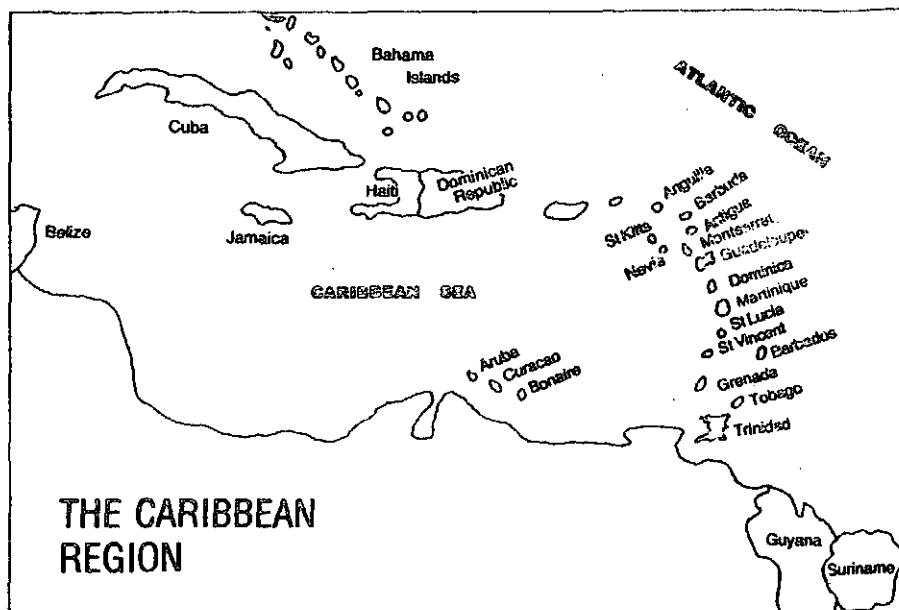


CARIBBEAN
DEVELOPMENT
 AND
CO-OPERATION
COMMITTEE



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COCONUTS IN JAMAICA -
 RESEARCH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
 Prepared by
 The Coconut Industry Board
 Jamaica

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UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

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INTRODUCTION

The Coconut Control Authority and the Coconut Industry Board are the two bodies established by law to manage the coconut industry of Jamaica. The former being the regulatory agency and the latter the administrative body.

Members of the Coconut Control Authority are appointed by the Government through the Minister of Agriculture who has the power to determine the composition and number of the Authority. The Coconut Industry Board has nine members, four of whom including the Chairman, are appointed by the Minister, and five who must be registered coconut growers are elected by registered coconut growers.

The Board as the administering body has the task of supplying material for the expansion of coconut planting, purchasing coconut and copra and disposal of same, and providing industry research and insurance.

Production is in the hands of private farmers who sell their coconuts to the Board through licensed copra makers. Copra is sold by the Board to manufacturers of oils and fats.

At the end of 1982 approximately 70,000 acres of land were planted with varieties of coconuts resistant to lethal yellowing disease. Peak production was 21,000 tons of copra in 1971. Deaths of susceptible bearing trees to lethal yellowing disease coupled with the number of non-bearing resistant varieties among other factors have caused production in 1982 to be just over 1,400 tons of copra.

The coconut industry plays an important part in the nation's economy. Farm operations require significant labour inputs, as does the manufacture of oil and oil products. Although not a major export crop, its role as a supplier of important household commodities (edible oil and soap) obviates the necessity to import these products.

RESEARCH POLICY

The overall research policy of the Coconut Industry Board is recommended by a committee of Board Members, the Research Committee. The basic principles underlying research at the Board is that such research should seek to improve farmers' knowledge and management of the crop and to find answers to problems they may have.

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH

As described above, the Research Committee is the effective monitoring body for research but the approval of the research programme rests with the Board. Research planning and execution are done by a Director of Research and research scientists, with support services in the field carried out by trained field officers and untrained field assistants, and in the office by laboratory technicians.

RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

The research programmes covers two main areas - botany/plant breeding and agronomy/crop physiology. Some work is done in other areas as the need arises and expertise is available from our staff or through collaborators from other agencies.

In the area of botany/plant breeding, the basic botanical characteristics of the varieties and hybrids used are studied, but the major task at this time is the multiplication of selected varieties and the making of hybrids with, for our particular needs, suitable resistance to lethal yellowing disease.

In the area of agronomy/crop physiology, work on several aspects of crop management is undertaken with major emphasis on plant density and nutrition. Work has been done and will continue in areas as inter-cropping soil management, weed control and nursery management. Work on pest control, e.g., rat control and mite control has been done.

EFFECT OF RESEARCH ON PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY

All research findings which should improve production are readily made available to farmers. Although not all farmers make full use of the recommendations made, it has been found that where the recommendations are used production and productivity are improved. Perhaps the major deterrent to improvement in production is the non-use of recommended improved cultural practices.

Production surveys have shown that where cultural practices determined through research and recommended by the Board are adopted, yields are usually better by as much as 30 to 50 percent.

PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES DEVOTED TO RESEARCH

Research at the Board is done by a team of three scientists, which includes a Director, Botanist/Plant Breeder and an Agronomist/Crop Physiologist. Field work is carried out by field officers and field assistants.

An integral part of the Research Department is the Advisory Section manned by two Officers who inform farmers of recommended cultural practices and any changes which may occur. This is done mainly by direct contact with farmers, through training days, field days and individual visits.

Approximately \$J500,000 is expended annually by the Research Department.

MAIN CONSTRAINTS TO CARRYING OUT RESEARCH

The unavailability of adequate funds to establish and maintain an "adequate" structure with staff and facilities for research is the main constraint to expanded research. In our particular case where the emphasis is on research geared to particular needs of farmers it may be said that the scope of research is somewhat limited. This, of course, does not preclude the inclusion of research on fundamental questions of interest in order to understand particular problems.

EXTERNAL LINKAGES

The Research Department has collaborated from time to time, with bodies such as the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development, the United States Agency for International Development and a number of research institutions in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and the major coconut producing countries.

Research on the cause of lethal yellowing disease has been the major project receiving support from these agencies.

