SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Sugarcane farming in KwaZulu:
Two communities investigated
by
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ABSTRACT

The social and economic impact of sugarcane farming in KwaZulu amongst two rural communities is described. Attention is focused on the cash benefits which accrue to those smallholders cultivating the crop. With an unequal distribution of arable holdings in both communities, it was found that only a small percentage of smallholders could expect monthly earnings equivalent to the Household Subsistence Level. The majority of smallholders will continue to rely upon migrant remittances to meet their subsistence requirements and for most the cultivation of the crop will prove to be economically non viable. The result is continued dependence on the sugarcane mill for financial assistance and the de facto loss of control of the smallholder over the utilisation of his land. Alternative food crop production on a community orientated basis is suggested as an appropriate rural development strategy in KwaZulu.
INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the impact of commercial sugarcane production in two areas of KwaZulu, one of the South African black homelands. The cultivation of sugarcane by smallholders in KwaZulu rapidly increased after agreement was reached between the South African Association (SASA) and the KwaZulu Government in 1973. The study focuses upon two communities, Newspaper and Nqunquma, in the Noodsberg district about 100 kilometres north of Pietermaritzburg. These communities differ in size and population but are sufficiently similar in other respects for comparative purposes. Sugarcane production by smallholders in Nqunquma began in the mid 1960's and in Newspaper in the late 1970's. Rapid expansion of sugarcane production was occurring at Newspaper during this 1980-81 field study whereas production was well established at Nqunquma. Comparison between these areas enables assessment of economic and social changes arising from sugarcane production and its suitability as a commercial cash crop in the South African homeland context.

THE STUDY AREA

KwaZulu, with area of 3,2 million hectares, is the third largest homeland in South Africa. It is highly fragmented with 205 separate land blocks most of which are surrounded by the white owned lands of Natal. The topography is generally hilly and rugged with only one fifth suited for arably production, the remainder being pasturage or nonproductive land (Bates 1980: KwaZulu Department of Agriculture and Forestry 1980; Nattrass 1981: 194). KwaZulu is inextricably linked to and has been fashioned by the South African economy; the poverty of KwaZulu is often perceived to be a direct function of its peripheral, dependent status within South Africa. (Wolpe 1980: 1979; Rogers 1980). The principal features of the KwaZulu economy are its dependence on the migrant labour system, lack of local employment opportunity and the stagnation of its agricultural sector. (Nattrass 1976; Knight and Lenta 1980: 33).
The agricultural sector is overwhelmingly subsistence production orientated, but since it has failed for many decades to satisfy the production and reproduction requirements of its inhabitants, the term sub-subsistence is more accurate (Bundy 1979; Palmer and Parsons 1977). The shortfall is met to varying degrees by migrant cash and non-cash remittances. The commercial sector is minute, mainly comprising 51,000 hectares under sugarcane which is delivered to white owned mills in Natal for processing. The land is communally held with no individual tenure permitted although there is reasonable security of tenure for those with arable holdings. There appears to be considerable, but unquantified, landlessness (Maré 1980: 29).

Politically, KwaZulu enjoys limited self government, with powers to control the day to day running of the economy (agriculture, education, health, public works etc.) although it is controlled in turn by the South African Government which directly finances 80 percent of the budget (Thorrington - Smith et al 1978, 115; Horrell 1973, 69). South Africa requires that 'tribal law' be maintained and has bolstered the powers of chiefs who are accountable to district magistrates. Legal political expression is restricted to Inkatha, a cultural Zulu dominated organisation headed by Chief Butnelezi which operates within the KwaZulu tribal structures.

The geographical interdependence of KwaZulu and Natal is evident in the field study areas. Newspaper borders on Natal whilst Nqunquma is completely surrounded by white farms most of which produce sugarcane. The two communities, 30 kilometres apart, are located within the Natal mistbelt at an altitude of 900-1300 metres. The mean annual temperature range is 16-18°C. Annual precipitation is usually greater than 1200 mm although Nqunquma receives slightly less. The natural vegetation is evergreen sub-tropical forests, thickets and woodlands (Phillips 1973). The grazing areas are well suited to dry land sugarcane cultivation. Newspaper covers 7,000 hectares of which about half is suited to sugarcane cultivation; in 1981 5 percent of all homesteads were cultivating sugarcane. The population
of 24,000 (including migrant workers) gave a population density of 362 per square kilometre. Nqunquma covers 300 hectares with a population of 600; all but one of the 66 homesteads were cultivating sugarcane at the time of this study. The mean homestead size was 9.22 persons at Newspaper and 9.51 at Nqunquma. The age distribution gave a high dependency rate of 55 per cent for both communities reflecting the predominance of children and the aged (Table 1).³

