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GROWTH PARAMETERS RELATED TO PRODUCTIVITY IN CASSAVA (Manihot esculenta Crantz)

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GROWTH PARAMETERS RELATED TO PRODUCTIVITY IN CASSAVA (*Manihot esculenta* Crantz)

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Preamble	10
2.2 The Development of the Growth Analysis Technique	11
2.2.1 The Importance of Leaf Area and Photosynthesis	14
2.2.2 The Concept of Harvest Index	18
2.2.3 The Use of the Growth Analysis	19
2.3 Growth Cycle and Development of Cassava	20
2.3.1 Morpho-physiological Characters of Cassava	23
2.3.2 Yield and Yield Attributes in Cassava	30
2.4 In Comparison with Other Tuberous Crops	32
CHAPTER III. MATERIALS AND METHODS	37
3.1 Site of the field experiments	37
3.2 Varieties	37
3.3 Specific objectives	39
3.4.1 Experiment 1: A Growth Analysis of Six Varieties of Cassava	43
3.4.2 Experiment 2: The Effect of Shading on Leaf Longevity	51
3.4.3 Experiment 3: A Study on the Control o Cassava	53

Page

3.4.4 Experiment 4: Measurements on Apparent Photosynthetic Rates in Six Varieties of Cassava 57

3.4.5 Experiment 5: An Investigation into the Relationship between Crop Growth Rate and Leaf Area Index 66

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS 75

4.1 Experiment 1 75

4.1.1 Growth of plant organs with time 75

(a) Dry matter partitioning and harvest index 79

(b) Growth rates and leaf area indices 82

(c) Light interception 86

(d) Relationship between mean root weight and number 90

(e) Root yields 90

4.1.2 Canopy development 93

(a) Internodal lengths 93

(b) Stem and branch diameters 93

(c) Unit node weights 93

(d) Area per leaf lamina 98

(e) Leaf area per unit node weight 101

(f) Branching pattern 101

(g) Leaf production 107

(h) Leaf life 110

4.2 Experiment 2 115

4.3 Experiment 3 117

4.3.1 Canopy characteristics 117

(a) Branching 117

(b) Leaf life 117

(c) Leaf size 117

(d) Leaf area index (at harvest) 120

4.3.2 Pattern of dry matter partitioning 120

(a) Number of thickened roots 120

(b) Total plant and root dry weights 123

Page

(c) Mean root weight 123
(d) Fresh root yields 123

4.4 Experiment 4 126

4.5 Experiment 5 131
4.5.1 Crop growth rates versus leaf area indices 131
4.5.2 Dry matter distribution 131
4.5.3 Root growth rates versus leaf area indices 135

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION 137

5.1 Dry matter production 137
5.1.1 Leaf area index 138
(a) Leaf size 139
(b) Branching pattern 140
(c) Leaf production rate 141
(d) Leaf life 141
5.1.2 The limitations presented by LAI 143
5.1.3 Light interception 145
5.1.4 Photosynthetic efficiency 146
5.2 Dry matter distribution 147
5.2.1 Harvest index 147
5.2.2 Competing sinks 150
(a) Leaves 151
(b) Stem/branch complex 153
(c) Stakes 155
(d) Suckers and lateral shoots 155
5.2.3 Components of root yield 155

5.3 Towards an ideotype for cassava 156
5.3.1 The LAI problem 158
5.3.2 The harvest index problem 160
5.3.3 Other considerations 160

