

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

A group of eminent agriculturalists visiting Trinidad and Tobago in 1962 to investigate the work of I.C.T.A. stated that "Particular attention must be given to food crops for local use in the hope of eliminating the present dependence on imported goods. It is most remarkable that..... it should be cheaper to use imported English potatoes than yams, sweet potatoes and other locally produced starch sources".

The root crops grown in Trinidad are many and varied and they include:

Sweet potatoes	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>
Yams	<i>Dioscorea</i> spp.
Tannias	<i>Xanthosoma brasiliense</i>
Dasheen	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>
	var. <i>globulifera</i>
Eddoes	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>
Cassava	<i>Manihot esculenta</i>

It was estimated in 1963 that the total production of root crops in Trinidad and Tobago was approximately 14,800 tons annually (1). In the same and subsequent years there has been a similar quantity of roots imported into the area, of which the major proportion, 12,000 tons, have been Irish (English) potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*). The cost of these imports of roots in 1963 was approximately \$1,800,000 in a total food import bill of \$78,000,000 (2).

It was with facts such as these in mind that the Texaco Food Crops Demonstration Farm (T.F.C.D.F.) was established in 1964, to examine the possibilities of greater food crop production in Trinidad and Tobago.

The object of this report is to examine the commercial prospects for Irish and sweet potatoes in Trinidad and Tobago; using mainly the evidence from the T.F.C.D.F. These two crops are chosen because they are fundamentally different. Sweet potato is an established crop in the island and is one of the most popular traditional root crops. On the other hand,

Irish potato has only been grown successfully on a small scale in recent years; but the prospects for this crop are important because of the large annual volume of imports, and the apparent consumer preference over traditional root crops.