

## INTRODUCTION.

The banana was first introduced into the West Indies in 1561 when de Berlango brought it to Dominica. No export industry was developed until 1870, when Baker started the first export industry by shipping Gros Michel bananas to the United States.

By 1912 Trinidad had a fairly large export trade with both the United States and the United Kingdom, worth \$9,600 per annum, but Panama disease, Fusarium oxysporum f. cubense, and banana borer, Cosmopolites sordidus, caused severe losses and the importance of the banana crop as an export industry declined.

After the first world war the export trade was again revived but in 1936 leaf spot, Mycosphaerella musicola (Leach), began to reduce yields and by 1938 production had fallen off severely.

After the second world war, exports were recommenced to both Europe and the United States. The Caribbean Fruit Co. of New Orleans, which handled the exports of bananas to the United States, would only accept Gros Michel bananas. These were ravaged by Panama disease and the volume of exports was therefore low.

In 1954 a contract between the Union International Co. Ltd. and the Marketing Board of Trinidad and Tobago was negotiated. The Company agreed to purchase all export bananas for a period of 15 years at a fixed price of  $5\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  per pound f.a.s. for the first five years, (the grower being paid 4¢ per pound). At the end of this period the price was subjected to revision and subsequently at 3 year intervals.