

## ABSTRACT

### Yam Cultivation, the Yam Stick Trade and Resource Depletion, in the Yam Growing Region of Central Jamaica: Integrated Problems, for Planning and Resource Management.

Clinton Lloyd Beckford

Yam production in Jamaica is primarily the domain of small to medium size farmers, many of whom cultivate marginal land on steep slopes. In addition to being an important employer of labour and source of income yam has, in recent times, become an important export crop and a significant earner of foreign exchange for the country. This is due mainly to the improvements in export marketing facilities in Jamaica, attractive market prices in both the domestic market and the main overseas markets, (Canada, Britain and United States of America) expanding effective demand for yams locally and in the main overseas markets and the emphasis of policy makers on domestic food production in general, and root crop production in particular.

It is estimated that over 95 percent of the national yam output is produced using the traditional yam stick method of cultivation. This involves the planting of large yam head setts in individual hills or mounds, which are later staked with a 'yam stick' of varying size. For reasons which are discussed later in this thesis, minisett technology, an alternative yam production mode which was introduced in Jamaica in 1985, has not been widely adopted and so has failed to meet one of its main

stated objectives, that is to reduce the use of yam sticks from yam production in the country.

The increase in the production of yam, using the traditional yam stick approach, has led to a tremendous growing demand for yam sticks. This increase in demand, and the exploitation of forests and woodlands over many decades, have led to the depletion of local forest resources. The inability to obtain adequate yam sticks from local wood sources has facilitated the growth of a commercial trade in yam sticks, in the main yam growing areas in central Jamaica. In a nutshell, the 'yam stick trade' is the phenomenon ( probably unique to the study areas) where men on trucks transport sticks obtained from forests and woodlands into prolific yam growing communities and sell them to farmers.

This research seeks to elucidate relevant issues surrounding the social, spatial and economic organization of this trade in yam sticks. The study also analyses the environmental implications of yam production and the yam stick trade. Finally, the research attempts to shed some light on the basis of farmers' economic decisions as these relate to yam production, the trade in yam sticks and the environmental implications.