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION 162

SUMMARY 165

BIBLIOGRAPHY 167

APPENDIX A1

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
TABLE I.	Maximal recorded yields of some important tropical crops	3
TABLE II.	World production figures of cassava	4
TABLE III.	Estimated total requirements for domestic consumption of animal products in Malaysia from 1975 to 1990	6
TABLE IV.	The requirements for energy (maize) and the total cost for supporting the production of meat and milk from the livestock categories in Malaysia	7
TABLE V.	Photosynthetic rates and crop growth rates of selected species	17
TABLE VI.	Morphological description of the six varieties of cassava used in the studies	40
TABLE VII.	Summary of the seven pruning treatments in Experiment 3	55
TABLE VIII.	Rates of gas exchange from the two surfaces of a cassava leaf (Variety MCol 113)	64
TABLE IX.	Relationship between total leaf weight and total plant weight at 11 weeks in three varieties of cassava	72
TABLE X.	Harvest data of six varieties of cassava	77
TABLE XI.	Actual and observed harvest indices in six varieties of cassava	83
TABLE XI.A	Regression equations between crop and root growth rates and mean leaf area index in six varieties of cassava	84-1
TABLE XII.	Extinction coefficients of six varieties of cassava	89
TABLE XIII.	Root yields of six varieties of cassava after 12 months' growth	92
TABLE XIV.	Branching pattern in six varieties of cassava after 12 months' growth	94
TABLE XV.	Linear regression equations for the different branching patterns in six varieties of cassava	106

Page

TABLE XVI. Harvest data of seven branch control treatments in MCol 113 122

TABLE XVII. Calculated number of apices with reference to different branching patterns 124

TABLE XVIII. Fresh root yields in relation to the number of apices present 125

TABLE XIX. Analysis of variance of net photosynthetic rates of six cassava varieties 127

TABLE XX. Components of variance from Table XIX 128

TABLE XXI. Crop and root growth rates resultant from leaf-clipping treatments in three varieties of cassava 134

Appendix

TABLE A.1 Meteorological data for I.C.A., Palmira A1

TABLE A.2 Equations and R^2 values of growth curves for six varieties of cassava A2

TABLE A.2-1 Regression equations of root weight on total plant weight in six varieties of cassava A3

TABLE A.2-2 Quadratic equations and R^2 values of $\log_e$ plots of total plant and root weights over time in six varieties of cassava A4

TABLE A.3 Means of leaf area per unit node weight ($cm^2\ g^{-1}$) in six varieties of cassava A5

TABLE A.4 Rates of leaf production per apex in six varieties of cassava as measured at different periods during the crop cycle A6

TABLE A.5 Leaf life measured on six varieties of cassava at different periods of the crop cycle A7

TABLE A.6 Leaf life (days) as affected by different branch control treatments in MCol 113 A8

TABLE A.7 Statistics of leaf temperatures (^oC) in six varieties of cassava during gas exchange measurements A9

TABLE A.8 The relationship between CGR and LAI in three varieties of cassava A10

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
FIGURE 1.	Two types of relationship between crop growth rate and leaf area index	15
FIGURE 2.	Growth curves of cassava through 21 months	24
FIGURE 3.	Growth curves of three tuberous crops	34
FIGURE 4.	Rainfall data of the period of study in comparison with 45 years' mean	38
FIGURE 5.	Diagram of a treatment plot in Experiment 1	44
FIGURE 6.	Diagrammatic set-up of the gas circuit in Experiment 4	58
FIGURE 7.	Diagram of a leaf chamber used in Experiment 4	60
FIGURE 8.	Diagram of a main plot in Experiment 5	67
FIGURE 9.	Leaf-clipping treatments in Experiment 5	69
FIGURE 10.	Growth curves of six varieties of cassava over 12 months	76
FIGURE 11.	Dry matter distribution as percentages of the final total plant weight in six varieties of cassava	78
FIGURE 12.	Dry matter distribution in relation to total dry weight in six varieties of cassava	80
FIGURE 12A.	Regression of root dry weight on total plant dry weight in six varieties of cassava	80-1
FIGURE 13.	The relationship of harvest index with time in six varieties of cassava	81
FIGURE 14.	Natural logarithmic plots of total plant and root growths in six varieties of cassava	83-1
FIGURE 14A.	Crop and root growth rates in relation to mean leaf area index in six varieties of cassava	84-2
FIGURE 15.	Crop and root growth rates and leaf area indices in relation to time in six varieties of cassava	85
FIGURE 15A.	Net assimilation rates in six varieties of cassava in relation to time	85-2

Page

FIGURE 16. Light transmission ($\log_e I/I_o$) in relation to leaf area index in each of six varieties of cassava 86-1

FIGURE 16A. Light transmission ($\log_e I/I_o$) in relation to leaf area index (pooled data from six varieties) 87

FIGURE 17. Percentage of light interception in relation to time in six varieties of cassava 88

