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Discussion Report

The point was raised that in view of the shortcomings of land-area as the determining factor in farm-size, whether modification would be necessary in formulating questionnaires in Agricultural Censuses. In reply it was stated that no single other factor could be used satisfactorily to determine farm-size but that the need for changes in censuses was not very great. What was required, however, was further information on farms, after they have been grouped according to size. It was further noted that the heterogeneous nature of farms of the same size would require information such as type of enterprise and resource availability to further divide such farms into sub-sections.

It was noted that even within the Caribbean there were difficulties in the classification of farm size. In Barbados, a unit of (10) acres is regarded as a large farm, whereas elsewhere this acreage is regarded as a small farm. The need for standardization of terminology was recognised.

It was recognised that two approaches to the study of small farms were presented.

- (a) Edwards approach which sought to investigate the different farming systems in order to determine the structure of particular types of small-farming enterprise. i. e. to view hillside farming in all its aspects, or
- (b) Momsen approach which examined a series of individual farms in detail in order to determine relationships among them.

Discussion revealed that the original presentations did not show these differences clearly. However, both approaches were seen to have merits.

Edwards emphasised that his approach was aimed at highlighting the great diversity of small farming and the need to develop a separate approach for each type. He further stated that there may be need for variation in policy for different types of small farms. It was stated that a solution to the problems of tiny part-time farms is likely to be different from a solution required for ten acre

whole-time farms even though they produced the same product. There was, therefore, a great need to examine the various types of small farms.

It was observed that Momsen's approach was analytical and was aimed at developing a theoretical basis for the development of small farming. The aim in this approach was to reduce the large number of variables which characterises small farms in order to produce a formula for the solution of problems.

Dr. Johnson emphasised the question of diversity of small farms and highlighted the numerous types possible in farms of the same size. He later referred to the work now in progress in Jamaica to develop farm plans based on different criteria. The stated aim was to provide the correct mix or enterprise based on existing known variables. Analysis of data from these experimental farms would provide information for project formulation. Such information could assist in obtaining loans from international organisations and provide a sound basis for diversification.

In reply to a question the view was expressed that the reason why Land Settlements of the old type produced low profitability for the individual who had set himself up in farming was due to inadequate facilities. Capital, markets and a shortage of extension workers were regarded as the main problems.

Doubt was expressed that with present marketing arrangements the gross profit margin on vegetables in Barbados could exceed the profit margin of sugar. There was need for strengthening internal marketing, however, it was argued that in spite of marketing difficulties greater income would be obtained from vegetables.

Clarification was sought on the question of individual control of the small farm. Edwards expressed the view, that it was not easy to identify a small-farm manager as the single person in control of the farm. This is especially so when the farm is fragmented and other members of the family may be in control of portions of the farm. The farm could therefore not be regarded as a single unit with a single identifiable controlling influence. It was further observed that small farms may be looked at as a co-operative unit.