

## A SAMPLE SURVEY OF PEASANT SUGAR-CANE FARMERS

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### INTRODUCTION

The people of most underdeveloped countries depend primarily on Agricultural resources for their livelihood and this makes it essential that every attempt be made to secure adequate information, so that these resources can be adequately developed. In these countries Departments of Agriculture are only beginning to collect data on agricultural output and its potential. In fact many agricultural schemes have failed in the past, because the planners did not possess sufficient information, correctly to judge the agricultural potential of the areas for which these schemes were designed.

If the planning of an agricultural development scheme is to be efficiently done, some type of agricultural or land utilisation survey should be carried out. The type of survey chosen will depend on the information required by the planners and on the resources that can be made available. A census or a complete survey is often too expensive and too time-consuming for this type of work and in such cases a sample survey is used with advantage.

The characteristics and advantages of sample surveys are often not well understood and their advantages over censuses are sometimes not clearly defined. When a sample survey is properly designed and proper statistical procedure is followed in drawing the sample, the results obtained are usually sufficiently accurate for agricultural purposes. Sample surveys are cheaper to operate and are less time-consuming than complete censuses and the cost and time can be varied according to the size of the sample. Small samples

are usually quite sufficient when the units in the population are not very dissimilar.

Another advantage a sample survey has over a census is that it allows more detailed information to be collected about sample units or groups of units. The data collected in sample surveys are usually less voluminous than in censuses so the information is made available more quickly. Censuses permit only a few single facts to be collected, whereas the planners of an agricultural scheme will need a wide variety of facts and although the planners will need population estimates, they are usually willing to accept some sampling errors in the interests of low cost, speed and comprehensiveness of the survey.

On the other hand however, censuses are generally used now, because the frame they provide is useful for other purposes and some important statistic, like the population, must be periodically checked by direct enumeration.

For the reasons already cited, sample surveys are very important and have greatest application to areas where financial resources are limited and where the required information must be made available in the shortest possible time. Thus in underdeveloped countries this method of collecting information about agriculture is very important.