

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



**Distr.
LIMITED
LC/L.588 (MDM.11/7)
31 October 1990
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**

**Eleventh Meeting of the Presiding Officers
of the Regional Conference on the Integration
of Women into the Economic and Social
Development of Latin America and the Caribbean**

Varadero, Cuba, 19 and 20 November 1990

THE HUCKSTERS OF DOMINICA

This document was prepared by Ms. Monique Lagro, Consultant of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. The views expressed in this work are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily coincide with those of the Organization.

This paper was not submitted to editorial revision.

90-8-1741

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Preface

Background of the research on the inter-island trade
in the Caribbean

The Women in Development (WID) Unit, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean initiated studies in the area of women traders¹ in the Caribbean in 1984. The project is regarded as a priority area in the work programme endorsed by the member governments of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) at its eight session held in 1984, and further supported at its ninth, tenth and eleventh sessions held in 1985, 1987 and 1988, respectively.

The initial research activities on the subject indicated that:

(a) Women predominate in the informal trading sector in: (i) wearing apparel and light goods, commonly referred to as the suitcase trade, and (ii) fresh agricultural produce;

(b) The economic contribution of the traders in the informal sector has been seriously underestimated as they are classified as self-employed and are not included in the statistics;

(c) Traders engaged in the inter-island trade are facing serious problems;

(d) There is a need to further investigate the situation of the inter-island traders in the Caribbean.

The possibility to deepen the study on these traders was found within the ECLAC/WID project: **The Establishment of a Database on Selected Areas of Women's Participation in Social and Economic Development (Phase I and II)**. Within the scope of that project, specific data on the inter-island traders was collected in Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Haiti and Curaçao. The main activities in 1989 were:

(a) The implementation of a regional socio-economic survey on the inter-island traders in the Caribbean; and

¹ Also known as traffickers or speculators in Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines, hucksters in Dominica, higglers in Jamaica and Madame Sara in Haiti.

(b) Collecting statistical data on trends in the inter-island trade in fresh agricultural produce in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Dominica.

The long-term objectives of the project were:

(a) To highlight the participation and contribution of female inter-island traders in the Caribbean to national and regional economic development; and

(b) To formulate and strengthen programmes and policies oriented towards improvement of the position of the female inter-island traders in the informal sector.

The immediate objectives were:

(a) To provide a regional overview of the inter-island trade in the Caribbean;

(b) To gather information on the socio-economic characteristics of the inter-island traders and relate to their trading practice; and

(c) To describe the main problems of the traders with reference to problems related to child-care.

This document reports only on the outcome of the survey and research on the Dominican hucksters.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 The survey among the Dominican Hucksters

The survey focused on the inter-island traders in agricultural produce - the so-called hucksters - of Dominica travelling to St Martin. The majority of the traders purchase, export, import and market the produce themselves. They collect their produce - fresh fruits, vegetables and ground provisions - at specific collection points in Dominica and transport it in trucks to the port where it is shipped. The traders travel by boat or aircraft to the neighbouring islands and collect their pre-shipped goods for marketing at their destination.

For the purpose of the research, the inter-island traders have been defined as individuals who operate in the informal sector and who purchase merchandise in one country, co-ordinate its transportation and travel to sell in another country.

The informal sector comprises all non-registered commercial and non-commercial enterprises or activities without formal structure, which are generally family-owned, small-scale and heavily reliant on indigenous resources.

1.1.2 Methods and techniques of research

The survey executed was a sample survey: "The collection of data from a defined population by recording appropriate information about some members of that population".² Data was collected by interviewers with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a sequence of open and closed questions (see Appendix I).

The overseas markets of the traders were chosen as the place to conduct the interviews in order to exclude the traders who do not travel overseas. The agricultural traders from Dominica market their produce in Guadeloupe, Antigua and Barbuda, St Martin, Anguilla, Barbados, St Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat and Martinique. Their main market is Guadeloupe. Owing to the fact that logistically it was difficult to organize the survey in Guadeloupe and because Dominican traders trading with St Martin seemed to be the ones facing most of the problems, the overseas market, St Martin, was selected for the survey.

² D.J. Casley and D.A. Lury: Data collection in Developing Countries, Oxford University Press, U.S., 1981, p.4.

During the months of March and May 1989, a total of 53 traders, (43 females and 10 males) who market produce in St Martin, agreed to co-operate, and were interviewed at the Marigot Market in St Martin.

The interviews were performed by two persons, stationed in St Maarten: Gracita Arrindell and Alida Francis. The Caribbean Development Center provided the institutional base for the project implementation.

1.1.3 Statistical data collection

A database fusing all the available data on the huckster trade in Dominica in fresh agricultural produce was developed by the Women in Development Unit, UNECLAC, Port-of-Spain.³

Data was retrieved from secondary sources such as shipping bills, CARICOM certificates, phyto-sanitary certificates, trader's licences, agricultural industrial and development bank records on hucksters' loans and records of the Dominica Huckster Association (DHA).

Data was collected for two months (January and February) over a period of three years - 1987, 1988 and 1989 - on the number of traders in the trade by name, sex, frequency of travel, quantities of produce exported in EC dollars and kilograms, name of the boat, port of departure and arrival; if available, residence and age of the trader; membership of the DHA; possession of a licence; and address and name of farmer/supplier.

1.2 Dominica

Dominica is the largest of the Windward Islands, situated between the French islands of Guadeloupe to the north and Martinique to the south. It has an area of 290 sq. miles and a population of 77,700.⁴

A British possession since the eighteenth century, Dominica formed part of the Leeward Islands Federation until 1939. In 1940 it was transferred to the Windward Islands grouping where it remained until the federal arrangements ended in December 1959. Under a new constitution, effective from January 1960, Dominica

³ This was made possible through collaboration with the FAO and the inputs of Mr Charles Schotman, Plant Quarantine Officer, FAO Office, Port-of-Spain.

⁴ Social Indicators of Development, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1988.

achieved a separate status. When the Federation of the West Indies was formed in 1958 Dominica joined as an independent member and remained so until its dissolution in 1962. In 1967, Dominica became a State in association with the United Kingdom and is now a member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

1.3 Women's participation in the labour force in Dominica

The proportion of women officially recorded as being part of the employed labour force in Dominica is 38.2 per cent which is considerably lower than men's participation (74.7 per cent). Female participation in the labour force is highest in the 20-24 age group (see Figure 1).

In comparison to other Eastern Caribbean countries,⁵ Dominica has the highest percentage of self-employed women: 22.9 per cent of the women in the labour force are working on their own account.

The overall majority of the female own-account workers without paid help are in the agricultural sector. Commerce is the second main area where self-employed women are active (see Table I).

1.4 Trade in agricultural produce within the Caribbean region

Trade in agricultural commodities among the Caribbean islands dates back to the pre-colonial period. It has continued to exist with varying degrees of intensity.⁶

The latter part of the 1960s saw a rapid growth in inter-island trade. This was mainly due to regional government policies which promoted the establishment of regional integration schemes such as the Agricultural Marketing Protocol (AMP), the Guaranteed Market Scheme, Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) and the Customs Union which subsequently evolved into the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM).

⁵ Saint Lucia (18.5 per cent), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (14.7 per cent) and Grenada (14.2 per cent). Source: Population Census 1980-1981.

⁶ Sir Francis Watts, Report on the Agricultural Conditions of Dominica with recommendations for their amelioration, Bulletin Office, Dominica, 1925, p.18 quoted in Social Structural Changes in Dominica, (AHG/SEM/SSC/1) UNECLAC, 1984.

Table I
 Women 15 years and over in the category
 "Own business/farm" by industrial group in Dominica

| Industrial Group | (1) | (2) |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Agri;Fores;Hunt., etc. | 39.9 | 49.8 |
| Min;Refin. & Quarry | - | - |
| Manufacturing | 14.5 | 14.5 |
| Elec;Gas & Water | - | - |
| Construct. & Install | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Commerce | 29.2 | 22.3 |
| Transp;Stor. & Commun. | - | 0.2 |
| Finan;Insur. & Real Est. | 0.3 | - |
| Government | 1.1 | 0.2 |
| Community Services | 2.4 | 0.3 |
| Other Services | 6.0 | 1.9 |
| Not Stated/Not Applic. | 6.3 | 10.7 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% |
| | n= 366 | n=1473 |

(1): With paid help; (2): Without paid help.
 Source: Population Census, Dominica, 1980-1981.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the inter-island trade had experienced a drastic decline⁷ due to a number of factors, among them:

1.4.1 Problems in regional co-operation

In July 1983, there was an agreement to abolish the AMP as a mechanism for facilitating intraregional trade in agricultural produce. The gains from thus liberalizing the trade were primarily beneficial to the More Developed Countries (MDCs).⁸ The guaranteed minimum original price set by the AMP stimulated greater production in the MDCs, thereby further weakening the position of the Less Developed Countries (LDCs).⁹ These policies had the effect of

⁷ See Appendix II for information on the total exports to and imports from CARICOM countries in the period 1978-1987.

⁸ The following countries are considered MDCs: Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados and the Bahamas.

⁹ The following countries are considered LDCs: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Belize.

undermining regional co-operation - a situation further compounded by the unsettled political climate accompanying the new status of independence in the early 1980s of virtually all the Eastern Caribbean territories.

Agreements of 1988 among Caribbean countries aimed at eliminating intraregional trade restrictions are expected to reactivate Caribbean economic integration.

1.4.2 The economic crisis

The inflation that had begun in 1972 continued to accelerate and was compounded by the international energy crisis that saw a fourfold increase in the price of oil and, for the islands, a food crisis which resulted in a rapidly growing regional food import bill. The LDCs were hardest hit: consumer and other import prices increased dramatically and primary exports were subject to the usual unstable conditions.¹⁰

1.4.3 The decrease in agrarian production

Higher wages in the extractive, industrial and tourist sectors as compared with the lower earnings in agro-industry, together with the traditional disdain for agricultural work, have led to a significant decrease in the total amount of land under cultivation and a movement of population away from farming areas.

