

## INTRODUCTION

In the Tropics in general, the importance of grass in agriculture is being more and more fully realised for the following reasons:-

(a) it provides the best soil cover against soil erosion.

(b) it builds up and maintains soil fertility.

(c) it permits of the more intensive use of land by cultivation, by substituting the temporary ley in rotations.

(d) It can provide soilage as a supplementary feed for livestock.

(e) It offers facilities for ranching or supports nomadic peoples in arid or semi-arid areas where other crop-cultivation is chancy.

For these reasons the agriculturist in the Tropics has come to regard grass in the light of a crop; one of the most important he has at his command, and one, which is rapidly becoming an integral part in rotation systems and forming a basis for a permanent, balanced, mixed husbandry.

As a crop, it must be studied as to its reactions to various environments and methods of management, so nowadays much of the research work being done is on these lines, both on indigenous and introduced varieties.

In Trinidad, however, grass has not, as yet, assumed the status of an important crop for the following reasons, as pointed out by Howes & Campbell (1953):-

(a) There are major economic factors which make the production of sugar cane and cocoa, very remunerative, causing the growth of large estates devoted to one or other and much

of the land used by the peasant farmer to be under these crops.

(b) The ecology of the island is natural rain forest, and grass is not a natural cover.

These factors combined have resulted in a lack of fundamental knowledge concerning the agronomy and management of what grass there is available in the Colony, and kept grass at a very minor level of importance in the general agricultural scheme.

The Imperial College and the local Department of Agriculture fully realize this, and know that if grass is to contribute more to agriculture here, than it does at present, then it is necessary to overcome this lack of knowledge, and therefore have intensified their research for better grasses, systems of management, and cheaper, better propagation methods.

and observation plots, and their reactions recorded.

Most of the other published work from the College by other workers, is on grasses that can be used for forage purposes rather than grazing. (Guyadeen 1950, 1951). This is not surprising, as there are very few fields of grass in Trinidad, and most of the grazing there is, is along the road-sides, the preference being, rather to cut and carry the green material to the animal.

The main bulk of work done by post-graduates, which started around 1940, has been on propagation methods, both by seed and vegetatively. (Rose 1943, Horrell 1953, Mulholland 1953, Evans 1954, Norman 1954, Tuley 1954) while the remainder has been on studies of grassland in the Tropics and Trinidad (Hinds 1940, Campbell 1944, Lloyds 1948, Speere 1952).

For the past few years however, the College has been