

## INTRODUCTION

The rice crop has the distinction of being the most widely distributed and intensively cultivated crop in the World and of being the staple food crop of the largest number of people. The World's rice area is estimated at about 134 million acres, and the population fed by the crop 50% of the World's total. Hence rice is one of the most important cereals in human dietaries.

In the main consuming countries, production was adversely affected by the war (1939 - 45) and meanwhile large and steady increases in population had taken place. These factors together indicate that world demand will outstrip world production for many years to come.

In these circumstances rice should be placed among the commodities which British overseas territories should be asked to encourage to the maximum possible extent. It is recognised that the rice resources of these territories are unlikely, in the near future to provide any large quantities of rice for export to outside countries, but an expanded or intensive production can at least reduce dependence on present overseas sources of supply.

All the British Caribbean territories, with the exception of British Guiana are importers of rice. Imports before the war came predominantly from the countries of South Asia - chiefly Ceylon, with small quantities from China, Siam and Indo-China.

TRINIDAD'S bill for food stuffs from abroad has always been unduly large. The following table quoted from "Trinidad and Tobago Department of Agriculture" (1955), gives the import figures of rice into Trinidad from British Guiana and India :-

1937	1939	1947
lbs. (Millions)	lbs. (Millions)	lbs. (Millions)
41.5	47.0	22.0

Historically, rice growing in Trinidad dates as far back as the first importation of indentured East Indian labour a century ago. Since then rice has been grown in the swamp areas and other low-lying parts where water is available. Gradually drainage canals have been cut and swamps cleared. Shortly before the war, Government started projects of controlled irrigation and drainage. Various dams and sluices have been constructed including the Bejucal and Oropouche schemes. Wet Rice here is cultivated mostly at elevations of less than 100 ft. above sea-level, usually on heavy silt lagoon soils and under rainfall of 60 - 80 inches per annum (see map in Appendix I - Rice growing areas of Trinidad).

Hill rice is grown as a catch-crop the first year after felling forest; yields are very variable and lower than wet Rice.

In the "General Survey of Agriculture" published by the Trinidad and Tobago Department of Agriculture in October 1954, the area under rice in the island was quoted as 10,000 acres and the yield was described as variable ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 pounds per acre; average yield was stated as 1,300 lbs. per acre.

Generally, the application of manures and fertilizers is exceptional. To increase production in order to support a fast growing population without extending the area under cultivation, it is desirable to use the land more intensively. The judicious use of fertilizers is probably the method to get quickest returns, since attempts at double cropping are confronted with varietal and pest problems requiring considerable further investigation. It is enough to emphasize that without any expansion in the acreage under rice crop, and without impinging on the present allocation of arable land to export crops, a substantial increase in the production of grain in Trinidad is immediately practicable.

With this aim in view the present project was initiated in order to discover what scope there might be for increasing the production of Wet Rice by the use of fertilizers.