The division of holdings by inheritance and the parcelling of lands have resulted in inefficient small-scale farming and limited land productivity; natural disasters such as hurricanes also influenced the level of agricultural production.

1.4.4 Increased international competition and loss of confidence in the national banking system

International trading companies increased not only their exports of agricultural produce to the Caribbean region, but also their importation of agricultural produce from the region. Thus trade in agricultural produce was more and more directed to extra-regional markets.

It must be said that this trend has often been set by commercial exporters from within the Caribbean region who see this as a means of gaining access to scarce foreign exchange, thereby facilitating a variety of other business transactions. In other

¹⁰ W. Andrew Axline, *Agricultural Policy and Collective Self-Reliance in the Caribbean*, 1986, pp. 33-34.

words, it is because of a lack of confidence in their own currency that business people seek to safeguard their capital and try to find ways for capital flow.

1.4.5 The development of traditional export crops

Historically, emphasis has been placed by governments in the region on development of traditional primary agricultural crops such as bananas, coconuts, citrus, mangoes, cocoa, arrowroot and nutmeg, to the detriment of the small-farmer cultivated foodstuff, such as ground provisions, fruits and vegetables which constitute the prime export goods within the intraregional trade. Yet the majority of farm holdings in the Commonwealth Caribbean - an overwhelming 95 per cent of the 350,000 farm holdings - are under 25 acres in size and amount to less than 30 per cent of the total acreage of farms.¹¹

1.5 The export of agricultural produce from Dominica

Dominica relies for revenue and employment almost entirely on its agricultural produce. The main cash crop is banana, but there has been constant shifting from one crop to another, as insuperable difficulties in commercial cultivations arose.

At the beginning of the century the export trade in limes was the major agricultural export produce. The middle 1950s saw a gradual shift towards grapefruit. The banana boom,¹² sparked off in the 1950s, had repercussions on the inter-island trade in fruits, vegetables and ground provisions. Small-scale farmers withdrew from the production of food crops for the local market. They were attracted by the possibility of getting a regular cash income. The increase of contract work and the expansion of land for the production of banana resulted in the diminishing of the supply of locally-grown fruits and vegetables for the inter-island trade.¹³ This shift to cash crop cultivation with its more advanced

¹¹ W. Andrew Axline, *Agricultural Policy...*, op cit., p. 51.

¹² The banana boom was sparked off in 1952 by a 15-year market contract between Geest Industries and the Dominica Banana Association.

¹³ J.B. Yankee, in *Small Farming Study in the Lesser Developed member Territories of the Caribbean*, Weirs Consulting Services Ltd, 1976, p. 60.; David Wood, *The Manpower Situation in Dominica 1946-1976*, National Planning Organisation, August 1978, quoted in *Social Structural Changes in Dominica* (AHG/SEM/SSC/84/1), UNECLAC, 1984.

Table II

Production of major agricultural crops in tonnes, 1978-1985

| FIELD CROPS | QUANTITY | | | | | | | |
|------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 |
| BANANAS | 53,182 | 24,381 | 1,512 | 35,252 | 35,423 | 38,013 | 41,177 | 42,656 |
| GRAPEFRUIT | 12,155 | 7,293 | 7,700 | 8,360 | 8,986 | 5,388 | 5,537 | 8,250 |
| DASHEEN | 19,910 | 12,576 | 12,650 | 12,870 | 12,962 | 13,014 | 13,351 | 12,100 |
| YAMS | 4,967 | 3,411 | 4,950 | 5,280 | 5,350 | 5,027 | 5,139 | 5,500 |
| TANNIAS | 7,805 | 6,294 | 7,920 | 6,218 | 6,199 | 6,241 | 6,420 | 4,400 |
| LIMES | 10,313 | 3,827 | 6,188 | 6,380 | 6,513 | 6,078 | 6,258 | 6,357 |
| ORANGES | 3,927 | 2,356 | 2,356 | 2,403 | 2,427 | 2,213 | 2,284 | 2,750 |
| MANGOES | 263 | 105 | 132 | 139 | 144 | 159 | 1,514 | 3,920 |
| COCONUTS | 3,333 | 3,380 | 1,042 | 865 | 1,277 | 3,395 | 3,198 | 3,193 |
| PLANTAINS | 3,035 | 2,271 | 1,344 | 1,478 | 1,565 | 1,393 | 1,530 | 1,820 |
| CUCUMBERS | 1,792 | 1,899 | 2,279 | 2,509 | 2,623 | 1,994 | 2,026 | 2,074 |
| SWEET POTATOES | 1,703 | 1,559 | 1,760 | 1,725 | 1,689 | 1,604 | 1,632 | 1,664 |
| CABBAGE | 1,045 | 936 | 1,098 | 1,142 | 1,079 | 1,001 | 1,019 | 1,019 |
| CASSAVA | 1,154 | 809 | 841 | 853 | 857 | 857 | 943 | 964 |
| PUMPKINS | 403 | 427 | 493 | 517 | 538 | 479 | 463 | 672 |
| COCOA BEANS | 778 | 428 | 428 | 428 | 492 | 473 | 480 | 498 |
| CARROTS | 520 | 466 | 547 | 569 | 529 | 491 | 499 | 510 |
| COFFEE | 297 | 171 | 164 | 168 | 171 | 362 | 410 | 419 |
| AVOCADO PEARS | 203 | 101 | 152 | 157 | 160 | 193 | 231 | 209 |
| GINGER | 139 | 132 | 146 | 151 | 156 | 178 | 199 | 204 |
| TOMATOES | 130 | 133 | 147 | 160 | 174 | 166 | 169 | 179 |
| BREADFRUIT | 200,850 | 120,510 | 100,000 | 110,500 | 112,039 | 112,000 | 113,900 | 116,520 |
| CHRISTOPHENES | 72 | 62 | 46 | 52 | 55 | 64 | 155 | 112 |
| LETTUCE | 314 | 333 | 366 | 384 | 399 | 405 | 415 | 392 |
| BEANS, PEAS ETC. | 90 | 99 | 88 | 93 | 95 | 97 | 100 | 102 |
| CUT FLOWERS | 9 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 22 | 27 |
| BAY LEAF | 22 | 32 | 7 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 24 |
| CINNAMON | 8 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 11 |
| OKRA | 7 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| EGG PLANT | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Source: Records of Statistical Office and Agricultural Statistics Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, Table 1 in the Statistical Digest "Dominica Ten Years of Growth 1978-1987, Ministry of Finance, Dominica.

Note: Breadfruit production is indicated by number of fruits.

technology¹⁴ can be one of the explanations for the deep decline¹⁵ of women's employment in agriculture between 1945 and 1965.

Table II provides an overview of the production of major agricultural crops from 1978 onwards.

Attempts to diversify Dominica's agricultural sector have not been very successful so far.¹⁶ This implies that the agricultural sector is vulnerable to changes in the world market and natural disasters such as Hurricane David (1979), Allen (1980) and Hugo (1989).

At present, exporters of agricultural produce may be categorized into three groups:

(a) Marketing corporations of government, such as the Dominica Export-Import Agency (DEXIA);

(b) Private organizations or large individual exporters, such as the Co-operative Citrus Growers Association, the South Eastern Plantain Association, the Farm-to-Market Ltd, the Caribbean Commodity Exchange and the Banana Growers Association; and

(c) Small inter-island traders, also referred to as "hucksters".

This document deals with the third category: the hucksters. At this moment, the market share of the hucksters in the inter-island trade in vegetables, fruits and ground provisions is estimated to be 18 per cent¹⁷ of the total export in agricultural produce. Their share in the market has diminished in comparison to previous years. Prior to the upsurge of private organizations such as Farm-to-Market Ltd and Caribbean Commodity Exchange, hucksters formed a major outlet for vegetables, fruits and ground provisions.

¹⁴ The introduction of pesticides by GEEST to be used by the Banana Growers Association, put the female weeders out of work.

¹⁵ Between 1945-1965, female employment in the agricultural sector dropped by 60 per cent (David Wood, op. cit., p. 13).

¹⁶ Statistical Digest: Dominica, Ten Years of Growth 1978-1988, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance, p.6.

¹⁷ This has been calculated from figures provided by the Dominica Export-Import Agency (DEXIA) on the amount of produce exported by the traders and Table 4 of the Statistical Digest

1.6 Means of transportation and overseas markets of the Dominica hucksters

Transportation for the marketing of the agricultural produce within the Caribbean region is mostly by sea. The high costs of air freight militate against use of air transport for short voyages.¹⁸

Trader movements are restricted by the availability of ships, whose routes, in part, determine the markets of the traders.

The most important market of the Dominican hucksters is Guadeloupe. Other markets are Antigua and Barbuda, St Martin, Tortola, St Christopher and Nevis, Montserrat, Martinique, Barbados, St Lucia, and St Thomas. From the research, it became clear that a small group of traders (13 in total) venture into Puerto Rico.

From the survey executed by the Women in Development Unit, ECLAC, in March 1989, in which interviews were conducted with 53 Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin, 25 per cent hucksters said they travelled regularly by air to reach their overseas market. Their trade income was higher than that of the average huckster from the sample. The few hucksters with low weekly trade incomes who travelled by air probably could not withstand the sea trip, as was expressed by one of the hucksters:

"Well some people do get sea sick very badly because it is a long ride and there are times when you do not get a place to lie, you have to keep sitting all night long. That is why some people really fly".

Since emphasis is placed in the region on the extra-regional export of agricultural produce, intraregional shipping links are less developed than extra-regional links. Within the region, the West Indies Shipping Corporation (WISCO)¹⁹ serves Trinidad and Tobago, Miami, Jamaica and Barbados.

