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**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CARIBBEAN FOOD CROPS SOCIETY**



SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

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VOLUME II

THE COMPULSORY PLANTING OF FOOD CROPS ON SUGAR

ESTATES IN BARBADOS

by

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Introduction

The growing of food crops, mainly sweet potatoes and yams on sugar estates in Barbados is traditional.

During World War II the Government, to produce more food locally, save shipping and keep the cost of living down, took advantage of this tradition and inaugurated a compulsory planting scheme. This Scheme has continued with modifications up to the present day.

Food Crop Cultivation

The growing of sugar cane is the basis of agriculture in Barbados and what food crops are grown must fit in with, and not hamper, the production of cane. Food crops are thus grown on land not at the moment under growing canes. There is therefore no special cultivation for these food crops.

There are two main periods for food crop planting, i.e. "Preparation Land" and "Thrown out" land, as these are known locally, and refer to the cultural methods employed in cane production.

Methods of Harvest

These vary from crop to crop and are governed by traditional practices. The most common of these is for the purchaser to provide the labour for "digging" and to look after transport and marketing.

The requirements under the law

From the very first crop year of the Second World War (1940-41) estates were required to plant not less than 10% of their "arable" land in food crops.

Due to the necessities of wartime conditions this percentage rose to 35% in 1942-43 and remained so till 1944-45. From 1945-46 onwards these percentages have declined gradually to the present 12%

Prices have been controlled at a very low level. The last revision was in 1952. There has never been any guaranteed market for these crops.

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How it has worked

At the start, it was considered as the cane producers 'war effort' and worked extremely well. Even after the war, the cooperation of planters has been remarkable. This can be seen from the fact that there have been very few prosecutions under the law and the average food crop planting is 15%-20% in excess of the requirements. This is surprising as prices are very low, no market is provided while wages have increased 86% since 1952.

Cumulsory planting, however, under peace time conditions does not encourage efficient production. There has so far been a reluctance to incorporate modern cultural techniques in the production of these food crops, for their own sake, there being not enough incentive to stimulate the use of these methods.