

INTRODUCTION

The pressing need for the development or improvement of peasant farming systems in tropical and sub-tropical areas under conditions of increasing human and stock populations is a problem with which most agriculturalists are well acquainted and a vast amount of research, designed to provide information on this subject has been carried out in many different climates on varying soil types.

In so far as pure subsistence agriculture is concerned, accumulated results have indicated the value and place of farmyard manure - composts, fertilisers, grass leys and green manures in the system. This paper is mainly concerned with an assessment of the results from crop rotation trials in which legumes used either as cover crops or green manures have been tested for their capacity to maintain the fertility of the soil as measured by crop yields.

The system of shifting cultivation or bush fallow rotation with its various advantages and disadvantages is outlined, some theoretical aspects of the functions of leguminous cover crops or green manures are discussed and experimental evidence in the literature of the value of legumes in crop rotations, surveyed.

At the end of the paper a list of the main publications which have been checked is provided for the benefit of anyone interested in further investigation into this aspect of peasant farming.