

SECTION I

THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

During the last fifteen years, rural sociologists in the U.S.A. have done a great deal of research into farm practice adoption, and the roles of various information media as change agents. A review of this work, by Lionberger (1960) gives some indication of the wealth of information, relating to the more advanced agricultural areas. Similar studies have recently been carried out by Jones (1962) in the United Kingdom and by other workers in Western Europe. To date, little has been done to adapt or modify these techniques to the problems of farm practice adoption (and they are many) in tropical agriculture; an exception worthy of mention is a useful chapter in Edward's (1961) study of small farming in Jamaica.

The economies of many tropical countries rely to a great extent on the productivity of their agricultural sectors. Increases in production, however, depend, in the majority of cases, on the adoption of improved farming practices, developed at research stations and passed on to the farming community by the extension service.

In many tropical countries, an imbalance exists between the production of useful knowledge by research, and its adoption as standard farming practice on the land. Thus a major problem facing all extension officers is to narrow the time lag, between the appearance of improved practices and their adoption and widespread use. In this context, a knowledge of the factors and processes involved, those personal and sociological characters of the farming community which stimulate or inhibit change, the function of the various information media at different points in the adoption process, and the nature of the diffusion process, is of crucial importance.

In the past, the study of the social customs and traditional farming systems of tropical peoples by anthropologists, did much to impress on the expatriate agricultural officer, that to ensure per-

manent improvements, new ideas must be incorporated into the existing social framework, rather ^{than} superimposed over it, against the will of the people. The anthropologist, however, tends to concentrate his efforts on the "status quo", and leaves others to draw their own conclusions, as to how best changes may be brought about. It is by considering the customs and attitudes of farmers, in relation to the ideas and practices, which must of necessity become widespread, if progress is to be made, that farm-practice adoption studies are of real value.

In the newly independent territories the tendency is to curtail the research programme in order to concentrate funds and personnel on education. Fuller utilisation of the vast fund of knowledge already available, by more effective extension activities, might compensate this to a large extent. More effective communication between the research scientist and the practical farmer is the ultimate goal of farm-practice studies; it would be heartening to see an increased volume of such work, in relation to tropical agriculture, in the not too distant future.

The aims of the present survey are two-fold; firstly to give the student some practical experience in the planning, execution and analysis of an agricultural survey; secondly to act as a Pilot Survey to further more detailed studies of this nature.

2. Climate, Relief and Soils

Climatically the year in Trinidad may be divided into two seasons; a wet season from June - December (7 months), and a relatively dry season for the remaining 5 months. Rainfall data from the I.C.T.A. Field Station, adjacent to the estate, indicates that the average annual rainfall receipt is in the order of 55", concentrated in the