There is a gap left in the intraregional shipping route that schooners and other small ships are virtually duty-bound to fill. The CARICOM Inter-Island Shipping Survey, 1977, revealed that the small vessel fleet was responsible for no less than a minimum of 55 per cent of the inter-island sea-borne freight trade.

¹⁸ A few persons - males - are able to charter airlines to the United States Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico.

¹⁹ WISCO is owned by the governments of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean, but Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Belize have withdrawn from it.

The small vessel fleet consists of privately owned vessels. The smallest, mostly wooden sloops, have a capacity of approximately 32 tons and the largest, mostly steel vessels, 200 tons. The steel vessels are older and mostly bought second-hand.

Although all the schooners, small and large, are unsuitable for the transportation of fresh agricultural produce, conditions on the wooden vessels are the worst: ventilation is poor; there is no insulation of the engine compartment; and no cargo-lifting equipment.

The badly maintained condition of the boats, which results in frequent engine breakdowns and accidents, presents tremendous problems to the hucksters. One major complaint of the hucksters is the dumping of their produce in the sea whenever the boat has a problem and the unreliability of departure and arrival times. Since the goods are not insured, the huckster is not reimbursed for loss of cargo owing to spoilage or dumping.

Table III

Total number of shipments by port of departure
by sex for Jan./Febr. 1987-1989

| | 1987 | | | | 1988 | | | | 1989 | | | |
|------------|------|----|---|-------|------|-----|---|-------|------|----|---|-------|
| | F | M | U | (T) | F | M | U | (T) | F | M | U | (T) |
| Portsmouth | 135 | 73 | 7 | (215) | 292 | 143 | 8 | (443) | 137 | 69 | - | (106) |
| Roseau | 101 | 71 | - | (173) | 140 | 68 | 3 | (211) | 109 | 25 | - | (134) |
| Total | | | | 388 | | | | 654 | | | | 240 |

At present 22 small vessels²⁰ operate out of Dominica and serve the hucksters from the Deep Water Harbour in Roseau, Portsmouth and Anse de Mai.

²⁰ The name of the vessels are: Penelope, Ile de Serk, Winchester, Citydelle, Bygin, Stella II, Independence, Elder, Centillia Scott, Dianna, Ocean Blue, Glory B., Tiny Gull, Lady Henry, Bernita, Canoe Honesty, Lady Claudette, Lady Hope, Mv. CIC, Tokyo, Eleta D. and Pola Bear.

As can be seen from Table III, Portsmouth is more frequently used by the hucksters than Roseau. The total amount of shipments from Portsmouth decreased by 63 per cent in 1989. This decline was especially drastic in comparison with 1988 at Portsmouth.

2 THE HUCKSTERS

2.1 Definition of a huckster

A huckster is generally a female entrepreneur who purchases agricultural produce in her own country and sells it in another Caribbean country. Her business, which is not officially registered, employs simple technology and is organized and supervised solely by her. "Since I born, I never work for nobody" and "I am boss of myself" are phrases often heard when talking to hucksters.

When additional labour is needed, the huckster usually depends on family members or other forms of temporary labour contracted under informal arrangements. The huckster makes use of the services of carriers, truck drivers, crate makers, brokers, shippers and other technical intermediaries, most of whom are male. The working relationships established to facilitate the activity are very personalized.

After purchasing and/or collecting her goods - mostly fruits, vegetables and ground provisions²¹ from small farmers - the huckster ships it by boat to the country in which it is to be marketed. The huckster²² travels with her goods on the boat or takes the plane to sell her own produce overseas.

2.2 The size of the huckster population in Dominica

In this report a distinction will be made between active and non-active traders. Active traders are those who have exported agricultural produce through legal channels²³ in the period of research: January/February 1987, January/February 1988 and

²¹ Ground provision refers to: tannia, dasheen, eddoes and yams, etc.

²² There are hucksters who send produce overseas but do not travel themselves. This report focuses mostly on those who travel overseas as they are the ones facing most of the problems.

²³ Having passed Customs with the necessary shipping bills.

January/February 1989.²⁴ Non-active traders are those who are registered, but who have not exported produce in the months of research.

There are two main sources of data in Dominica that can give an idea of the size of the huckster population: the hucksters' licence records available at the Ministry of Agriculture and the shipping bills that each exporter has to prepare when trading overseas, available at the Customs Department.

2.2.1 The huckster's licences

If we look at the number of licensees over the years, the early 1980s are remarkable, in that the number of traders with a huckster's licence grew from 1,010 in 1983 to 1,378 in 1984 (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

After 1985 the number of licensees dropped from 1,089 in 1985 to 467 in 1986. A decline can also be noted in the number of new licence applications and renewals in 1986.

The number of licences issued to hucksters is, however, much larger than the number of traders actually exporting produce out of Dominica. This implies that holding a licence does not automatically mean that the person in question actually trades. It is therefore of crucial importance to have a closer look at the shipping bills, where only those who actually export produce, the so-called active traders, are registered.

2.2.2 The shipping bills

Based on data collection from shipping bills,²⁵ we can estimate the number of active²⁶ Dominican traders who regularly export agricultural produce. For 1987 the total active population of hucksters was 195. Their number rose during 1988 to 222 and declined drastically by 46 per cent to 119 in 1989.

²⁴ This implies that traders who have not traded in the period of research and those who travel less than once every two months are not taken into account.

²⁵ This was based on the shipping bills of January-February 1987, January-February 1988 and January-February 1989.

²⁶ Even here caution must be exercised as a trader who prepares a shipping bill can stay in Dominica and only ship the produce.

In addition to changes in the size of the trading population, there have also been shifts in the sex-ratio over time, especially if the port of departure - Portsmouth or Roseau - is taken into consideration. A closer look at the data (see Table IV) reveals a decline particularly among male traders embarking at Roseau: 56 per cent of the hucksters trading from Roseau in 1987 were females and in 1989 this rose to 82 per cent. In Portsmouth the sex ratio changed from 57 per cent female traders in 1987 to 66 per cent in 1989.

Table IV

Number of active hucksters, by sex and port of departure for January/February 1987-1989

| | Roseau | | | Portsmouth | | | TOTAL |
|------|--------|----|----|------------|----|---|-------|
| | F | M | U* | F | M | U | |
| 1987 | 42 | 32 | - | 65 | 49 | 7 | 195 |
| 1988 | 39 | 22 | 1 | 105 | 53 | 2 | 222 |
| 1989 | 24 | 5 | - | 60 | 30 | - | 119 |

* "Unknown" and referring to traders whose sex was not mentioned in the shipping bill documents.

2.2.3 The number of newcomers and drop-outs

The entry of newcomers to the trade seems to be low. This is based on the decrease in licence applicants (see Figure 3) and the socio-economic survey carried out among 53 Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin. Only 13.2 per cent of those interviewed had entered the trade less than two years earlier. The overall majority had been trading more than seven years.²⁷

²⁷ This must be considered as a preliminary outcome; the overseas market of St Martin is considered to yield low profits which could attract less newcomers. If the sample had consisted of Dominican hucksters trading with Guadeloupe, the percentage of newcomers could have been higher.

2.3 Sex**Table V**

Percentage of active traders, by sex,
January/ February 1987-1989

| | Female | Male |
|------|--------|------|
| 1987 | 57% | 43% |
| 1988 | 66% | 34% |
| 1989 | 71% | 29% |

It is well known that women dominate the huckster trade in Dominica. However, exclusively on the basis of data on licensees (the active and non-active traders), 54 per cent of the licensees are male. Records of the DHA seem to reveal an increase in the number of male traders since the mid-eighties (see section 4.2).

From the shipping bills (data on the active population), however, we see a completely different picture: women's participation in the trade is high and on the increase (see Table V).

This is further supported by the results of the survey on the Dominica traders with St Martin, 81 per cent of whom were females. The hypothesis that there has been an influx of males into this sector was not confirmed by the survey data: only 19 per cent of the hucksters in the sample²⁸ were male and those who entered the trade in the previous two years were all female.

There is therefore reason to believe that men enter the sector "on paper" (licence/membership of the DHA) for purposes other than trading.

²⁸ The sample of the UNECLAC survey was taken at random: during the months March and April in 1989, all the non-resident Dominican hucksters in St Martin were checked at the Marigot market and if they consented, interviewed.

2.4 Age

Data collected from the huckster's licences appear to indicate that the majority of the traders, male and female alike, are between their twenties and forties. Only 19 per cent of the female licensees are above the age of 40. After Hurricane David in 1979 younger people registered as traders.

Table VI

Number of traders by sex and age-group in possession of a Huckster's Licence 1987-1989

| | >20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 51-60 | >61 |
|--------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Female | 9 | 190 | 120 | 47 | 24 | 5 |
| % | 2 | 48 | 31 | 12 | 6 | 1 |
| % | 43 | 42 | 47 | 57 | 63 | 38 |
| Males | 12 | 258 | 136 | 36 | 14 | 8 |
| % | 3 | 55 | 29 | 8 | 3 | 2 |
| % | 57 | 58 | 53 | 43 | 37 | 62 |
| Total | 22 | 448 | 256 | 83 | 38 | 13 |
| % | 2.5 | 52.1 | 29.8 | 9.7 | 4.4 | 1.5 |

The Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin were much older than the average licenced trader in Dominica. There were in the survey no traders under the age 20; the oldest was 73. The average age of the males was 41 and of the women, 45. The newcomers in the trade to St Martin were generally younger (average age: 38 years).

From the St Martin sample it appears that traders generally start operating in their early thirties.

2.5 Educational background

The educational level of traders is basic. They have been exposed to formal education, most of them at primary levels (P 7) and incomplete secondary levels. The general assumption that younger traders and newcomers were more exposed to formal education than the older ones did not hold in the case of the Dominicans trading with St Martin.

2.6 Household type

The ECLAC survey indicated that 54.7 per cent of the hucksters trading with St Martin are single. 45.3 per cent of them are in partnership arrangements (married/common-law or visiting).

