

ABSTRACT

During the 1950s the Yallahs Valley in Jamaica was selected by the government for the establishment of a pioneer agricultural extension authority. The programme was modelled along the lines of the T.V.A. with the active promotion of agricultural improvements.

The spread of soil conservation techniques was selected and examined by the author using concepts formulated in the developed world. The spatial diffusion was analysed with reference to physical and population density constraints. Once this pattern was established, the density of acceptance was assessed from the viewpoint of sociological concepts relating acceptance levels to innovator characteristics.

As a preliminary guide, the distribution of terracing was plotted by air photograph interpretation. This pattern was then verified and elaborated upon by data collected in a questionnaire survey undertaken in the field. Differential acceptance levels were shown by the use of isoline maps and associations between relevant sociological variables were tested by the use of appropriate statistical procedures. On this basis tentative hypotheses have been made to explain the resultant spatial and temporal patterns.

The diffusion of soil conservation techniques broadly followed an axial pattern along the river valley. Within this overall pattern variations in time and density of acceptance were shown to be significantly related to certain personality traits of the farmers as well as to the efficacy of the Yallahs Valley Land Authority's work (Y.V.L.A.).

In conclusion, the results of the study tend to support concepts evolved in the developed world although local conditions, particularly political affiliations, impose certain limitations upon the interpretation of the data. Whilst further research is needed before the full significance of the extant work can be assessed, this study seems to indicate that many of the existing concepts on the diffusion of innovations are applicable in a Third World context.