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*Land Reform, Diversification and Rural Development:
The Case of St. Vincent and The Grenadines*

Increasingly, the agricultural sector policies of the Government of St. Vincent and The Grenadines have reflected a concern for increased production and productivity as well as the achievement of broader socio-economic objectives. Considerable emphasis has been placed on policies which target broader development of rural communities. Efforts at land reform illustrate this move to rural development through agriculture.

This paper will examine the efforts of St. Vincent and The Grenadines at diversification through hard reform and rural development. Before this however, an overview of the agricultural sector of the state will be given.

OVERVIEW OF AGRICULTURE IN ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The agricultural sector is a most vital sector of the economy of St. Vincent and The Grenadines. In 1985, it contributed about 19 percent of Gross Domestic Product, employed 67 percent of the labour force and accounted for 58 percent of export earnings (Agricultural Census, 1985).

Export data for St. Vincent and The Grenadines for 1985 and 1986 presented in Table 1 showed a wide range of crops grown for export. Banana was the major export commodity followed by root crops. These were also significant production and export of coconuts, vegetables and other fruits.

The 1985 Agricultural Census showed that 86 percent of Vincentian farmers are small farmers operating on farms of 5 acres or less (Table 2). The output from individual farms is small. Production of tree crops is scattered with only a few established orchards. Infrastructure (such as roads) is poorly developed. Marketing of output (except bananas) from farms is difficult. Market

information systems are poor. Collection and distribution systems are inefficient. Little emphasis is given to grades and standards and significant post-harvest losses occur. A trend towards commercialisation of what were mainly subsistence production systems is however evident in St. Vincent. Farmers respond quickly to perceived 'markets' for crops and there are wide price fluctuations.

The livestock subsector remains underdeveloped despite rising imports of meat and meat products. The estimated livestock population is shown in Table 3. Here again, livestock production units are small, and low levels of technology are used.

The development of small farming has been constrained by the insecurity of tenure. Many farms are operated on a rental or lease hold basis. This limits the ability of these farmers to use credit for farm improvement and their willingness to invest in further development of these farms.

The Agricultural situation described above evolved over several centuries. In St. Vincent, there has always been competition between estate (export based) agriculture and small farm (subsistence or domestic) agriculture. Attempts at diversification have usually been in response to a collapse in the market prospects for major export crops whether sugar, arrowroot, or banana.

Some writers argue that the development of a peasantry has been linked to the state of the sugar industry (or by extension the major export commodity). (Fraser, 1980; John, 1974). The demand for sugar and other export crops in metropolitan markets led to the monopolisation of arable land. It was felt that such demand could best be met by the estate form of organisation and production. Small farmers were restricted to producing mainly food crops on small

Table 1: *Export of Selected Commodities from St. Vincent 1985 and 1986*

Commodity	1985		1986	
	Quantity (kg)	Value (\$)	Quantity (kg)	Value (\$)
Bananas	40,569,754	45,623,490	41,304,870	52,368,465
Coconuts (Nos)	1,779,787	839,504	1,911,421	874,625
Arrowroot flour	320,682	522,555	182,388	383,347
Arrowroot starch	495,292	1,162,228	457,544	1,250,665
Sweet potato	7,754,432	10,981,790	10,728,650	15,369,655
Dasheen & Eddoe	23,069,091	34,508,954	20,755,981	31,621,588
Tannias	8,504,483	13,043,922	8,828,538	14,494,041
Yams	2,827,276	4,466,462	712,189	1,163,690
Avocado	881,527	972,427	463,981	429,088
Plantains	3,517,419	3,849,615	4,016,134	4,672,596
Nutmegs	50,726	101,312	79,447	154,260
Carrots	586	683	-	-
Mangoes	781,355	1,112,169	590,289	944,011
Ginger	329,045	354,459	644,487	545,344
Mace	33,314	79,031	10,829	44,216
Peanuts	24,838	216,478	17,825	60,074
Cassava	3,035	4,126	6,127	9,091
Apples	964,134	1,066,591	697,567	773,865
Limes	76,728	83,605	65,520	78,074
Lemons	3,155	1,141	1,401	1,545
Grapefruit	46,694	32,536	53,941	35,877
Oranges	55,697	39,561	73,589	51,426
Hot Peppers	9,683	8,670	4,471	4,833
Sweet Peppers	-	-	16,125	31,830
Pumpkin	108,848	119,589	81,444	89,910

SOURCE: Statistical Unit, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture.