FIGURE 18. Mean root weight in relation to mean root number in six varieties of cassava 91

FIGURE 19. Internodal length in relation to canopy level in six varieties of cassava 95

FIGURE 20. Stem diameter of different canopy levels in relation to time in six varieties of cassava 96

FIGURE 21. Unit node weight of different canopy levels in relation to time in six varieties of cassava 97

FIGURE 22. Area per leaf in relation to canopy level in six varieties of cassava 99

FIGURE 23. Area per leaf as a percentage of the maximal area in six varieties of cassava 100

FIGURE 24. Leaf area per unit node weight in relation to time in six varieties of cassava 102

FIGURE 25. Time to branching in six varieties of cassava 104

FIGURE 26. Number of nodes to each branch level in six varieties of cassava 105

FIGURE 27. Rate of formation of apices in six varieties of cassava (semi-log scale) 108

FIGURE 28. Cumulative rate of leaf production per apex in six varieties of cassava 109

FIGURE 29. Rate of leaf production per plant in six varieties of cassava 111

FIGURE 30. Harvest index in relation to total leaf production rate in six varieties of cassava 112

FIGURE 31. Leaf life in relation to time of leaf formation in six varieties of cassava 113

Page

FIGURE 32. The effect of different degrees of shade on leaf life 116

FIGURE 33. Time of branching as affected by branch control treatments in MCol 113 118

FIGURE 34. Leaf life as affected by branch control treatments in MCol 113 119

FIGURE 35. Leaf size of different branch levels as affected by branch control treatments in MCol 113 121

FIGURE 36. Light response curves of six varieties of cassava 129

FIGURE 37. Crop growth rate in relation to mean leaf area index in three varieties of cassava 132

FIGURE 38. Dry matter distribution as percentages of maximal total dry weight in six leaf-clipping treatments in each of three varieties of cassava 133

FIGURE 39. The effect of apex removal on dry matter distribution in three varieties of cassava 136

FIGURE 40. Hypothetical model of changes in crop and root growth rates under stress conditions 144

FIGURE 41. Brouwer and de Wit's model on dry matter utilization 149

Appendix

FIGURE A.9 Regression of leaf dry weight on total plant dry weight in three varieties of cassava A11

FIGURE A.10 Example of a curve fitted by Probit analysis A12

ABSTRACT

Dry matter production and distribution to major plant organs were studied by periodic harvests over 12 months in six varieties of cassava with varying branching patterns. Simultaneous studies traced the pattern of branching, leaf size and leaf area development, rates of leaf production and of node weight increase, and leaf life.

Total dry matter production depends on leaf area index (LAI) and leaf photosynthetic rate. Measurements by an infra-red gas analyzer on single attached leaves indicated varietal differences in apparent photosynthetic rates. The LAI of three varieties, with high, intermediate and low rates, was altered by leaf and apex clipping. A relationship was found between crop growth rate (CGR) and LAI, and a possible association between CGR and photosynthetic efficiency.

LAI is influenced by canopy characteristics, viz. leaf size, rate of leaf production and leaf life. Leaf production has two components: production rate per apex, and rate of apex production which relates to branching.

Root bulking has a lower optimal LAI than CGR, implying competition with dry matter utilization by stems, leaves and stakes. The capacity for branching determines LAI but also establishes the potential for top growth and its competitive sink strength. Node weight increased throughout the crop duration, and branching both augmented the stem mass and accelerated leaf production rate through rapid apex increase. Results from leaf and apex clipping suggest that new leaves constituted a very

substantial sink.

The simulation of branching patterns by pruning a highly branched variety showed that where the rate of apex number increase was moderate, root yields were high and similar to varieties with such characteristic branching patterns. Leaf life is important in maintaining LAI by precluding the need for rapid leaf production to replace abscised leaves. Introduced shade reduced leaf life, whilst highly branched varieties also had shorter leaf lives.