| TABLE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION AT NEWSPAPER AND NQUNQUMA KWAZULU (%) (Excluding Migrants) |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Area                     | 0 - 14 | 15 - 24 | 25 - 34 | 35 - 44 | 45 - 54 | 55+ TOTAL |
| Newspaper                | 51.9   | 22.0   | 5.8    | 7.6    | 4.6    | 7.2    | 100     |
| Nqunquma                 | 52     | 22.6   | 10     | 5.4    | 2.6    | 7.4    | 100     |


FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The data were obtained with the assistance of four local enumerators between November 1980 and June 1981. The Newspaper field study was narrowed down to an area of 1805 hectares containing 650 homesteads from which a 15 percent random sample was drawn using air photographs taken in 1978. All 66 homesteads at Nqunquma were interviewed.

The bulk of the quantitative data derives from two questionnaires focusing on arable production and socio-economic aspects of both communities (see Cobbett 1982). The qualitative and miscellaneous data were obtained from 50 taped interviews taken in the vernacular in Newspaper and Nqunquma.
RESULTS

ARABLE HOLDINGS

The distribution of arable holdings per homestead for Newspaper and Nqunquma is given in Table 2.4.

The mean holding for the two communities was 2.5 hectares and 5.0 hectares respectively. At Newspaper 25 percent of homesteads had less than one hectare and 75 percent had less than four hectares of arable land. The chief cultivated 36 hectares. The distribution of arable holdings at Nqunquma showed two groupings; one third of the community cultivated one to two hectares and just under half cultivated four to five hectares.

TABLE 2 : DISTRIBUTION OF ARABLE LAND BY HOMESTEADS AT NEWSPAPER AND NQUNQUMA, KWAZULU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivated area (Hectares)</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Nqunquma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 1.9</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 2.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 3.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 4.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 5.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 6.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 7.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : As for Table 1.
6.

CROPPING PATTERNS

The cultivation of sugarcane led to a reduction in the area which could be used for food crop production. The Nqunquma community were established sugarcane growers and thus this impact was more noticeable with only five percent of the total arable area reserved for food crops. At Newspaper the corresponding percentage was 50 percent.

The sale of food crops for commercial purposes was limited. At Nqunquma only one homestead specialised in commercial food crop production, where eight hectares produced grain and vegetables which were sold both locally and at the Durban vegetable market 80 kilometres away. Three levels of food crop sales were observed at Newspaper. At the lowest level, some produce was exchanged or sold to neighbours and friends by the tin (five litres) or dish. At the intermediate level a limited surplus was produced to obtain a cash return. Some women left their homesteads to sell produce at one of two local selling points where they competed to attract buyers. The number of sellers varied but never exceeded ten and frequently there were none.

At the third level of food crop production were three male farmers who were market orientated selling beans, potatoes and maize to local traders and the white owned vegetable markets. In all these three cases, however, their main income was obtained from alternative employment, notably teaching. Their agricultural sales realised earnings from R600 to R2,000 per annum whilst as teachers they earned R6,000-R8,000 per annum.

The principal food crops cultivated at Newspaper and Nqunquma were maize (64 percent of the arable areas), beans (15 percent) and madumbes (13 percent) a sweet potato like plant. The proportions did not vary between Newspaper and Nqunquma nor did they differ significantly from the overall KwaZulu cropping pattern (KwaZulu Department of Agriculture and Forestry 1980).
CATTLE OWNERSHIP

Cattle ownership per homestead at Newspaper was twice that of Nqunquma with an average of two head per homestead. A notable feature was the high proportion of homesteads without any cattle (Table 3) and the low level of commercial cattle activity. In most cases cattle were kept for their utility value only. Stated reasons for keeping cattle at Newspaper were: to provide milk (45 percent), for ploughing (16 percent), for manure (10 percent) and for eating (10 percent). Significantly only five percent stated that they were used to pay lobolo (bridewealth). Few other livestock, with the exception of chickens, were kept.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF CATTLE OWNERSHIP PER HOMESTEAD AT NEWSPAPER AND NQUNQUMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Newspaper %</th>
<th>Nqunquma %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Newspaper%</th>
<th>Nqunquma%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No slaughter (79-80)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sold</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No bought</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No died (disease)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: As for Table 1
The Development of Sugarcane Production at Newspaper

The expansion of sugarcane at Nqunquma will not be discussed as the crop has been established there for sometime and data was unavailable.