Traders, regardless of their union status, have children. If we look at the women above the age of 46 who are at the end of their child-bearing period, their average number of children is around seven (see Table VII).

Table VII

Age of the huckster by number of children

| Children | Age | | | Total |
|--------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 21-30 | 31-46 | 46 + | |
| None | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| % | 50 | 50 | 0 | |
| % | 14.3 | 4.2 | 0 | |
| 1-2 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 13 |
| % | 38.5 | 53.8 | 7.7 | |
| % | 71.4 | 29.2 | 4.5 | |
| 3-5 | 0 | 12 | 7 | 19 |
| % | 0 | 63.2 | 36.8 | |
| % | 0 | 50 | 31.8 | |
| 6 + | 1 | 4 | 14 | 19 |
| % | 5.3 | 21.1 | 73.7 | |
| % | 14.3 | 16.7 | 63.6 | |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>24</u> | <u>22</u> | <u>53</u> |
| % | 13.21 | 45.28 | 41.51 | |

CHI = 25.01893

The majority of the traders going to St Martin have children above 12 years (see Table VIII).

Table VIII

Age of Youngest Child by age of huckster

| Age huckster | Age of Youngest Child | | | | | Total |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | < 5 | 5-7 | 8-11 | 12-16 | 17 + | |
| 21-30 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| % | 40 | 40 | 0 | 20 | 0 | |
| % | 50 | 25 | 0 | 5.3 | 0 | |
| 31-46 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 20 |
| % | 10 | 30 | 20 | 40 | 0 | |
| % | 50 | 75 | 100 | 42.1 | 0 | |
| 46 + | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47.6 | 52.4 | |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 52.6 | 100 | |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>19</u> | <u>11</u> | <u>46</u> |
| | 8.7 | 17.39 | 8.7 | 41.3 | 23.91 | |

CHI = 33.50564

2.7 Residence

Data on residence have been retrieved from: (1) licence records; and (2) survey data on the hucksters trading with St Martin

It became evident that there are three main areas from which hucksters operate: St Georges, St Patrick and St Andrew.

2.8 Occupational history

Fifty-five per cent of the hucksters were more than 10 years in the trade. It is interesting to note that those who entered the trade between 1980 and 1985 were previously employed. It is possible that they came from those sectors of the economy that were hit by the hurricanes. It is estimated that 30 per cent of those

entering the activity in 1981 came directly from services which had ceased operations.²⁹

Seventy per cent of the traders who entered the trade in the last two years were not previously employed.

The reasons most mentioned by hucksters for entering the trade is their need for income for themselves and their children.

"I like the job because I eat from it."

"We just find we cannot sit down all the time at home; and when we have children, the world of today call for education, and most of us want to educate our children so we get out to find money to have our children educated."

Twenty-one per cent of the hucksters mentioned that they derived extra incomes from other jobs.

2.9 Trade income

Reliable figures on the returns of the trade are difficult to come by as hucksters are reluctant to let anyone know just how much profit they are making. The following data on the weekly trade income is exclusively based on statements given by Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin. It is possible that the male traders say they earn more or that the female traders say they earn less than they actually do. This remains an area to be researched. Also, since the number of males interviewed in the survey was small, we should be prudent in making generalizations.

The monthly trade income of the huckster varies, with the males represented in the higher-income groups (see Figure 9).

On the whole the monthly incomes given by the hucksters seem to be high, which suggests that purchasing and overhead costs were not subtracted from the amount given as weekly income in the survey. This clarifies why 40 per cent of the traders who were found in the higher-income groups described themselves as being unsuccessful in their trade.

²⁹ Clarendon, Hannah, Constructing a Data Base on Women Traders in Dominica, ECLAC Consultant Paper, Port-of-Spain, August 1987.

Table IX

Previously employed versus number of years trading
by the huckster

| | Years trading | | | | Total |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 0-4 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15+ | |
| Yes | 6 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 22 |
| % | 46.2 | 72.7 | 23.5 | 33.3 | |
| % | 27.3 | 36.4 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 41.51 |
| No | 7 | 3 | 13 | 8 | 31 |
| % | 53.8 | 27.3 | 76.5 | 66.7 | |
| % | 22.6 | 9.7 | 41.9 | 25.8 | 58.49 |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>13</u> | <u>11</u> | <u>17</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>53</u> |

CHI = 7.124838

Traders represented in the higher-income groups were mostly: (1) male; (2) in the age group 31-46; (3) trading five to nine years; and (4) involved in the two-way trade.³⁰

Thirty-five per cent of the single traders had weekly incomes under US\$100, compared to 9.5 per cent of those in partnership arrangements. Although this did not come out of the survey, it leads to the conclusion that hucksters with partners have better opportunities to be successful.

The overall majority of the hucksters (79.2 per cent) appeared to be solely dependent upon revenues gained from huckstering. In the survey, 20.8 per cent of them admitted having additional incomes from other jobs. Those with additional incomes were mostly male and had been trading over seven years.

³⁰ This means hucksters who export agricultural produce but also re-import goods to Dominica, the so-called reverse trade.

3 THE TRADER'S ACTIVITY CYCLE

3.1 General description of the work

Huckstering includes a number of activities which are generally repeated in the same order on each trading trip, thus constituting a cycle.

The activities of the Dominican traders vary depending on the countries with which they trade, but they extend generally over a period of between one to two weeks. The activities performed by the hucksters are as follows:

- (a) Investigating which produce is available, at what time and price and placing an order;
- (b) Paying creditors and getting orders for re-importation of goods in Dominica);³¹
- (c) Collecting or securing delivery of the produce;
- (d) Making family arrangements for household members during huckster's absence;
- (e) Sorting/cleaning/packing the produce;
- (f) Transporting produce to the port and preparing travel documents such as shipping bills, phyto-sanitary certificates;
- (g) Making arrangements for boat transport and payment of freight;
- (h) Loading the produce;
- (i) Huckster embarking on ship or plane;
- (j) Disembarking of trader and off-loading of produce at next port;³²
- (k) Passing through Customs, Immigration and phyto-sanitary control;
- (l) Selling of produce;

³¹ Activities in brackets are optional.

³² Hucksters of Dominica often travel to different ports during one business trip. Especially those with destination St Martin disembark in different countries: Antigua and Barbuda, St Kitts and Nevis and Montserrat.

- (m) Purchasing goods for re-importation into Dominica and preparing the necessary documents);
- (n) Embarking on boat or aircraft for return voyage.

3.2 Skills required

The hucksters indicated the following qualities necessary to be a good huckster: physical strength, ability to talk to and deal with people, being well-mannered, patience, courage, persistency, intelligence and ability to handle money. These qualities are more prevalent in women than in men, according to the traders.

"You have to have understanding; you have to have courage; you have to have strength; you have to put your mind to it. Continue to do the work and then it will come."

"Well you have to have a good character, you cannot be a noisy person to be a huckster at the market! You have to behave yourself."

"You have to be very strong, you have to be patient, cool, aggressive and you have to learn to cope with others. You have to be patient as well because there are times when the sale is very slow and if you are not being patient everything will go wrong."

"You have to be nice to everybody, even smile under difficulties and so on (...)."

Some of the replies to the question why there are more women in the trade are revealing:

"Well to sit down at the market that's a ladies work not a man's work!"

"Maybe we are more loving. Before a customer would come we give a nice smile so the people are more attached to us. Some men are very bossy, they would not like to go and let people feel that they are in the market selling, but women don't care that is their task."

"The men like to counter. They will use the money in different ways even if they can handle the load more than us. The woman now can hold the money better. We want to use the money for our own use and our children, so that is why women more can do these things."

Although the hucksters are aware that their job cannot be done by everybody and requires certain skills, the female traders have

a low opinion of their work. In general, women traders do not wish their children to follow them in this line of work:

"Well the sort of work it is, I would not encourage my children to do that, I would not like them to do that. I would like them to learn well at school for them to do something better."

Anderson³³ who did research among Jamaican traders found it to be the same; all wanted something more decent for their children.

3.3 Workload

3.3.1 Time input

The huckster's workload is high. Many hours are spent ordering, cleaning, packing, crating, shipping and making arrangements with different persons for each trip. Since traders have no formal working relations, they are powerless when agreements are not met. This is why personalized contacts must be nurtured to ensure that the required services are performed.

Those interviewed informally estimated that on an average, they worked at least 10 hours a day:

"To be a huckster you really have to make up your mind to work hard because it is not an easy job. It is really a tedious job. When you have to be lifting up so many boxes, it is really a hard task."

If the trader lives in the countryside, she gets up at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. to go to the market in Roseau to buy additional produce. If she goes to Guadeloupe, she has to be at the port at night and spend eight hours on the boat, where she sleeps. She then passes through Immigration and Customs in Guadeloupe, goes to the market and leaves there at the end of the day to go to her sleeping accommodations. She gets up at 2:00 a.m. to get a space to sell. If the huckster goes to St Martin, she usually unloads at several islands during just one business trip. Her time spent at sea is longer. In St Martin, however, there are restricted selling hours at the Marigot market: the huckster must leave the market by 1:00 p.m. On Fridays they often sleep at the market to ensure having a space to sell the next day.

³³ Patricia Y. Anderson and E.R.M. Lefranc: Social organisations and social relations in the informal sector in Jamaica, ISER, Mona (Jamaica), June 1984, p. 21.

3.3.2 Time spent away from home

Hucksters trading exclusively with Guadeloupe usually have an activity cycle lasting a week; those trading with Barbados, two weeks.

Most of the traders going to St Martin spend five to eight days away from home. On their way to St Martin some hucksters only off-load produce for wholesale in Antigua and St Kitts and travel on the boat the same night to the next island. Some hucksters leave their produce in the hands of intermediaries to market and recover their sale incomes on their way back to Dominica.³⁴ The hucksters usually reach St Martin on a Tuesday or Wednesday and stay until Saturday.