Optimal LAI for high root yield, therefore, may possibly be achieved through the selection of favourably branched phenotypes having long leaf life and superior photosynthetic capacity.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cassava (Manihot esculenta Crantz) is a crop of the New World, believed to have originated in the marginal zone between the tropical rain forests and savannahs in the area covered by Venezuela, north-eastern Brazil and Paraguay (de Candolle, 1886; Vavilov, 1951; Sauer, 1952; Smith, 1968). Rogers (1965) considered present-day southern Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras a likely secondary centre of origin. Its domestication has been attributed to the Arauk Indians, who were credited to have disseminated its cultivation as a result of their migrations to various parts of South and Central America (Schmidt, 1951; Rogers, 1965). Archaeological evidence seems to suggest that cassava has been in cultivation in Peru since 2000 B.C. (Sauer, 1951; Leon, 1977), rivalling maize (Zea mays L.) in antiquity (Smith, 1968).

Following their conquest of Brazil, the Portuguese introduced cassava into their colonies in Africa in the 16th century, and more recently into Asia, particularly India and South-East Asia in the 18th or 19th century (Purseglove, 1968; Montaldo, 1972a; Rogers & Appan, 1972; Nestel & Cock, 1976). Today, it has become the primary staple in many parts of Africa (Terry & MacIntyre, 1976), and an important source of carbohydrate in South America, with Brazil leading in production (Nestel & Cock, 1976).

The efficiency of cassava as a starch producer can hardly be questioned (de Vries et al., 1967; Kay, 1973; Cock, 1974). Starch,

mainly in the form of amylose and amylopectin (Johnson & Raymond, 1965), is stored in the thickened roots at levels up to 71 tons/ha/year which is equivalent to 250 x 10^3 cal/ha/day in terms of energy (de Vries et al., 1967) (see Table I). The one-time research priority for the improvement of protein content in cassava roots (Bolhuis, 1953) has been acknowledged to be of secondary importance (Phillips, 1974) since this deficiency may be met by post-harvest processes such as microbial fermentation (Brook et al., 1969; Seerley, 1972; Phillips, 1974; Nestel & Cock, 1976).

Being a carbohydrate and hence an energy source, cassava finds an important place in the human diet (Jones, 1959; Phillips, 1974; Terry & MacIntyre, 1976), as a component of animal feed (Phillips, 1974; Nestel & MacIntyre, 1975; Terry & MacIntyre, 1976), and in various industrial processes based on starch - industries producing confectionery, foodstuffs, textiles, paper, alcohol, glucose and acetone (Normanha & Pereira, 1964; Kay, 1973; Araullo et al., 1974), to name a few. Table II gives a general picture of the main areas of cassava production and production figures (FAO, 1975).

Traditionally, cassava has been grown and tended by small farmers, and seldom, until recently, has it been managed in large commercial plantings. Perhaps, for this reason, there has been a noticeable lack of organized research on the crop (Nestel & MacIntyre, 1973; Nestel & Cock, 1976; Kawano et al., 1978) as compared, for instance, to maize. The total volume of literature related to cassava research up to 1972 was estimated by CIAT's documentation centre for cassava to be not more than 4000. However, of late, there has been an increasing interest in this long-

TABLE I. MAXIMAL RECORDED YIELDS OF SOME IMPORTANT TROPICAL CROPS (After de Vries et al., 1967)

Crop	Yield (tons per ha per year)	Energy production ($Cal/(ha.day) \times 10^3$)
Rice	26.0	176
Wheat	11.7	110
Maize	20.0	200
Sorghum	13.0	114
Cassava	71.1	250
Sweet potato	65.2	180
Banana	39.0	80

TABLE II. WORLD PRODUCTION OF CASSAVA (1975)
(Adapted from FAO Production Yearbook, 1975)

	Million tons	% world production
Africa	43.97	41.79
Nigeria	10.00	9.50
Zaire	9.17	8.72
Burundi	4.10	3.90
Tanzania	3.56	3.38
Mozambique	2.30	2.19
Ghana	1.80	1.71
Angola	1.60	1.52
Madagascar	1.42	1.35
Sudan	1.13	1.07
Central African Republic	1.10	1.05
Uganda	1.00	0.95
Asia	28.81	27.38
Indonesia	12.92	12.28
Thailand	6.36	6.05
India	6.33	6.02
Malaysia	0.35	0.33
South America	31.43	29.87
Brazil	27.21	25.86
Colombia	1.32	1.25
Paraguay	1.13	1.07
Others	1.00	0.95
TOTAL	105.21	100.00

neglected crop. This is largely due to the growing demand for cheap carbohydrate sources in the animal feed industries which has resulted in considerable attention being given by various national and international research bodies (Nestel & MacIntyre, 1973; Phillips, 1974; Wholey & Cock, 1975; Nestel & Cock, 1976). In recent years, Thailand has become one of the world's leading exporters in cassava because of the available animal feed markets in the European Economic Community (Phillips, 1974).

