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THE PRACTICE OF SOIL CONSERVATION IN THE BRITISH COLONIAL EMPIRE

by

SIR HAROLD A. TEMPANY, C.M.G., C.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.I.C.

Formerly Agricultural Advisor, Colonial Office



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PREFACE

Soil erosion is a major problem in the Colonial Empire and of late years the practice of soil conservation has extended greatly.

Progress has varied; in some dependencies it has been spectacular, and conservation work has become one of the main activities of the Departments of Agriculture; in others developments have not advanced beyond the initial stages.

The position has been reviewed from time to time, the last occasion being in 1944^[28]. It then appeared that the dangers of erosion and the need for measures to combat it were widely appreciated. There was also growing realization that conservation measures should not be regarded as separate ends in themselves, but must be integrated into systems of husbandry capable of maintaining and enhancing fertility.

In many dependencies there is now considerable accumulated experience of the practical application of conservation measures; some of it has been published in departmental journals, bulletins and reports, but much more exists in unpublished records; published accounts are scattered and not always easy of access, while publication has been restricted owing to war and post-war paper shortages.

It appeared that it would be useful if the experience of workers in different territories could be collected and summarized; accordingly, in 1946, with the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to the Directors of Agriculture in dependencies where soil conservation had obtained considerable development, seeking information on a number of points.

In the account which follows, the information contained in the replies has been supplemented by data taken from published papers and reports and material supplied from other sources. It is believed that it gives an accurate and reasonably up-to-date account of the position.

The territories which furnished replies to the questionnaire were Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, Basutoland, Swaziland, Ceylon, Cyprus, Jamaica, the Windward Islands and the Leeward Islands. To the Directors and other officers of the Departments of Agriculture concerned, acknowledgment is made of the voluminous and detailed information supplied.

The section of Chapter VIII dealing with legislation in the Colonial Dependencies is based upon copies of the original ordinances supplied by the Legal Library of the Colonial Office ; of this, acknowledgment is also made.

It is also desired to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. G. N. Sale, late Conservator of Forests, Palestine, in supplying information concerning the fixation of sand dunes in that territory.

Finally, special thanks are due to Messrs. G. V. Jacks, Director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Soil Science, G. W. Nye, late Director of Agriculture, Nyasaland, and now Deputy Agricultural Adviser at the Colonial Office, and D. Thornton, Agricultural Officer of Tanganyika Territory, who have read the manuscript and have made a number of valuable suggestions and criticisms which have been incorporated in the text.

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H. A. TEMPANY

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