The decision to cultivate sugarcane at Newspaper resulted from the desire of the community to increase their standard of living. Glendale Sugar Millers commenced its programme of expansion by establishing Farmers Associations which were used to describe the wealth generating possibilities of sugarcane. The community was initially suspicious fearing that their land might be taken over by white farmers (many also feared the loss of grazing land for their cattle). At first a few homesteads switched to sugarcane and by 1981 this had increased to 50 percent. The KwaZulu Government constructed a haulage road leading to the mill and sugarcane depots were built. Four black sugarcane contractors were established and were responsible for land preparation, harvesting and the transportation of the crop.

Under the terms of the contract signed between the grower and Glendale Sugar Millers the farmer was committed in the following ways to Glendale:

i) He obtained a load amounting to approximately R1,000 per hectare developed to cover operational costs before the first crop was cut. The loan comprised five parts: Land preparation (27 percent of total cost), seed care (26 percent), fertilizer (30 percent) weeding (10 percent) and planting (7 percent). The loan was repayable at three percent interest for the first four years and at five percent thereafter.

ii) The grower was bound to produce at least 70 percent of his allocated quota under normal conditions. Failure to do so could result in the quota being forfeited.

iii) The mill was responsible for the 'orderly production' of sugarcane. As such it managed the loan on behalf of the grower determining and when the money should be spent. The only latitude given to the
grower was at weeding time. This could either be undertaken by the homestead (at no direct financial cost to itself) or labourers could be hired and paid for by Glendale Sugar Millers.

iv) The registered quota holder had to be male.

v) The minimum holding had to be half hectare.

Yields and Returns from Sugarcane Cultivation

Glendale sugar Millers predicted yields of 60 tonnes per hectare. The first crop would be harvested after two years, thereafter the ratoon crop would be cut every 18 months. The actual average yield during 1980 - 81 was 65 tonnes per hectare at Newspaper and 27.4 tonnes per hectare at Nqunquma. This large discrepancy may be attributed to three factors. Firstly, the rainfall received in Nqunquma was lower than Newspaper and this depressed yields. Secondly, the extension service provided by Noodberg Sugar Mill was poor. Thirdly, the growers were responsible for the provision of all cash inputs as they had repaid their loans. In many cases however, they had not retained a sufficient portion of their previous earnings to meet recurrent costs (fertilizer application, weeding, harvesting and a new seed cane). Returns from sugarcane production were received only every two years compared to 18 monthly at Newspaper owing to lower rainfall. By grouping the homesteads in each area according to their arable holdings, the earnings from sugarcane for each group in 1981 have been determined. The figures are based on a net average receipt of R10 and R11.23 per tonne at Nqunquma and Newspaper respectively. This amounted to about 47 percent of their gross earnings in both areas. (Table 4).
Supplementary Income from Migrant Labour

The shortfall between agricultural production and subsistence requirements was met by migrant remittances. The mean number of migrant workers supplied by each homestead was 1.66 and 1.2 at Newspaper and Nqunquma. The evidence from Nqunquma suggests that even where sugarcane cultivation has become well established, the migrant labour system remains entrenched. The remittances were an important source of revenue in both areas and the amount received was highly correlated (p < 0.01 for both areas) with migrant earnings. Generally speaking about one fifth of net earnings was remitted; the mean monthly remittance was R25 at Newspaper and R30 at Nqunquma. (Table 5).
The amount remitted was not related to homestead size nor to the number of dependents, suggesting that either migrant workers remit as much as they can or that among large homesteads, the remittances were made by several migrants. About ten percent of migrants did not remit any cash. Non-profit remittances (food parcels, goods etc) were sent by about a third of migrants usually on an irregular basis, but their cash value could not be determined.