In view of the increasing demand for animal proteins due to population growth, consumer preference and a higher standard of living (Devendra, 1977), the government of Malaysia recognizes the need to expand the domestic livestock and animal product industries in order to achieve a higher degree of self-sufficiency. Projections up to 1990 for the demand for beef, mutton, pork, poultry, eggs and dairy products are given in Table III. It may be seen that the largest required increases are in the supplies of pork, poultry and eggs. Corresponding increases in the volume of feedstuffs will, therefore, be required to produce these animal proteins. The traditional source of energy in compounded feeds for non-ruminants has been maize, all of which is imported to furnish our local feed mills. By 1990, the total requirements for maize would have more than doubled to be able to satisfy the needs of the livestock industries (Table IV).

The continued dependence on maize for feeding pigs and poultry has been questioned (Devendra, 1977), especially since the cultivation of maize is more critical in its requirements and its yield performance is relatively unstable (Syed Ali, 1977; Wong, 1978) compared to an

TABLE III. ESTIMATED TOTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS IN MALAYSIA FROM 1975 TO 1990*
(Adapted from Veterinary Division, 1974)

Animal product	Unit	Total requirements			
		1975	1980	1985	1990
Beef (buffalo & cattle)	10^6kg	18.6	22.1	26.3	31.3
Mutton (goat & sheep)	10^6kg	4.8	5.7	6.7	8.0
Pork (pig)	10^6kg	61.5	73.8	88.6	106.4
Poultry meat (chicken)	10^6kg	83.1	123.9	184.5	279.4
Eggs (chicken)	10^6	1727.4	2411.4	3366.3	4699.4
Dairy products	10^6 l	353.8	406.9	468.1	538.4

*Assumes a 2.7% population growth rate, a growth rate in real income per capita of 2.8%, and income elasticities of demand of 0.3, 0.3, 0.4, 2.0, 1.5 and 0.5 for beef, mutton, pork, poultry meat, eggs and milk, respectively.

The meats refer to dressed carcasses, and were derived by applying a dressing percentage of 50 for cattle and buffalo, 50 for goat, 45 for sheep and 70 for chicken (approximately 230 kg liveweight/cow, 364 kg/buffalo, 18.2 kg/goat or sheep and 2 kg/chicken).

TABLE IV. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENERGY (MAIZE) AND THE TOTAL COST FOR SUPPORTING THE PRODUCTION OF MEAT AND MILK FROM THE LIVESTOCK CATEGORIES IN MALAYSIA (10^3 TONNES)

Animal Product	1975	1980	1985	1990
Pork (pigs)*	66.4	79.7	95.7	114.9
Broiler (chicken)**	74.8	111.5	166.1	247.4
Eggs (chicken)***	51.8	72.3	101.0	141.0
Milk (cows)+	22.2	25.5	28.7	33.7
Total requirements	215.2	289.0	391.5	537.0
Cost ($\$10^6$)++	94.7	127.2	172.3	236.3

* Based on an efficiency of feed conversion (EFC) of 3.6 feed units per unit liveweight gain, 30% maize in the diet.

** Based on an EFC of 3.0 feed units per unit liveweight gain, 30% maize in the diet.

*** Based on an EFC of 1.0 kg of feed/0.5 kg of egg mass, 30% maize in the diet.

\+ Based on an average yield of 8 kg of milk/cow consuming 0.5 kg maize per day.

++ Costed at 44 cents/kg.

alternative energy source such as cassava. Animal nutrition studies have shown the feasibility of substituting a large portion of the maize component of feeds with cassava (Seerly, 1972; Muller et al., 1974; Hew, 1975; Syed Ali et al., 1975). The high-protein leaves of cassava (20.6 to 36.4%) render them potentially useful as a fodder crop, possibly replacing alfalfa in milk production (Murillo, 1952; de Guzman, 1978) because of its price advantage (Syed Jalaludin, 1977).

