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WORKSHOP REPORTS

I. Developing the Region's Cereal (Rice and Maize Industry)

The Group was benefitted by the brief presentation of Mr. Johnson on the cereal industry of Jamaica - scope and programmes for expansion; Mr. Sutherland on the rice industry of Guyana - scope and programmes for expansion; Mr. Nurse on the cereal industry of Trinidad and Tobago - scope and programmes for expansion; Mr. Chesney on the major constraints on the commercial production of corn in Guyana and Dr. Sukdeo on machine utilization in the rice industry in Guyana. Paper on the presentation by Dr. Sukdeo was not available.

It was pointed out that there is a huge demand for corn in the Region as evidenced by the 1972 imports of more than 400m. pounds. The successful expansion of corn production in Guyana is of importance to the entire Region, as Guyana along with Belize are the only member states with adequate land mass for the production of corn to meet regional needs. Production of corn in Guyana has increased progressively from 1m. pounds in 1961 to 6m. pounds in 1974, largely by peasant farmers under the shifting system of cultivation. Production of corn on large scale to meet the regional needs would require attention to the following main constraints:

- (i) technical, e.g., land clearing type and availability of machines and equipment, varieties and other inputs;
- (ii) managerial, e.g., professional and administrative personnel;
- (iii) social: farmers' involvement with regards to changes in production patterns.

In the case of rice in Guyana, the point was made and well supported that plans are afoot for increasing the rice production from this year's level of 165,000 tons to 280,000 tons in 1976. While a number of constraints, for example,

- (i) drainage and irrigation;
- (ii) transportation;
- (iii) storage; and
- (iv) processing.

were mentioned, evidence was led to show that positive steps have already been taken to overcome these constraints.

In the face of declining paddy yields, which has gone down from 16.10 bags per acre in 1945/46 to 10.79 bags per acre in 1969/70 concern was expressed over the attainment of over 40 per cent increase in production by 1976.

In the presentation of machine utilization, attention was drawn to the number of years machines have been in use, changing ownership, state of repairs and maintenance, scarcity and high cost of parts and the degree of utilization.

Broadly speaking, in Jamaica and Trinidad, there is a considerable gap between present production and demand of cereals, mainly rice and corn. It is anticipated that this gap will become wider as years go by having regard to population increases, higher standard of living, etc. The major factors responsible for this state of affairs were given as

- (i) traditional;
- (ii) land suitability and availability; and
- (iii) technological.

In the case of rice, reference was made to the situation which arose a few years ago whereby both Jamaica and Trinidad did not receive their normal supply of rice from Guyana. This resulted in serious thought being given by these countries to increasing their own production of rice. However, having regard to (i) the limited availability of land suitable for rice and corn in these countries and (ii) plans for expansion of both rice and corn in Guyana, it was felt that Jamaica and Trinidad should depend on Guyana for their full supplies of these two commodities and devote their attention to crops in which they have comparative advantages.

General points brought out in discussion were:

- (i) rationalization of agriculture;
- (ii) storage;
- (iii) grain vs molasses/urea in stock feed;
- (iv) low grade rice in use of stock feed;
- (v) impact of highly mechanized operation on employment; and
- (vi) cost benefit analysis of mechanization.

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