**DISCUSSION**

The cost of living for a family of six at the Household Subsistence Level (HSL) for September 1981 varied between R196,18 and R250,44 in various parts of South Africa. The lower figure has been taken as the best approximation of monthly costs at Newspaper and Nqunquma. As the homestead size in both areas was approximately eight persons, excluding migrant workers, the HSL estimate should be revised upwards to R261,57. It can be seen from table five that sugarcane earnings were insufficient to meet the HSL requirements for a majority of cultivators in both areas. None of the Nqunquma smallholders earned anywhere near the equivalent of the HSL whilst only those at Newspaper with more than four hectares...
earning R252 per month approached the HSL. The Newspaper chief with a monthly income of R2,000 was the only person in a position to accumulate capital from producing sugarcane, yet there was evidence suggesting that he spent his earnings straight away. Yields were admittedly depressed at Nqunquma owing to low rainfall during the study period, but even if yields there were doubled the largest group, with four to five hectares, would only have earned R206 per month. The low earnings from sugarcane have resulted in most homesteads at Nqunquma being unable to purchase fertilizers, new seed cane if required, or to pay for labourers to weed their fields. Consequently over a period of time their management of sugarcane has fallen below accepted standards. It is probable that the same situation will emerge at Newspaper once their loans have been repaid and the management of sugarcane is handed over to the homestead. This poverty trap has been identified by Glendale and Bates (1980). Glendale’s extension manager noted that for homesteads cultivating less than four hectares, migrant remittances would still be required to augment the homesteads subsistence requirements. (This applies to 87 percent of all homesteads at Newspaper).

'Small-holders will be obliged to apply for a further loan to reestablish their crop as the existing cost structure was unlikely to permit the necessary savings to meet recurrent costs.’ (Bates 1980; 267).

The obvious conclusion made is that the structural dependence upon migrant employment and wage remittances will continue although for a minority of homesteads earnings from sugarcane will reduce their absolute dependence on such remittances. Clearly, therefore the cultivation of sugarcane can only lead to at best limited development at Newspaper and Nqunquma.
13.

1) Increased Local Employment

The cultivation of sugarcane did result in limited local employment opportunities although only 9.7 percent and 12.3 percent of all adults were employed locally at Newspaper and Nqunquma respectively. Approximately 60 women at Newspaper and 30 at Nqunquma obtained seasonal employment as casual labourers. The Newspaper figure can be expected to double as more homesteads produce sugarcane.

The labourers were employed to assist in land preparation, planting seedcane, weeding and cutting. They were without exception female and aged between 15 and 30. This was due to two factors. Firstly, males shunned this employment owing to the hard work involved and the low wages paid of R1.40 - R1.50 per nine hour day. Secondly, male sugarcane contractors preferred female labour; the latter accepted lower wages and could be easily disciplined or fired. The high levels of unemployment in both areas meant that there was always a ready reserve pool of labour that could be tapped.

The need for sugarcane contractors created employment opportunities for several well-to-do adult males. At Newspaper four rural businessmen, all store owners, were invited by Glendale Sugar Millers to apply for loans from the KwaZulu Development Corporation (KDC) for the purchase of tractors and other machinery used in contracting sugarcane which were repayable at an annual interest rate of 9 percent. The contractors were encouraged by the sugar mill to form a cartel in order to establish a fixed pricing structure and to prevent other aspiring contractors from poaching their business. They undertook the land preparation, planting, fertilizing, harvesting and transporting operations on the smallholder's behalf. The sugarmill drew money from the loads given to the smallholder to pay the contractors. Their annual net earnings as contractors were difficult to ascertain but probably varied between R8,000 and R18,000 for five months work. As they retained their stores and rural businesses, their total earnings were considerable. Nqunquma contractors however, were less fortunate. When sugarcane was initially cultivated, there was a proliferation of contractors and eleven homesteads purchased second-
hand tractors and lorries with the view to accumulate capital. The
failure of Noodsberg mill to regulate the number of contractors contributed
to this proliferation. By 1981 eight of the eleven contractors were
out of business. Four reasons for their failure are offered. Firstly,
Nqunquma is too small to accommodate eleven contractors. Secondly,
poor sugarcane yields were obtained owing to a combination of low rainfall
sub-standard weed control and fertilizer application resulted in lower
than expected earnings which in turn affected the ability of the farmer
to repay the contractors. Thirdly, most Nqunquma smallholders commenced
sugarcane cultivation without being able to secure financial loans as
they were only introduced in the mid 1970s. Fourthly, many contractors
obtained their machinery on hire purchase and later defaulted on repay-
ments. The surviving contractors were reasonably well off but not being
as rich as their Newspaper counterparts they augmented their income by
engaging in part-time activities such as, transporting building materials
and wattle barks, both in Nqunquma and in other parts of KwaZulu.