Table 2: *Distribution of Land Holdings by Size in St. Vincent and The Grenadines*

Size of Farm (ac)	No. of Holdings	% of Holdings
0.2	488	7.178
0.2 - 0.49	921	13.546
0.5 - 2.49	3,479	51.169
2.5 - 4.9	974	14.326
Subtotal	<u>5,862</u>	<u>86.219</u>
5 - 9.9	672	9.883
10 - 24.9	180	2.647
25 - 49.9	35	0.515
50 - 99.9	16	0.235
Subtotal 5 - 99.9	<u>903</u>	<u>13.281</u>
100 - 249.9	21	0.309
250 - 499.9	4	0.059
Subtotal 100 - 499.9	<u>25</u>	<u>0.368</u>
500 ac	9	0.132
Total	<u>6,799</u>	<u>100</u>

(Total arable land St. Vincent and The Grenadines = 29,649 acres)

SOURCE: St. Vincent and The Grenadines Agricultural Census 1985

plots of marginal land. Official support for plantation agriculture militated against the development of small farm systems.

Since 1899, land settlement schemes have been introduced in response to pressure from subsistence farmers for more land. Such schemes have attempted to diversify agriculture and develop a strong peasantry. However, they were only partially able to diversify agriculture and their major outcome was an increase in the number of holdings:

The Moyne Commission of 1938 — 39 advocated compulsory acquisition of land for land settlement and called for measures for improving the husbandry of all existing

small holders. This contributed to the further development of the Ministry of Agriculture and of extension systems to support the requirements of subsistence agriculture.

Since then, the Ministry of Agriculture has had a key role in the diversification of agricultural production. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the introduction of new and improved germplasm over the years. During the 1950s and 1960s a range of tree crop varieties were introduced. Most of the improved cultivars of cocoa, avocado, mango and citrus grown on farms today were introduced during this period.

Table 3: *Estimated Population of Major Livestock in St. Vincent and The Grenadines*

LIVESTOCK	POPULATION
Cattle	6,850
Goat	5,000
Sheep	12,000
Poultry	125,000
Pigs	6,600

SOURCE: Raninga, 1988.

The scattered tree crop production systems used today again evolved because of the needs of the subsistence sector. A small farmer relied on land to meet his food needs. He therefore could not afford to devote all his lands to production of one enterprise (tree crop). The compromise was to plant some tree crops while leaving room for planting other crops.

Banana production was introduced and intensified in an attempt to diversify agricultural production. The development of proper marketing arrangements for banana provided small farmers with an ideal crop. Banana production provided a secure and regular source of income to the farm family.

The 1960's saw continued decline in the profitability of major export commodities. The sugar industry was closed in 1962 and arrowroot production also declined. Marketing problems for major export crops ultimately contributed to the decline of the estate system. This in turn led to the fragmentation of large estates and an increase in the number of small to medium sized farm units. This fragmentation impacted and continues to impact on the development of marketing and other services, technology of production, demands for supportive infra-structure, soil erosion and overall rural development.

In 1975, the St. Vincent National Agricultural Programme (SNAP) was developed as an attempt to officially chart directions for the agricultural sector. SNAP recognised

the need to diversify agricultural production away from dependence on banana. It proposed targets for crop and livestock production and was a distinct attempt at comprehensive agricultural sector planning. SNAP made policy recommendations relating to physical planning, soil conservation, irrigation, fertiliser use, land use, land reform, cooperative development, crop and livestock production. Land zoning, fisheries, forestry development, and the role of the Agricultural Department and related statutory bodies. (SNAP 1975).

The SNAP programme was only partially implemented and most of the constraints which faced the Agricultural Sector still remain. Sugar production was reintroduced. Considerable emphasis was given to Livestock development. The Diamond Dairy was established to provide national milk protein requirements. A beef project funded by the European Development Fund (EDF) was proposed though never fully implemented. The main emphasis in livestock improvement was on improving the genetic potential of the animals. Attention was eventually paid to improving management or husbandry systems by the establishment of animal health and production clinics.

The development of CARIFTA and CARICOM also affected agricultural diversification. These regional initiatives attempted to rationalise agricultural production within the region. They resulted in the development of crops intended for the regional markets.

Non-traditional crops such as sweet potato, peanuts and carrots increased in significance. These initiatives served to reorient agricultural production. Traditional exports to the UK continued but more food crops were exported regionally.

The boom in the Trinidad economy after 1974 led to the emergence of root crops as the second major agricultural commodity exported from St. Vincent. The expansion of the trafficker trade also led to increased demand for other crops, e.g., plantains and vegetables. Collection systems for farm produce improved with an increase in the number of pick-up vehicles servicing the farming sector. The development of the trafficker trade has therefore made a most important contribution to the commercialisation of production systems that were mainly subsistence oriented.

