CONCLUSIONS

Soil erosion is a serious problem in the Caribbean. Several efforts have been made and continue to be made to reduce or minimize soil erosion but it has been recognised that historically farmers do not often adopt soil conservation methods on their own volition or even when the methods are demonstrated to them. This failure has been due to the use of soil conservation methods that are not appropriate to the physical, social and economic environment. Therefore, the social context and methods of extension are critical.

In the Caribbean most of the farmers on hillsides are resource-poor small farmers who do not have a soil conservation culture, and who have limited formal education and training. Therefore, the methods of soil conservation must be simple, inexpensive and must preferably give an economic benefit quickly and must not compete seriously for scarce labour. In the past the focus has been on physical or engineering methods but adoption of these methods has been limited. A different approach is therefore needed. There are many practices which are not normally associated with soil conservation but which can reduce erosion. In this regard the agronomic or biological methods are very important.

The two volumes of this book have considered the institutional, sociological and technical factors which are necessary for the successful implementation and adoption of soil conservation projects. Experience in the Caribbean has shown that the following factors are essential:

- strong institutional base to promote soil conservation;
- enforcement of existing relevant legislation;

- active, knowledgeable and adequate numbers of extension workers with good communication skills;
- identification of critical behavioural factors at the project design stage to ensure that changes are sustained;
- early identification of farmers with the project (from the design stage) and active involvement throughout the project i.e. the bottom-up approach;
- identification and involvement of community leaders in bringing about change;
- public awareness and education;
- proven inexpensive or cost effective technologies.

The institutional and sociological factors have been considered in Volume I while Volume II has concentrated on the technical requirements. The second volume has emphasised that agronomic or biological methods which can be integrated into the farming system are more cost effective than physical or engineering methods and more readily adopted by farmers. Since gullies are common problems on farms located on hillsides, appropriate methods for their control are given prominence. The methods of control inevitably involve some simple engineering techniques but the methods presented are simple, and sufficient information is given to be of practical benefit.

It is hoped that this approach of integrating soil conservation into farming systems would be widely appreciated and adopted and that this book would contribute to this process.