

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Five Year Development Plan for Trinidad and Tobago 1964 - 1968 stated that the main requirement from the agricultural sector was for an increase in home food production, which would result in a reduction of imported agricultural produce. One of the ways of achieving this was the reclamation of the country's low-lying swamp areas. This report deals with one such area, the Oropouche Lagoon in South Trinidad (Figure 1).

The drainage of the area was carried out under the first Five Year plan in 1963 at a cost of many thousands of dollars.

Our interest in the area was aroused when we heard that the expected increase in production, of both wet and dry season crops, had not come about. In fact the general productive trend was said to be going down, rather than up.

Against this background, a brief survey of the area was made which resulted in two projects being undertaken. In relating some of the problems encountered in the survey, it is suggested that the reader consult the D.T.A. report by BENNETT (1967) (see bibliography for full reference) as many of the problems encountered are closely correlated to soil factors.

This survey covers two areas of the lagoon, some six miles apart, similar to those chosen by JOLLY, 1946. To begin with, we hoped to be able to do an economic study similar to that of Jolly's and draw some comparative conclusions. However, it was soon evident

that the data collected over two years (1944 -- 1946) could not be collected and analysed in six months. Also the complete lack of records was another limiting factor; some farmers had difficulty in remembering how many children they had, let alone any idea of inputs or outputs!

Therefore, as the title indicates, we have concentrated on the social and physical limitations of the area and avoided going into detailed input/output data on the farms visited.

Therefore the report has taken the form of a preliminary study of the major problems of farmers and farming in the lagoon, and includes recommendations for future development.