The time spent in the different overseas markets vary: Antigua and St Kitts (one day), Guadeloupe and St Martin (three days) and Barbados (twelve days).³⁵

3.3.3 The frequency of travel

In the survey, most (81.1 per cent) of the hucksters going to St Martin travel twice a month.³⁶ The data collected from shipping bills strongly indicated that male traders, on the whole, trade more on a part-time basis than their female counterparts:³⁷ 51.8 per cent of the male traders shipped once during the months of research.³⁸ Males appear more often than females to be part-time farmers as well.

³⁴ ECLAC, The Informal Trade in the Leeward Islands (LC/CAR/G.275), Port-of-Spain, August 1989.

³⁵ Barbados takes two weeks, due to schedule of boat which is fortnightly.

³⁶ Quite some hucksters, however, complained that other hucksters came weekly to St Martin, causing over flooding of the market.

³⁷ It is possible that there is a sexual division of labour, whereby males are more involved in organizing the necessary activities in Dominica, leaving the selling overseas to their trading partners.

³⁸ January and February in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

3.3.4 Support obtained in performing the work

Forty three per cent of the traders get some form of help. The majority get their help from relatives: 9.4 per cent said they obtain help from their spouse and 24.5 per cent of the total group of traders get the help of their children. Help from relatives is not automatically free of charge.

From the open interviews held with traders the impression was given that there were some "trade couples". The men will stay in Dominica and organize the ordering, purchasing and paying-off of the farmers, while the selling overseas will be done by the women and together as a couple they will do the packing.

3.3.5 Child-care arrangements

Women hucksters with or without partners often see themselves as the ones responsible for the upbringing of their children and for the making of arrangements when leaving their home. They often speak in the "I" form whenever referring to their offspring.

"Even, I'm making money, I have a lot of children, I have to feed them, I have to send them to school, so I always need to (...)"

According to the women hucksters, it is up to them to look after their children whether they like it or not:

"Some men just don't care; they leave all the responsibilities on women (...)"

A very high percentage of the female traders said that their partners were not taking care of their children and that they did not stay with the children at night.³⁹

The "spouses" of the married hucksters did not stay significantly more often at home at night than spouses in other forms of relationships.

³⁹ As stated before, caution must be taken with survey outcomes: the possibility always exists that questions, although they have been pretested, are misunderstood.

Table X

Child-care during absence of huckster

| | Persons taking care of the children | | Persons staying with the children at night | |
|-----------------|--|-------|--|-------|
| | YES | NO | YES | NO |
| Spouse | 9.4% | 90.6% | 13.2% | 86.8% |
| Daughter | 18.9% | 81.1% | 18.9% | 81.1% |
| Son | 7.5% | 92.5% | 7.5% | 92.5% |
| Other relatives | 3.8% | 96.2% | 35.8% | 64.2% |

Not every huckster is in the same situation. Among those going to Guadeloupe,⁴⁰ some said that their husbands were helpful in the rearing of their children.

"Well my husband, he has to look about the kids, especially watch them going to school, prepare food while I does be in Guadeloupe".

Most of the traders (78.4 per cent) have their children sleep at home when trading overseas. Those who place their children in the homes of one of their relatives while trading, are mostly male.

Only 3.8 per cent of the hucksters said their children stayed at home alone. The children are all over 12 years of age.

⁴⁰ For the filming of the video-production "God Give Us the Talent: the hucksters of Dominica", approximately 20 interviews were done with hucksters in Dominica by the author. A boat trip to Guadeloupe was undertaken with the hucksters; on arrival, group interviews were held.

Most hucksters with children under the age of 12 have female relatives who look after the children during their absence from home.

"I have two kids and I leave them with my parents because my ... (pause) their father is not around. I live with my family. I left my mother taking care of them".

"My bigger girl she just left school. She has finished school, she is 18 and she stays there with the two smaller ones until I come back and my mother is nearby. She keeps an eye on them for me".

Although the relatives help with the minding of the children, paid arrangements are common for hucksters with young children, especially when the children are in the 5-7 age-group.

"When they were smaller I used to pay people to comb their hair, to bath them, to feed them".

Table XI

Payment for child-care by age of huckster's youngest child

| Age | Payment | | | Total |
|-------|----------------|------|-----------|-------|
| | Yes | No | Sometimes | |
| < 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| % | 25 | 75 | 0 | |
| % | 9.1 | 15 | 0 | |
| 5-7 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| % | 87.5 | 12.5 | 0 | |
| % | 63.6 | 5 | 0 | |
| 8-11 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| % | 50 | 25 | 25 | |
| % | 18.2 | 5 | 100 | |
| 12-16 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 16 |
| % | 6.3 | 93.8 | 0 | |
| % | 9.1 | 75 | 0 | |
| TOTAL | 11 | 20 | 1 | 32 |
| | 34.38 | 62.5 | 3.13 | |
| | CHI = 24.33636 | | | |

In general the hucksters were not dissatisfied with the arrangements they made for their children; 11 per cent said they were unhappy with the child-care arrangements they made.

3.4 Type of produce marketed overseas

The hucksters trade in a variety of products. In a single shipment, there is an average of four to five products. In 1987 and 1988 on average the traders shipped more items from Portsmouth than from Roseau. In 1989 more items were shipped from Roseau. As the boats from Roseau leave for Guadeloupe, St Lucia and Barbados, recently the produce assortment to those markets have been expanded. As can be seen in Table XII, prior to 1989, women exported slightly more items than males. On an average, more items were shipped from Portsmouth in 1987/1988 than from Roseau.

Table XII

Average number of items of produce shipped by hucksters in one shipment, by sex and port of departure in January-February 1987, 1988 and 1989

| | 1987 | | 1988 | | 1989 | |
|----------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| | P | R | P | R | P | R |
| Females | 6.6 | 3.1 | 5.9 | 5.0 | 3.1 | 7.0 |
| Males | 6.2 | 2.3 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 6.0 |

P = Portsmouth; R = Roseau

Choice of produce depends mostly on availability, market demands and whether or not there are trade restrictions governing their entry into any particular import market.

Plant quarantine restrictions can affect the trade in fresh agricultural produce. Since the establishment of the mango-seed weevil in Dominica a few years ago, mangoes were suddenly prohibited entry into traditional mango-importing countries such as Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and the United States Virgin Islands. Also, other pests such as fruit flies, are responsible for certain quarantine restrictions on the export of mangoes and other fresh fruits from Dominica. Bananas, plantains and yams are not allowed entry in the French Antilles because of other phytosanitary considerations.

The main goods purchased by the Dominican hucksters are grapefruits, plantain, oranges, dasheen, christophenes, pumpkins, tannias, pears, mangoes, limes, yams, coconuts and fresh cut flowers (see Figure 10).

Since 1982, traders have been exporting anthurium lillies mainly to the French Antilles. Some traders with health problems seemed to prefer the flower trade as the load is more manageable for them.⁴¹

3.5 Prices and payments of produce purchased

Purchasing price of goods fluctuates a great deal and is determined by various factors such as the degree of competition, the quantity of supplies and the market price of the goods. Whatever the price conditions, traders are said to be prepared to pay higher prices for produce than formal export companies.

Often, farmers extend credit to traders, but this service depends entirely upon the farmers' willingness to undertake such risks. This is where problems often crop up between farmers and hucksters.

3.6 Market source

Hucksters purchase goods from three sources: (1) directly from farmers, (2) from the local market and (3) from the Citrus Growers' Association.⁴²

When produce is scarce traders go to the countryside to get produce from the farmers.⁴³ In some cases, they purchase fruits on the tree, doing the harvesting themselves.

When produce is not scarce farmers take their produce to town to the hucksters.

When hucksters are farmers themselves, they still need to purchase additional produce since they are small farmers and their production capacity is too limited to supply market demands for all the trips they undertake. The survey indicates that 37.7 per cent of the hucksters trading with St Martin market their own produce: 80 per cent of the males grew their own produce, compared with 27.9

⁴¹ This is based on three interviews with hucksters in anthurium lillies by the author in 1987.

⁴² Only a small group of traders buy from the Citrus Growers' Association.

⁴³ The scarcity of agricultural produce in Dominica is at present a problem for the hucksters and for the agricultural sector in general.

per cent of the females. Men generally deal regularly with six to seven small farmers, while women generally deal with five.

Produce comes from almost all the production areas. Hucksters make their own arrangements to purchase goods with no interference by intermediaries. They often try to conceal the names of their suppliers and the price at which they buy to safeguard against competition.

Here again, personalized relationships with suppliers are of enormous importance. Hucksters living in the same area as their suppliers have more opportunities to foster these relationships than those residing further away.

3.7 Market outlets

3.7.1 Countries traded with

The markets covered by the hucksters are mainly Guadeloupe, Antigua and Barbuda, St Martin, Barbados, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla and Martinique. The greater volume of trade is with Guadeloupe, Antigua and Barbuda and St Martin.

In 1988 more traders started to take boats leaving Portsmouth for Guadeloupe.

As can be seen in Table XIII, quite some male traders stopped trading. They remained, however, in the trade with Guadeloupe and Barbados.

From the survey, 52.8 per cent of the hucksters trading with St Martin trade with two countries, 34 per cent with three and 13.2 per cent with four. It appears that traders under the age of 30 transact business more often with two countries while the older hucksters market more often in three countries.

Hucksters with partners⁴⁴ trade with slightly more countries than the single ones.

3.7.2 The buyers

Practically all the hucksters marketing in St Martin sell to vendors,⁴⁵ 40 per cent of the males sell to supermarkets, as against 20.9 per cent of the female traders.

⁴⁴ Partners refers to the legal husband, the common-law husband or "visiting" partner.

⁴⁵ Haitians resident in St Martin are regular vendor-buyers.

