

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

Trinidad, like most British Colonies, has developed a system of agriculture in which the main emphasis has been on export crops. It appears that up till quite recently the dominant note in British Colonial policy has been the production in the Colonies of raw materials: foods, fibres and fats and oils which Britain needs for her consumption or her trade but cannot produce for herself nor obtain cheaply elsewhere. Thus in agriculture, in particular, the development of cash crops in the Colonial Empire was given a great deal of attention almost to the total exclusion of subsistence crops. This tendency was very much stimulated in the inter-war years in consonance with the emphasis on the policy of Colonial governments being responsible for balancing their budgets. This is evidenced by the phenomenal growth of the West African cocoa industry, cotton in Uganda, sisal in Tanganyika and tea in Nyasaland.

Trinidad's agricultural activities have centred in sugar and cocoa and to a lesser extent in coconuts - all export crops. She has had therefore to rely on imports for her food supply. Thus even now she gets the bulk of her potatoes from abroad, beef from South America, poultry from Canada, Sweet potatoes from St. Vincent, plantains and rice from British Guiana. It is true that she produces a certain quantity of her food crops including vegetables, some tannias, bananas and fruits. But her reliance on imported foodstuffs is great enough to give a certain amount of concern.

This state of affairs offers many interesting subjects of investigation for the student of economics, viz., problems of production, transport, distribution and marketing, how far prices are influenced by scarcities, the advisability or otherwise of increasing local food production, the prospects of

food preservation and even the development for export of crops like tomatoes which tend to be overproduced in their season.

Investigation of these subjects will require full-time research over a period of time much longer than the writer had at his disposal. The work embodied in this report is therefore a study of only one aspect of the problem of marketing certain food crops. The study is based on the weekly market reports which are sent from the various markets, once a week, to the Marketing Officer in Port of Spain.

To enable the investigators to have an intimate knowledge of the conditions on the markets, brief visits were paid to the markets at various centres.

The main purpose of the study was to see what co-ordinated story, if any, could be built from the market records, whether they could give a scientific picture of the supply position on the island or whether they did not signify much that was of interest and value. Was there any effect of supplies and seasonality on prices and could such an effect be indicated by the returns in their present form? If the market returns could not supply answers to these questions in what way might they be improved?