The attainment of independence has also impacted on diversification of agricultural production in St. Vincent. It has resulted in a larger number of international agencies and firms becoming involved in agricultural planning and production. Bilateral and multilateral agreements have led to a number of projects aimed at diversification and overall improvement of the agricultural sector.

Projects were aimed at tree crop diversification and mango top working (BDD), the production of winter vegetables (USAID), onion and garlic production and livestock improvement (EDF) and institutional development (CAEP-USAID). Two technical missions were established - the French Agricultural Mission (FAM) and the Chinese Agricultural Technical Mission (CATM).

Unfortunately, there has been little coordination of the efforts of these agencies and projects. Lack of coordination, coupled with the institutional weakness of the Ministry of Agriculture to monitor and implement such projects has produced less than ideal results. There has been little integration into overall development strategies, little attention to market development, heavy reliance on foreign technical assistance for project design and implementation, peripheral involvement of local technicians in projects, with consequent lack of interest and continuity after completion of projects. Since the project approach is likely to be continued in the short to medium term, these weaknesses are serious barriers to the successful implementation of diversification programmes.

GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURAL SECTOR POLICY

The 1986 - 89 Development Plan for St. Vincent and The Grenadines has the following broad objectives for the Agricultural Sector:

- (i) develop a viable small farm sub-sector through a programme of land reform involving state lands and including the provision of supportive services.
- (ii) broaden the export base, and increase export substitution through the introduction of new crops.
- (iii) increase total output and productivity through improved cultural practices.
- (iv) develop a viable fishing industry.
- (v) promote growth of the livestock sub-sector with particular emphasis on small stock production.
- (vi) reorganise the Ministry of Agriculture to enable it to effectively plan and execute policies, programmes, and projects and improve the marketing framework in order to increase export earnings.

These policy objectives broadly aim at diversification of agricultural production. A critical implementation issue which has not been fully addressed, is the full elaboration of these policy objectives into discrete and definite activities and strategies. There is need for broad national agricultural sector planning with special attention paid to precise implementation schedules and the full integration of objectives for each sub-sector. This was a weakness with SNAP (1975) and is not yet adequately addressed for the 1986 - 89 National Development Plan.

An important policy objective to be addressed in the development plan is the creation of a viable small farm sub-sector through a programme of land reform. This programme has on several occasions been identified as a central element of the strategy for agricultural development of the Government. The concept underlying the land reform programme is therefore examined to identify some critical issues with respect

to Agricultural Diversification.

AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION THROUGH LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The current land reform programme (FAO/World Bank) is conceptually, more rural development-oriented than previous land settlement or distribution programme. The programme developed for the former Orange Hill Estate, now Rabacca Farms Limited (RFL) illustrates Government's current approach to land reform.

The project aims at settling 655 settlers on 2,500 acres of land on farm units ranging from 2.5 to 6.25 acres. Farms are expected to produce an average income of EC\$8,050 per annum. For the project, the value of annual production is targeted at \$8.4 million. Subdivision of land will be based on land capability studies and the potential for generating the target income. Land will be leased for 20 years with an option to purchase after ten years. Lease contracts are intended to cover repayment of rents, charges for services and farmer obligations with respect to cropping systems, crop husbandry and soil conservation measures.

Other elements of the land reform programme include cadastral surveys, installation of infra-structure, establishment of support services, housing schemes for settlers, skills training activities and a forestry programme. The reducing estate will be managed on commercial lines using technical assistance until sub-division is complete. Rabacca Farms Limited, a publicly owned company was set up to manage the estate and settlement programme over a five year period. It is anticipated that in the long run, the provision of services would be managed by farmers' organisations.

The diversified agricultural production objective is to be met by production of an optimal mix of crops and livestock based on land capability, and by the development of agro-processing activities on the estate.

A variety of aid donors and technical agencies are to provide support to the Project. These include BDD, EDF, OAS, CIDA, and CDB.

This broad approach to land reform is to be extended to seven (7) other estates at Grand Sable, Langley Park, Colonaire, Sans Souci, Cane Grove, Wallilabou and Richmond comprising a total of 4,800 acres.

A significant weakness of the RFL project is the lack of attention given to the

design of suitable extension systems. This is a major deficiency, since the success of the project will rely heavily on the settlers learning new production techniques and achieving targetted levels of production. Related to this has been the lack of involvement of Ministry of Agriculture personnel in overall project design and implementation.

Other issues to be resolved include the optimal crop and livestock mixes, availability and use of credit, integration of marketing services and the level of emphasis on livestock enterprises in a community where protein-energy malnutrition is a serious problem.