Table XIII

Number of shipments by destination and sex of trader,
January/February 1987, 1988 and 1989

| | 1987 | | | 1988 | | | 1989 | | |
|-----------------------|------|----|---|------|-----|---|------|----|---|
| | F | M | U | F | M | U | F | M | U |
| Guadeloupe | 115 | 82 | 1 | 213 | 115 | 7 | 208 | 77 | 0 |
| Antigua | 61 | 22 | 0 | 87 | 30 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 0 |
| St Martin | 44 | 22 | 5 | 111 | 39 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Barbados | 8 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 2 | 16 | 9 | 0 |
| Martinique | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Montserrat | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Anguilla | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| St Kitts and Nevis | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Montserrat | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 0 |
| Martinique | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

Table XIV

Number of shipments to Guadeloupe by port of departure
and by sex in Jan./Febr. 1987-1989

| | 1987 | | | 1988 | | | 1989 | | |
|------------|------|----|---|------|-----|---|------|----|---|
| | F | M | U | F | M | U | F | M | U |
| Roseau | 93 | 71 | 0 | 128 | 55 | 1 | 93 | 16 | 0 |
| Portsmouth | 22 | 11 | 1 | 85 | 60 | 6 | 115 | 61 | 0 |
| Total | 115 | 82 | 1 | 213 | 115 | 7 | 208 | 77 | 0 |

From previous studies and from direct experience in trading countries, hucksters have been known to engage heavily in the retail trade. The extent to which hucksters can continue to engage in retail is limited as countries such as Antigua and St Martin are placing restrictions on retailing. Through training programmes run by the DHA hucksters have been encouraged to sell wholesale to maximize returns.

Table XV

Union status compared with number of countries traded with

| Countries | Union Status | | Total |
|--------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| | With Partner | Single | |
| Two | 14 | 14 | 28 |
| % | 50 | 50 | |
| % | 58.3 | 48.3 | |
| Three | 6 | 12 | 18 |
| % | 33.3 | 66.7 | |
| % | 25 | 41.4 | |
| Four | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| % | 57.1 | 42.9 | |
| % | 16.7 | 10.3 | |
| Total | 24 | 29 | 53 |
| % | 45.28 | 54.72 | |

$$\text{CHI} = 1.686166$$

3.8 The business size

Quantities shipped per month fluctuate, reflecting the seasonality in production of agricultural produce.

If we look at the total quantity of exports for the three main products exported by the hucksters, we see that the trade tripled⁴⁶ between 1987 and 1988 but declined drastically between 1988 and

⁴⁶ The figures for 1988 are very high, thereby giving reason to believe the data may not be reliable.

1989. The average quantity of goods per person⁴⁷ was 862 lbs in 1987 and 575 lbs in 1989.

In 1989 the differences between male and female traders increased. Males shipped larger quantities than the females. The information retrieved from the shipping bills for 1987, 1988 and 1989 on the amount of money involved in each shipment shows the same trend.

Table XVI

Average value in EC dollars of a shipment
by sex of trader, port of departure, 1987-1989

| Jan./Febr. | Roseau | | Portsmouth | |
|------------|--------|------|------------|------|
| | F | M | F | M |
| 1987 | 301 | 431 | 821 | 751 |
| 1988 | 977 | 1392 | 1056 | 999 |
| 1989 | 1304 | 1704 | 589 | 1032 |

Table XVII

Total amount of shipments by sex of trader,
port of departure, 1987-1989

| Jan./Febr. | Roseau | | | Portsmouth | | | Total |
|------------|--------|----|---|------------|-----|---|-------|
| | F | M | U | F | M | U | |
| 1987 | 101 | 71 | 0 | 135 | 73 | 7 | 387 |
| 1988 | 140 | 68 | 3 | 292 | 143 | 8 | 654 |
| 1989 | 109 | 25 | 0 | 137 | 69 | 0 | 340 |

⁴⁷ Caution should be noted as this figure is based on shipping bill documents. Traders help each other and add produce of other traders on their own shipping bill; this practice increases the average quantity shipped per trader.

3.9 Reverse trade

From research at the Customs Department,⁴⁸ it appeared that hucksters were also importing commodities into Dominica during the months January and February 1987. Out of the 139 entries in the period of research, 15 were related to hucksters. They brought in a range of goods valued from \$267 to \$4,732. Goods originated from Guadeloupe, St Martin and Puerto Rico. From Guadeloupe, traders generally take back agricultural produce (onions, potatoes and red beans) and from St Martin and Puerto Rico, footwear, ornaments, cosmetics and clothes.

From the survey among the hucksters trading with St Martin, a different picture was obtained: 77.4 per cent of the hucksters said they take back clothes but when asked for the quantities, only 45 per cent of the hucksters admitted to being involved in the reverse trade.

Of those who admitted to being involved in the reverse trade, 50 per cent sent goods to Dominica by ship, 12.5 per cent by air and 37.5 per cent used both means of transportation.

Male traders are more involved in the reverse trade:⁴⁹ 60 per cent, as opposed to 42 per cent of the female traders. The quantities of goods imported are, however, small, especially in the case of the female traders.

3.10 The level of formalization of the hucksters' business

This section is exclusively based on the survey done on the 53 hucksters trading with St Martin.

A very high percentage (69.8 per cent) are members of the DHA and can be considered organized. But from the way the traders order their business, the level of organization is low.

The level of organization has been measured as follows: a huckster gets three points if he/she has capital investment at home in the form of a van, storage area or a shop; two points if the huckster is marketing produce overseas to the formal sector (e.g. restaurants/supermarkets); two points if the huckster keeps records or business accounts; one point if the huckster makes use of regular suppliers when purchasing produce; and one point if the

⁴⁸ Based on data from the Portsmouth Customs Department (see Appendix III).

⁴⁹ More research is needed, as the number of males in the sample was small.

huckster markets in Dominica commodities bought overseas in the formal sector.

On the basis of such measurement, it can be said that only 32.1 per cent of the traders are organized in one way or another⁵⁰ and that female traders, on the whole, were much less organized than their male counterparts.

3.10.1 Capital investment

Capital investment in the trade is low. Only 24.5 per cent of the hucksters had any kind of capital investment in their trade; 9.4 per cent have vans; 18.8 per cent own shops and 5.7 per cent have their own storage area for produce.

The traders who seemed to own shops in Dominica all had been in business over seven years.

3.10.2 Formalized contact with farmers/suppliers and buyers

It appeared that 69.2 per cent of the hucksters in the survey made use of the same suppliers of produce in Dominica. The average number of suppliers to female traders was five, and six to the male traders. None had written agreements with their suppliers.

The hucksters normally try to contact their supplier by telephone or by sending messages through friends. This is a two-way communication as the farmer also approaches the huckster.

Half of the males, as against 27.9 per cent of the females, market a part of their produce to the restaurants, supermarkets or hotels in St Martin.

Here, too, no written agreements exist between the traders and their buyers in St Martin.

Only 7.5 per cent of those involved in the importation of goods to Dominica (the reverse trade) sell to the formal sector; 41.5 per cent of those importing goods to Dominica sell to friends.

⁵⁰ This means that they score one point or more on the categories that were defined under "level of organization".

Table XVIII**Marketing in the formal sector in St Martin
by sex of huckster**

| | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| No | 5 | 31 | 36 |
| % | 13.9 | 86.1 | |
| % | 50 | 72.1 | |
| Yes | 5 | 12 | 17 |
| % | 29.4 | 70.6 | |
| % | 50 | 27.9 | |
| TOTAL | 10 | 43 | 53 |
| | 18.87 | 81.13 | |

$$\text{CHI} = 1.817621$$

3.10.3 Book-keeping

The level of record-keeping is very low among the traders, even among those traders with a high level of schooling, high trade incomes and a high level of organization. Most of the older hucksters (86.4 per cent) said they kept no records. Among the others, males keep slightly more records than females. Book-keeping records showed an overlap between business and domestic expenses.

The lack of record-keeping is not necessarily an indication of poor business expertise. The trader in many instances has developed her own system, as can be illustrated by the passage below:

"Well you have to know how to handle the money and you know what the profits are like, so if you, say, make \$20 you spend \$10 and you hold \$10 from that you can save \$5 and buy with \$5."

Table XIX

Record-keeping by age of huckster

| Age | Record keeping | | Total |
|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
| | No | Yes | |
| 21-30 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| % | 42.9 | 57.1 | |
| % | 7.7 | 28.6 | |
| 31-46 | 17 | 7 | 24 |
| % | 70.8 | 29.2 | |
| % | 43.6 | 50 | |
| 46+ | 19 | 3 | 22 |
| % | 86.4 | 13.6 | |
| % | 48.7 | 21.4 | |
| Total | 39 | 14 | 53 |
| | 73.58 | 26.42 | |

CHI = 5.342032

4 THE DOMINICA HUCKSTERS ASSOCIATION

4.1 Services provided by the Dominica Hucksters Association

The Dominican Hucksters Association (DHA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization formed in 1982. The association is managed by a board of directors with representatives from the private and public sectors. The president of the association is chairperson of the board. The aim of the association is to promote the interests of the hucksters by providing technical and financial assistance.

To date, the association has provided services for its members, such as securing the necessary documents to export; making requests for visas; maintaining individual tax records; investigating complaints both overseas and locally; providing training and appropriate packaging, furnishing loans, conducting periodic market surveys and representing hucksters' interests in dealings with both the government and private sector.

A training programme in basic costing and pricing and post-harvest losses forms a critical part of the work of the association. The association also has been involved in testing different prototypes of packaging material, plastic crates, wooden crates and cardboard cartons. At present they provide cardboard

cartons to the hucksters. The introduction of smaller boxes was favourable for the women traders as they can manage those easily themselves.

The credit scheme of the DHA is administered by the AID Bank. A DHA member can get a 60-day short-term loan of US\$300.00. Interest on loans is 8 per cent, with 4 per cent interest paid to the Bank for covering administrative costs and 4 per cent to the DHA. Forty-seven per cent of this goes back to the revolving fund. All reports on loan activities have been favourable, both in terms of use of loans, funds and repayment⁵¹.

