reduce the amount of imported poultry meat and, so, to encourage local production are thus closely in line with general policy. However the measures were so constituted, that if deemed necessary, more imports could quickly be allowed, resulting in an increase in the amount of poultry meat available for sale to the public at lower prices.

The broiler industry in Trinidad has only developed in recent years. A considerable import trade had started and built up since 1955, but it was not until after 1961 that local production equalled the volume of imports. Since this date it has expanded rapidly and the local production for 1963 was estimated at over 9 million lbs. of broiler meat. The figure for 1964 - based on the day-old chicks placed by the hatcheries - was over 14 million lbs. of meat, and it

was not until August 1964, when stocks had been reduced, that the effects of the import restrictions really became apparent.

It is only in the last few years that the hatcheries have developed and introduced the large scale modern machines. Also, Trinidad's first mechanical processing plant, - capable of an output of 900 birds per hour - started operating in December 1963. Prior to this the sale of broilers had been in the hands of wholesale merchants and poultry shops who did a considerable proportion of their trade live and who processed the birds by hand at the customers request.

Information as to the exact magnitude of the local industry and its development is difficult to obtain. The only estimate is in a survey by the Industrial Development Corporation carried out in March 1964 which interviewed 48 "approved producers". These so called "approved producers" were classified by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1963 in an attempt to distinguish between the specialist producers and the "back-yard" ones. These figures, in table I, for 1961 production are lower than was expected due to an outbreak of Newcastle Disease.