Other local employment opportunities arose for artisans (fencers, brickmakers,
buiders, etc) as the proceeds from sugarcane were spent in part on home
improvements. Twenty-five labourers were employed by the KwaZulu Govern-
ment for a contracted period for the construction of the haulage road
at Newspaper. A few clerical posts were created. The overall impact
of these local employment opportunities was, however, small and did not
markedly reduce the high unemployment levels observed in both areas.

2. Agricultural Mechanization

A notable agricultural change arising from the commercialization of
agriculture was the introduction of tractors at Newspaper and Nqunquma.
Four were bought by Newspaper contractors and eleven by their Nqunquma
counterparts, of which only four remained in use in 1981. They were
used primarily for the ploughing, discing and harrowing of sugarcane
land as well as for sugarcane haulage. As a consequence of the introduction
of tractors, a number of would be sugarcane cultivators at Newspaper
were paying contractors to have their land ploughed. The cost was R36
per hectare but those with some cattle spent on average R22 to have a portion of their lands ploughed by tractor. Only a handful of the 55 percent of homesteads without cattle could afford to hire a tractor. The effect of this mechanization was two-fold. Firstly, it enabled those homesteads without cattle or labour or both to have their lands ploughed provided they could raise the cash. Secondly, considerable labour was saved freeing men and women to attend to other activities.

3. Changes in Land Tenure

Commercial agricultural production on an individual homestead basis will accelerate the transition from communal to individual land tenure. At Newspaper 86 percent of respondents declared that they favoured some form of individual land tenure. The corresponding response at Nqunquma was 87 percent in favour. These results are not surprising considering the substantial capital investment (R1,000 per hectare) that sugarcane cultivation entails. The creation of a land market arising out of individual land tenure would facilitate the acquisition of holdings by wealthier smallholders who could then farm viable units. This trend had become pronounced at Nqunquma where several large cultivators were renting land for cash and delivering sugarcane to the mills using the owners sugarcane quota.

4. Increased Agricultural Social and Economic Interdependence

The separation of black (subsistence) and white (commercial) agriculture in South Africa has arisen from the Government's policy of separate development. With changing political considerations emerging there has been increased penetration of commercial production into the homelands. The objective has been to create suitable economic conditions within the homelands which would facilitate granting political independence by demonstrating that the homelands are economically viable. The spread of commercial sugarcane in KwaZulu is an extension of the Governments
homeland policies which coincides with the South African Sugar Association's objective to maximise output from its sugarcane mills.

As a consequence of these policies there has been increased economic interdependence between KwaZulu and Natal; the rural communities of Newspaper and Nqunquma are now in regular contact with Glendale and Noodsberg mills, and new technology and improved agricultural practices have been introduced. Sugarcane cultivators have their produce delivered to the mills and in turn receive payments from the mill. The two communities have, in short, become more dependent on commercial interests in Natal.

Limitations of Sugarcane Cultivation in KwaZulu

The limited development arising from the cultivation of sugarcane in both study areas raises the question whether other crops and an alternative development strategy would be better suited to increasing rural wealth. The fieldwork data brought to attention five objections to sugarcane cultivation. These objections are discussed below.

1) Increased Rural Differentiation

The social structure at Newspaper displayed various strata prior to the introduction of sugarcane and this was probably true at Nqunquma as well. The evidence to support this assertion is based on the unequal distribution of arable holdings and cattle ownership pertaining at Newspaper before sugarcane was introduced.