Table XX

Number of loan applications by year of Dominican hucksters, by sex

| Year | Number of Applicants | | Total |
|------|----------------------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | |
| 1984 | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| 1985 | 118 | 36 | 154 |
| 1986 | 203 | 63 | 266 |
| 1987 | 130 | 49 | 179 |
| 1988 | 85 | 26 | 111 |
| 1989 | 43* | 14* | 57* |

Source: Huckster Credit File, Dominica

*: Figures until 26/06/89

DHA members estimate the loan facility highly:

"I found it beneficial a lot, 'cause the people who has don't feel anything but the people that don't have like a woman like me, I use it a lot."

4.2 Membership of the Association

From the inception of the DHA, 152 members were registered and in 1989 the total number of members registered was 517, of whom 65 per cent are female.

⁵¹ The impact of the Credit Scheme has not been studied or evaluated to determine how effective it has been in terms of improving trade operations.

In 1989 approximately 60 per cent of all the traders who exported agricultural produce were members of the DHA (see Table XX).

The percentage of hucksters who can be considered non-active, in the sense that they were not exporting produce in the months of research, is high. A closer look at Table XXI reveals that:

(a) The percentage of non-active male traders belonging to the DHA is much higher than that of females; and

(b) The group of hucksters in the DHA trading full-time is small: only 22.3 per cent of the trader population.

It is possible that male traders become members of the DHA to support their huckster partner. As members, they are allowed to get a loan, which doubles the amount allocated to their partner. Another plausible explanation is the existence of trading couples with the women selling overseas and the men making the necessary arrangements in Dominica.

Table XXI
Percentage active traders belonging to the Dominica
Hucksters Association by sex, 1987-1989

| | F | M |
|------|-----|-------|
| 1987 | 5% | 2.5% |
| 1988 | 46% | 34.6% |
| 1989 | 59% | 60% |

5 PROBLEMS OF THE TRADERS

5.1 Introduction

The traders encounter numerous problems in their work. The income they derive from their trade is small and insecure, competition is stiff, the level of produce spoilage is high, thefts are frequently experienced, their bargaining power is low and the conditions under which they perform their work are harsh, sub-standard and injurious to their health.

Table XXII

Percentage of active and non-active traders, belonging to the DHA, by sex, Jan./Feb. 1987-1989

| | Active traders | | Non-active traders | | | Total |
|------|----------------|----|--------------------|-----|----|-------|
| | F | M | F | M | U* | |
| 1987 | 65 | 21 | 191 | 109 | 1 | 386 |
| 1988 | 67 | 26 | 230 | 143 | 1 | 467 |
| 1989 | 50 | 21 | 283 | 162 | 1 | 517 |

*= sex was not mentioned in the shipping bills

5.2 Insufficient trade income

The difference in trade incomes for male and female traders trading with St Martin was high. More men were found in the higher-income groups, whereas more women were found in the lower-income groups.

Care must be exercised when analyzing the survey data by sex because the number of males interviewed was small. Besides that, a survey is solely based on what the respondents want to say. It is quite possible therefore that female hucksters have undervalued their income when questioned about it and/or that male hucksters have overvalued theirs.

The income of the hucksters is never secure. At any time something might happen which could take away all the profits.

"It is a lot of problems you know, because sometimes the sale does not always be good. Sometimes I get spoiled fruits. Sometimes I don't get what I really want and so.."

The hucksters encounter high overheads. The numerous costs to be met include air or sea travel and accommodation overseas; transport and documentation costs; market fees; and taxes, to name a few.

In the survey sample the hucksters trading with St Martin were asked if they considered themselves successful; 58.4 per cent, both male and female alike, responded negatively to this question.

5.3 Competition

When asked for their views on the hindrances, the hucksters responded that internal competition was one of the primary factors that served as a barrier to their success. To quote one of the hucksters:

"I am not making because too much people".

All the hucksters concentrate on the same products. They are dependent on what the market demands. In St Martin there is a demand for bananas, while in Guadeloupe there is more of a demand for grapefruits and oranges. As there is no product diversification and several boats come in weekly, there is a situation of over-supply.

5.4 Spoilage of produce

Only a small group of traders seem not to experience any damage to their produce during the transportation from farm to market: 81.1 per cent said they had problems with spoilage. The percentage of post-harvest losses is estimated to be in excess of 25 per cent - 50 per cent.⁵²

The major reason for the spoilage was perceived by the traders, male and female alike, as having to do with the shipping and off-loading of the produce; 56.6 per cent said that their produce got damaged by off-loading and 41.5 per cent because of shipping. By shipping, they meant the boat transport (heat of the engines, no ventilation) and the dumping of produce when seas were rough. Among the traders, 13.2 per cent said the spoilage had to do with the bad quality of produce they had obtained from their suppliers.

A small group of hucksters (11.3 per cent) mentioned the way they pack the produce as a cause of spoilage.

Spoilage does, however, occur any time between the harvesting and actual selling of the produce. Temperature, humidity, infection from fungus or bacteria and physical damage due to bad handling are some of the factors that affect the rate of spoilage.

If the harvesting or packaging of the produce is done in rain, the rate of its spoilage is higher. The hucksters at present do not have a collective checking point, where the produce obtained from the farmers can be checked properly and they also do not have a facility, such as a shed, where they can repack and prepare their

⁵² FAO, Production is only half the battle. A training manual in fresh produce marketing for the Eastern Caribbean (PFL/RLA/001/PFL), Barbados, December 1988.

produce for shipment. This activity is usually performed in open air.

The markets overseas also lack facilities, further affecting the quality of the produce. In St Martin, for example, the hucksters do not have access to a covered market: the produce remains on the ground, drying in the sun.

From Table XXIII, it becomes clear that the traders do not have control over all the factors that cause damage to their produce. Modes of harvesting and transporting and the lack of facilities at the markets are factors not under the control of the traders. The male traders, however, seem to have greater control over some of these factors as:

(a) A high percentage of them are part-time farmers: (80 per cent⁵³ of the males as against 20 per cent of the females) and can therefore ensure proper harvesting;

Table XXIII

Causes of Spoilage

| CAUSE OF SPOILAGE | ACTIVITY CYCLE | PERFORMING AGENT | |
|---------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | trader | other |
| Lack of ventilation | packing shipping | trader | shipper |
| High temperature | transport marketing | trader | carrier, shipper |
| Physical injuries | harvesting transporting handling packing | trader | farmer carrier, shipper carrier |
| Moisture | harvesting in rain marketing cleaning produce shipping | trader trader | farmer shipper |
| Premature ripening | harvest time grading/packing | trader | farmer |
| Pests and diseases | pre-harvest control post-harvest handling and control | trader | farmer farmer, carrier |

⁵³ This data is based only on the survey among the hucksters trading with St Martin.

(b) It is quite possible that they have more control over what happens to their produce,⁵⁴ their physical strength enabling them to load it themselves.

As was said by a huckster (page 22): "They (the men) can handle the load more than us."

In addition, if we look at the occupational statistics, one major employment sector for men is the transport sector. The men probably drive the produce to port more often than do female traders and in so doing, have an advantage as they can control, to a certain extent, the transport.

5.5 Stealing

Traders, especially females, are plagued by theft: 74.4 per cent of the women seemed to have had produce stolen from them, compared with 40 per cent of the males. Goods were stolen from the women nine times on an average during the previous year. For the men, the average was 2.5 times; but the number of males in the survey is too small to generalize for all the male traders. More research will be needed to consolidate the above preliminary results.

Those most seriously affected by theft are female traders in the 46-and-over age category (see Figure 12).

Theft of money is less common. Only 15.1 per cent of the traders seemed to have had their money stolen during the previous year.

In general, theft of produce and money occurs in the market place overseas. This is very clear in the case of Dominican traders in St Martin (see Figure 13), where the traders do not have any place to store their goods at the Marigot Market and have to leave them at night in the hope of finding them there in the morning.

5.6 Problems with persons/ institutions

In the survey (see appendix 1) some questions were asked concerning problems experienced by the hucksters with certain persons or institutions with whom they dealt in the course of their work.

The traders mentioned the customers as the group with which they encountered the most problems. The males especially (50 per cent of them) appeared to experience this kind of difficulty, as against 44.2 per cent of the female hucksters. This reinforces the image given by female hucksters (see page 21) that females are

⁵⁴ This is a hypothesis still to be verified.

better at selling as they have more patience and "give nice smiles".

From the survey it appeared that the males in the trade could not get along with the female hucksters. The male traders mentioned that their second biggest problem was their female colleagues.

The female traders cited the farmers as their second biggest problem. That some of them actually have problems becomes obvious from the following statement by a Dominican farmer:⁵⁵

"Some of the hucksters are crooked. Some of them will tell you they will pay you and sometimes you stay a whole four-five weeks before you can get any money and you have to sue them".

Not all farmers think this way. Some of them expressed a different view:

"Sometimes hucksters don't get proper markets, they don't order much, they don't even order at all but the problem is not with them but may be with overseas markets which is not in demand."

The males made no mention of problems with farmers. The number of farmer-hucksters is much higher among male than among female hucksters, which partly explains this.

Of the traders, 15.1 per cent - mostly females and in the age category 46-and-over, did mention having problems with Customs officers. From research in other islands there are some indications that young female traders are helped by Custom Officers. If this is also the case for Dominica, it is not known.

Of the traders, 9.4 per cent - females and males alike, experienced problems with the drivers who transport their produce.

No problems were mentioned by the hucksters with regard to the phyto-sanitary officers. Only 1.9 per cent had problems with airline companies and in obtaining loans.