Malaysia is therefore endeavouring to expand her production of cassava to match the growing needs of her local feed mills. This necessitates equal if not greater efforts in research to ameliorate the production systems of the crop. Coursey & Haynes (1970) have pointed out that the genetic and agronomic potential of most root crops is still relatively unexplored. A better understanding of the crop's physiology is one of the necessary initial steps towards its fuller exploitation.

There is a dearth of information on the physiological aspect of productivity in cassava, as a literature review on the topic will reveal. Productivity encompasses both root yield and whole plant productive capacity. This latter is becoming of relevance since the leaves of cassava have been found to be suitable for use as forage.

It is mainly with this deficiency in knowledge in mind that the present studies were initiated. Without doubt, such information would be of interest and help to both the plant breeder and the agronomist in cassava research -- the former will then possibly attempt the improvement of morpho-physiological traits identified to be of importance to productivity and yield by means of genetics or the inherent qualities of the cultivars, whilst the latter will manipulate environmental and

cultural factors to optimize, if not maximize, the performance of whichever of these traits already existing in his cultivars.

It was decided to adopt the growth analysis approach as the focal point of the present studies because this offers a means of observing the interaction of several traits selected for study during the various developmental phases of the crop, and their relative importance may possibly be recognized at each phase. Of course, a growth analysis provides, in addition, a general picture of the growth pattern and development of the crop.

There is surprisingly little research on the efficiency of the leaf surface, or the relative photosynthetic capacities of different cassava cultivars (Alagianagalingam & Ramakrishnan, 1970; Hunt, 1975b). An attempt is made here to look for varietal variation in net photosynthetic rates, and to relate these rates as measured in the laboratory under controlled conditions to crop performance in the field.

With a better understanding of the crop physiology of cassava, it might be possible to construct the "ideal" plant type with the optimal combination of desirable physiological characteristics which promise a high level of total productivity, and, more important, superior yields.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 PREAMBLE

Man has been dependent on his crops ever since he gave up his nomadic way of life and ceased to rely entirely on hunting and foraging for his survival (Harlan, 1975). A settled form of life requires the assurance of a reliable food source. This has been achieved, short of natural calamities and disasters, through the domestication and cultivation or husbandry of plants and animals.

Through the ages, man has learnt through experience to select what appears to him to be the best (usually in terms of size, weight and/or appearance) for use as "seed material" in the following planting season. By this means, he has gained some degree of yield and quality improvement in the crops he grows. However, until about half a century ago, he failed to truly understand the underlying physiological processes and genetic factors which governed yielding capacity in his crops (Thurling, 1974). Research emphasis has, in the past, been on physiology at the molecular, cellular, or, at the very most, the plant level. These findings have without doubt helped in supplying the basic knowledge on physiological processes, but such results do not always give a clear picture of the behaviour of a crop stand which involves

interaction between the plants as well as with the environment in which they are raised (Watson, 1952).

Crop physiology is the study of growth and development of a community of plants in relation to the different aspects of its environment. With the shift from research conducted under controlled or laboratory conditions to actual field situations, different techniques for study to be developed -- one of the most important being the growth analysis technique.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GROWTH ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

As growth is a continuous, highly intricate and ever-changing process, its study has to involve a time component. Growth analysis encompasses the study of metrical traits measured at regular time intervals throughout the life cycle of the plant with the aim of attempting to quantify growth. Among the earliest workers who tried to analyze growth and yields were Balls and Holton in 1915 (Watson, 1952) in their studies on cotton. They took daily measurements on plant height, rate of flowering and weekly counts of ripe bolls throughout the latter phase of the growth cycle in trying to relate yield with environmental variations in spacing, planting date, water supply, climate and pest infestations.

The formal concept of growth analysis was, however, developed by Blackman in 1919. He defined growth as a process obeying the "compound interest law", an idea conceived by Noll in 1906 (Evans, 1972). In other words, the rate of dry weight changes in plants at various time intervals was influenced by the existing amount of