Commercial agricultural production usually exacerbates social differentiation and income inequalities resulting in increased poverty and landlessness for a section of the community (Lenin 1977; Cliffe 1979; Abdel-Fadil 1975; Bernstein 1979). Findings in both study areas suggest that the cultivation of sugarcane contributed to the rapid development of four social strata, namely:
a) landless and poor homesteads with less than one hectare;
b) homesteads with one to four hectares;
c) homesteads with greater than four hectares;
d) large landholders and proto-capitalists.

a) Landless and poor homesteads with under one hectare. The extent of rural landlessness was extremely difficult to determine. It used to be traditional practice for adult males to acquire their own arable holdings away from their father’s homestead once they married, but a shortage of arable land for expansion has forced many married males to remain within their father’s homestead. In both areas there were more than two married adult males between the ages of 25 and 45 per homestead. The subdivision of holdings was only reported amongst a few homesteads with greater than four hectares of land. In the vast majority of cases (88 percent) the subsistence produce was shared between two families one of which could be regarded as being landless. The degree of landlessness could be estimated, on this basis, to be near 40 percent of all families at Newspaper and slightly higher at Nqunquma. Average monthly earnings from sugarcane amounted to no more than R28 at Newspaper and R11 at Nqunquma, a minute fraction of the HSL requirement. For these impoverished homesteads sugarcane cultivation offered only the illusion of greater wealth. Their dependence on migrant remittances was increased and their ability to produce a portion of their own subsistence requirements decreased. It was from this group that the majority of sugarcane labourers were drawn.

b) Homesteads with one to four hectares. The homesteads within this group (60% at Newspaper and 39% at Nqunquma) remained dependent to varying degrees on migrant remittance. These varied from R34 to R80 per month at Nqunquma and between R84 and R196 per month at Newspaper. (see Table 5).
The cut off point of four hectares was sufficient to provide two thirds of the HSL at Newspaper but only just under a third at Nqunquma. Clearly therefore homesteads at Newspaper were much less reliant on migrant remittances than their Nqunquma counterparts and for those with nearer four hectares, sugarcane cultivation was an attractive proposition even though their earnings probably only equalled the value of subsistence production and were certainly insufficient to permit the accumulation of capital.

c) Homesteads with four or more hectares. The ten percent of homesteads within this group at Newspaper earned sufficient amounts to meet the HSL requirements. Here sugarcane cultivation most probably resulted in an increase in wealth although this cash went, as we have seen, to the male head. Forty-three percent of Nqunquma homesteads fell into this group but their earnings were only slightly in excess of one third of the HSL. Thus whilst the Newspaper group did not need to rely on remittances their counterparts at Nqunquma remained dependent. The cash earnings derived at Newspaper did not result in any change in the employment patterns of homestead heads who continued with their employment; sugarcane earnings were regarded as supplementary income.

d) The development of large landholders and proto-capitalists. This group consisted predominantly of sugarcane contractors, rural traders and businessmen, and the chief at Newspaper. They all sought to accumulate capital and many owned tractors, trucks and other mechanical equipment and hired wage labourers on a regular basis. With the exception of the chief, their aim was to become established rural capitalists by providing a variety of services to the Newspaper and Nqunquma communities. Eight to ten homesteads comprised this group at Newspaper but only three at Nqunquma. For most the introduction of sugarcane was an additional bonus from which they profited and most were already wealthy prior to its cultivation in the area. The monthly earnings of this group were difficult to ascertain but were certainly considerably in excess of the HSL requirements (see earlier discussion on increased local employment).
The Newspaper chief with at least 36 hectares of sugarcane was the largest landholder and received a monthly income in excess of R2,000 apart from his Government salary of R600 per month as chief. (Undisclosed amounts were also obtained from several twilight operations in which he was involved). Despite his large income he was allegedly frequently in debt owing to a tendency to squander his earnings on luxury goods and religious celebrations. The chief and the tribal authorities clashed with the sugarcane contractors and rural businessmen who objected to the tribal law restrictions which the chief tried to impose upon them and the community. The conflict between them is unlikely to be resolved in the short term while tribal law remains in force in KwaZulu.