The approach to land settlement may have assumed that the highest level of efficiency in agricultural production is achievable on small farms, or equity considerations (greatest number of settlers possible) may have been paramount in deciding on the farm size and distribution process. The question which still needs to be answered for this estate and all the other estates is what is the optimal mix of farm sizes to achieve the broad rural development goals of the Government? This is important, since the selection of farm size can mean the difference between true rural development through the land reform programme and the perpetuation of poverty.

Another critical concern is the relationships between the project small farmers and the non-project small farmers. For example, how will the access to extension and other services now requested by an increasing small farmer population be met when these land reform programmes are fully instituted? The provision of extension services is currently taxing the resources of the Extension Division of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture. The land reform programme may require a total re-organisation of existing systems of extension and support services in order to achieve the objective of developing a viable small farm sub-sector.

EXTENSION AND AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

The extension services have attempted to support diversification needs by developing broad programmes covering a range of crop and livestock farming systems. The increasing commercialisation of subsistence agriculture is creating a demand for more commodity specific extension type activities. This trend in production systems orientation has implications for the deployment

of extension staff, farmer training programmes, resource use on farms and in extension, use of technology and overall extension system design.

The increasing focus in rural development programmes on socio-economic objectives have implications for the type of person involved in extension work, and the orientation of present day extension agents. Increasingly extension agents are expected to master a range of disciplines outside the agronomic, or livestock husbandry fields. They are expected to develop social analytical skills, to be able to diagnose community problems and work with communities in implementing solutions. Most extension personnel will therefore have to re-orient their approaches to extension work in communities, especially if they are to properly service agricultural development programmes with a broader rural development thrust.

There is therefore need to examine the broad approaches to extension programme development introduced by CAEP to see how they can be made to meet the needs of Government's land reform and agricultural sector development programme. In the short run, new farmers will have to be integrated into existing extension programmes in such areas as tree crop, root crop, livestock and vegetable production.

The Extension Division of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture has developed a two-year extension programme designed to re-orient extension programme planning and delivery to the new emphasis on agricultural diversification. The strategy is to emphasise some major commodities such as tree crops, root crops, vegetables, livestock and banana. Special programmes will be implemented to expand crops such as peanuts, arrowroot, ornamentals, sorrel and home garden production systems.

Attention will be paid to the development of farmers' organisations and providing support to agricultural education programmes in schools. Significant re-training of extension personnel will be required to support diversification and land reform programmes.

The strategy is also to target production in areas most suited for particular crop or livestock enterprises. The objective is to base production mainly on demand and agro-ecological suitability. For tree crops, emphasis will be placed on rehabilitation of existing fields, and improvement of supportive infrastructure such as propagation stations. Crops which could be grown in certain areas will be

identified and a comprehensive long term tree crop development programme will be developed.

Specific efforts will be made to base extension programmes on technological packages developed by research. The use of technology developed by CARDI for aroid production is one such example of extension programmes being linked to concrete research. The aim is to make best use of supportive units for overall improvement of extension delivery systems.

The integration of Home Economics training into extension programmes is to be given higher priority in extension programme delivery. The full development of the Information Unit of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture to provide vital communication support is a critical need in the overall extension strategy.

The Extension Division continues to be inadequately staffed to meet the needs of a revitalised agricultural sector. The quality of the extension labour force and its capacity for implementing the programmes developed will be decisive in the eventual achievement of agricultural diversification programmes. Particular attention needs to be paid to the motivation of extension personnel and increasing the level of professionalism among extension staff as a whole.

NATIONAL DIVERSIFICATION AND REGIONAL DIVERSIFICATION APPROACHES

Recent political initiatives to address the issue of agricultural diversification have stemmed largely from problems facing major exports, banana or sugar and the increased need to support and stimulate overall rural development. There has been renewed emphasis by regional and international agencies on diversification in response to requests from the political directorate. The Meeting of Prime Ministers of the OECS in Saint Lucia, March 1988 was an attempt to develop a common approach to diversification. An OECS programme for diversification has been designed by CDB/IICA.

The major implementation issue here would be how to synchronise national and sub-regional diversification initiatives for the overall development of agriculture in the OECS. The answer to this question might determine the success or failure of agricultural diversification programmes at both levels.

SUMMARY

This paper has attempted to trace the development of diversified agricultural production systems in St. Vincent and The Grenadines. It has identified factors which have influenced the development of a small farm sector or contributed to agricultural diversification. It has attempted to relate Government's land reform programme to the achievement of national development goals and has identified some issues which need to be addressed for the successful implementation of agricultural diversification and land reform programmes. It paid attention to some needs for extension services and pointed to the need for national diversification initiatives to be synchronised with regional initiatives. This paper has at best been exploratory, but at all times it has attempted to identify issues which have implications for the implementation of a sustainable agricultural diversification programme.

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