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4. Rationalisation of Agriculture in the Commonwealth Caribbean : problems and research required

Chairman : A. McIntyre

Secretary : C. G. Davis

Summary of Discussion

1. The need for rationalisation arises largely from the inadequate performance of the traditional agricultural sector both in regard to providing adequate levels of employment and incomes.
2. There are major aspects of rationalisation :
 - (a) exploiting the scope for regional import substitution;
 - (b) harmonising export production for extra-regional markets.
3. A major problem in considering the possibilities for rationalisation was the absence of adequate quantitative data on the performance of domestic and export agriculture. In particular, there was an urgent need to study the success and failures of national programmes of import substitution.
4. It was accordingly agreed that in attempts to explore the scope for regional import substitution there was need for investigations along the following lines :
 - (a) the construction of estimates and projections of the regional consumption of agricultural products;
 - (b) arising out of (a), the selection of specific commodities of major importance in regional consumption, for detailed study;
- (c) commodity studies should be concerned with patterns of production and the scope for import displacement;
- (d) in regard to production patterns, investigation should centre on the input structure, the composition of output according to farm sizes, the response of farmers to price changes, the impact of government programmes and institutions on production, and the patterns of marketing. This will hopefully provide basic data for the determination of optimum farm sizes, and the policy instruments and agencies that will most effectively promote rural transformation.
5. It was further considered that it was essential to provide for the continuous collection of data that were needed for formulating policy. It was accordingly suggested that a survey should be undertaken of existing methods of collecting data, and of the extent to which such data were being used for policy formulation.
6. The need was also seen for study of intra-regional marketing arrangements, in order to identify the specific obstacles that lie in the way of freeing the channels of trade.
7. Finally, in regard to the harmonisation of production for extra-regional markets, it was agreed that detailed studies should be done of the current state and prospects of the traditional export crops both on a regional and a territorial basis.

APPENDIX