2. Displacement of Food Crops

The area devoted to food crop cultivation was reduced to a negligible area at Nqunquma and to similar trend was occurring at Newspaper. The tendency will be for homesteads to devote all their land to sugarcane in order to generate as much cash earnings as possible. This is particularly true for homesteads lacking available labour and cash inputs. However, as sugarcane payments are received only after 18 or 24 months, any reduction in food crop production will initially result in a corresponding increased dependence on wage remittances. With payments made to the male who is usually a migrant workers, women and children have become increasingly and, in some cases, totally dependent on the male to provide their food requirements. As there was no evidence to indicate that the males had increased their remittances to make up for the reduction in food crop production, it is likely that the incidence of poor dietary related diseases will increase amongst women and children. This would require further investigation. Many women noted that there was a tendency for men to purchase conspicuous consumption items (cars, hi-fi's, furniture) on hire purchase agreements from these earning's consequently the money was not handed to them.
In general the cultivation of sugarcane has resulted in a deterioration of the relative autonomy of women and their power within the homestead. The increased tendency to purchase basic foodstuffs has coincided with another market induced trend where highly refined foods, in particular white rice, are being bought often at highly inflated prices in preference to traditional maize products. The result of this switch in dietary habits could result in lower calorie intakes and increasing indebtedness to rural traders amongst the poorer section of both communities.

The cultivation of food crops particularly beans, potatoes, and sweet potatoes would provide higher annual net returns to the smallholder than sugarcane provided that they received adequate financing, infrastructural development, access to markets and proper agricultural extension services. Traditional food crop production should be emphasized in any rural development strategy for KwaZulu for the following reasons. Firstly, the community possesses the agricultural skills necessary to cultivate these crops and a switch to commercial production would be relatively simple. Secondly, the commercial cultivation of these crops would require less capital outlay than sugarcane. Thirdly, a portion of the produce could be consumed domestically if required, thereby reducing the likelihood of dietary related diseases. Fourthly, the cultivation of food crops is more conducive to labour intensive techniques and community development. Fifthly, commercial food crop production could reduce the absolute dependence of women and children on migrant remittances and would prevent the deterioration in the autonomy and status of women.

3. Lack of Community Involvement and Control

It is evident that there has been little rural development in KwaZulu and no attempt to satisfy rural needs and wants. The South African Government's approach has tended to be authoritarian and directive. Glendale Sugar Millers in contrast has attempted to win over the Newspaper community by debating the advantages and disadvantages of sugarcane
cultivation with the prospective growers and as such it has been fairly successful. However, the options open to the community were limited; if they decided against the offer, no alternative agricultural investment was going to be forthcoming. They therefore agreed, reluctantly at first, to grow sugarcane and the mill established, Farmers Associations to ensure that the growers would have a platform to discuss their problems with the mill. Unfortunately, the terms by which the growers agreed to cultivate the crop were not decided upon in consultation with the sugarcane millers but were stipulated by the South African Sugar Growers Association with the collaboration of the KwaZulu Government. Most smallholders chose to grow sugarcane because they desperately needed an agricultural income to supplement migrant remittances and this was their only realistic option. However, as the main operations were undertaken by the mills and the contractors, with the former retaining the loans advanced to the smallholder, it is nearer the truth to state that the smallholders rented out their lands to the sugar mills in return for cash payments every one and a half to two years. In due course, when the loans have been repaid, most smallholders will have to reapply for a further loan, owing to the non-viability of the crop. The end result will be continuing dependence on the mills with the smallholder retaining little or no control over their land and the increased reliance of women and children on migrant remittances.


KwaZulu Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Annual Report, 1979-80.


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NOTES

1. Smallholder refers to a homestead with access to arable land. A homestead is a discrete settlement comprising three or four buildings surrounded by arable land.

2. This figure is considerably higher than the 1980 census figures.

3. The dependency ratio = 15 nad 65 / 15-64. The homestead size includes migrant workers.

4. The area was determined with the aid of a measuring wheel.

5. Glendale Sugar Millers are the smallest of Natal's 13 mills and are owned by Lonrho.

6. Calculated by the Institute of Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth using data provided by the Institute of Race Relations.

7. This includes labourers who resided locally and obtained seasonal employment on nearby white farms.

8. One contractor said: "Older women and men do not work as hard and tend to cause trouble. When reemploying females I make certain that all trouble makers and lazy workers are not hired."

9. A parastatal organisation committed to the advancement of black business.

10. The term 'strata' is preferred to classes owing to the limited commercial development prior to the cultivation of sugarcane and the lack of relevant statistical and empirical data.

11. In many cases the women claimed that they had not been informed by the sugarcane mill that payments would be made to males only.

12. The KwaZulu Development Corporation now speaks in terms of satisfying basic needs, yet very little is being done.
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