5.7 Hard working conditions

"I used to trade and have a big stomach and I still trading. After I make the child, after three-four months I re-go back to the trade. So I paid somebody to mind the baby and so what have you. It is very hard fixing load,

⁵⁵ Author's interview with farmers, 1988.

and lift-up big load; I lose three of them (children), I had eight and I lose three."⁵⁶

The work conditions on the boat:

"You know I sleep on the boat whenever. Sometimes it's on the ground I have to stay. I just open a sheet, a piece of cardboard and I sleep."

Traders going to St Martin often "sleep" on their last day there at the market to ensure they have a space to sell. Saturday is their most important day, as there are most customers then and it is their last day in St Martin. Haitians living in St Martin buy wholesale from them during the week and retail their produce on the roadside but also market their leftovers on the Saturday market. The available space at the market is small which necessitates their over-nighting on the spot.

5.8 Obtaining credits/loans

From the survey it appears that a high percentage of hucksters have loans. This reflects the activities of the DHA. In that respect, the traders of Dominica are in a much better position than those of the other islands, as their association facilitates their access to loans.

Other credit agencies in Dominica have also issued loans to hucksters, but to a lesser extent. The National Development Foundation issued 46 loans between 1983 and 1986 to a value of EC\$99,148. Barclays Bank at Portsmouth issued twelve loans in a period of two years. Marigot Credit Union had no applicants in 1985, two in 1986 for a value of EC\$30,400 in one case and EC\$5,250 in the other. Portsmouth Credit Union, on an average, disburses EC\$1,500 monthly to about four persons. Repayments are regular and up-to-date.⁵⁷

5.9 Health problems

Health problems are common among traders but the difference between male and female traders is striking. More than two thirds of the females seemed to suffer from some kind of health problem,

⁵⁶ Based on interviews done for the video production: God Give Us the Talent, The hucksters of Dominica, ECLAC, Port-of-Spain, 1987.

⁵⁷ Hannah Clarendon, Constructing a Data Base on Women Traders in Dominica, Consultant Paper, ECLAC, Port-of-Spain, August 1987.

Table XXIV

Experience of health problems by sex

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| No | 7 | 14 | 21 |
| % | 33.3 | 66.7 | |
| % | 70 | 32.6 | |
| Yes | 3 | 29 | 32 |
| % | 9.4 | 90.6 | |
| % | 30 | 67.4 | |
| Total | 10 | 43 | 53 |
| % | 18.87 | 81.13 | |

as against one fourth among males.⁵⁸

Vulnerable groups are those above 46 and those who are single: 68.2 per cent of the women over 46 appeared to have some form of health problem. Of the single traders 72.4 per cent, in comparison to 45.8 per cent of those with partners, experience problems with their health.

Headache was the main problem for the females, affecting 35.7 per cent of them. Other common health troubles among women were pains in the back (25.6 per cent), swollen feet (23.3 per cent) and dizziness (14 per cent).

Some are tired and just want to stop. One trader expressed a longing to be able to retire and draw a pension:

"I am too old for this trading but I must continue because I have to live".

According to the traders, the main cause of their health problems was the fact that they were exposed too much to sun and dust.

5.10 Recommendations proposed by the Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin

Hucksters have very clear ideas about the problems they are facing and the solutions required. Any project should incorporate mechanisms for hucksters to reflect and speak for themselves.

⁵⁸ It should be kept in mind that the number of male traders interviewed was small.

PROBLEMS**SOLUTIONS**

| | |
|---|--|
| Very bad market conditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expanding market area - providing shelter - providing tables/stand - providing water facilities - permission for longer market hours at the Marigot market |
| Stealing of produce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing facilities to store goods overnight at the market - providing insurance for losses incurred |
| Too much competition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a pension for older traders over- flooding the market - introduction of export quotas - reduce the number of boats to St Martin - introduce a system of rotation to stop hucksters who come every week - assistance in getting new markets - improving economic situation in Dominica so that traders can make a living |
| High overhead costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lower the freight costs for boat transport |
| Spoilage of produce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide cold-storage facilities on boat - improve handling of produce by crew members |
| Dumping of goods by boat owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial redress when produce is dumped |
| Customers buy on credit and do not pay back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cash payment |
| High prices of farm produce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - price control on agricultural produce |

6 SUMMARY

6.1 Trade characteristics

- The number of active⁵⁹ traders in Dominica in 1989 was 119.
- The drop-out rate is high: between 1988 and 1989 the decline in the number of active traders was 46 per cent.
- Women's participation in the huckster trade is high and on the increase. In 1989, 71 per cent of the active traders were females.
- The percentage of active male traders has declined from 43 per cent in 1987 to 29 per cent in 1989.
- Portsmouth is the most important port for the hucksters: in 1989, 60 per cent of the traders were operating from there.
- Male traders made greater use in 1989 of the Portsmouth port than the one at Roseau, compared with previous years: 34 per cent of the hucksters shipping from Portsmouth were males in 1989, compared to 18 per cent from Roseau.
- Hucksters do not specialize in any particular product; they trade in four to five products.
- In 1989, produce assortment shipped from Roseau was higher than from Portsmouth.
- Hucksters' exports of the three main products (grapefruit, plantain and oranges) tripled between 1987 and 1988, but declined drastically between 1988 and 1989.
- The male traders increased their quantities of exports per shipment over those of the female hucksters.
- The influx of new hucksters in the trade to St Martin is low.
- Of the hucksters trading with St Martin, 37.7 per cent partly market their own produce.
- The three main markets for the traders are: Guadeloupe, Antigua and St Martin.

⁵⁹ Active means traders who have exported agricultural produce in the period of research: January-February 1987, 1988 and 1989.

- Of the total huckster population, 45 per cent⁶⁰ is involved in a regular reverse trade⁶¹. Male traders, especially, are involved in the two way-trade.
- The value of commodities imported into Dominica by the hucksters varied from \$EC267 to \$EC4,732.⁶²
- The level of business formalization is low, especially for the female hucksters.
- Capital investment in the trade is low: only 18.8 per cent of the hucksters have invested in a shop and 5.7 per cent in a storage area⁶³.
- Regular book-keeping was not done by 73.6 per cent of the hucksters.
- No written agreements exist either with produce suppliers or buyers.
- Of the hucksters, 25 per cent travel by air once in a while⁶⁴. Most travel by boat.
- The traders rely mostly on relatives for assistance in their work.
- Hucksters of the same sex and the same parish co-operate in the transporting, documenting and supervising of the load.
- More female hucksters are engaged full-time in the trade than males.

⁶⁰ Based on the survey in 1989 of 53 hucksters trading with St Martin.

⁶¹ Reverse trade means importing goods into Dominica. This data is based on data collected for January-February 1987 at the Portsmouth Customs Department and shipping bills over the same period.

⁶² Based on data entries in Dominica in January-February 1987

⁶³ Based on the survey in 1989 on 53 hucksters trading with St Martin.

⁶⁴ See footnote 63.

6.2 The hucksters

- The average age of traders shipping to St Martin is 43. Most of them started trading in their early thirties.
- Most of the traders finished primary school. Newcomers and younger traders were not exposed to higher education⁶⁵.
- Of the hucksters,⁶⁶ 54.7 per cent are single, widowed, separated, or divorced.
- Males earn higher incomes from the trade than females.
- Of the traders, 79.2 per cent seemed to be solely dependent on income from the trade.
- More male hucksters appear to be small farmers than female hucksters.⁶⁷
- The residences of the hucksters are concentrated mostly in the parish St George.

6.3 The Dominica Hucksters Association

- In 1989 approximately 60 per cent of the traders shipping agricultural produce were members of the Dominica Hucksters' Association (DHA).
- Among the hucksters going to St Martin in 1989, 69.8 per cent were members of the DHA.
- Of the hucksters, 77.7 per cent belonging to the DHA did not ship agricultural produce during the months of research (January-February 1987, 1988 and 1989).

6.4 Child-care

- Of the spouses of hucksters, 90.6 per cent did not take care of their children during the absence of the trader.
- Paid arrangements are common for taking care of children in the 5-7 age-group.

⁶⁵ See footnote 63.

⁶⁶ See footnote 63.

⁶⁷ More research is needed to verify this as the number of male respondents in the survey was small.

- Among the hucksters, 11 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with child-care arrangements⁶⁸.
- Female relatives mostly, help in looking after the children during the trader's absence from home.

6.5 Views

- There are strong indications that female traders hold the work they perform in low esteem.
- According to complaints by hucksters, the deplorable condition of the schooners operating from Dominica, in which the produce is transported, leads to delays and the dumping or spoiling of their cargo.
- Males are regarded by the female traders as being able to cope better in the "loading" activity, while they consider themselves as being better at selling. Males on the whole have less problems with farmers than females and probably cope better in purchasing produce.
- The hucksters like the fact that they are their own boss.
- Not every huckster likes to travel overseas, but does so out of necessity. Some are tired. Some would like to stop trading.

6.6 Problem fields

- The hucksters have no insurance coverage on losses.
- They have a very heavy workload and perform their work under less than adequate conditions.
- Conditions on the boats present problems to the traders. One major complaint is the dumping of produce when rough seas occur.
- The hucksters' income varies, resulting in much insecurity.
- Of the traders marketing in St Martin, 58.5 per cent considered themselves unsuccessful.

⁶⁸ Based on the traders going to St Martin; members of this group are older and have older children than the average huckster in Dominica.

- Traders feel that their spoilage problems are caused by bad handling during loading and off-loading and during the voyage by boat. They seem to underestimate other factors affecting the spoilage rate.
- Of the female traders marketing their produce in St Martin, 74.4 per cent experienced theft of produce in the Marigot market in 1988. Most of the victims were female traders over the age of 46.
- Co-operation between male and female traders travelling to St Martin is rare. Male traders - who are in the minority - seemed to have antagonistic feelings towards their female counterparts.
- Conflicts exist between female traders and farmers with regard to the quality of the produce obtained from the farmers and the lack of repayment of credit by the hucksters to the farmers.
- More than two thirds of the female traders marketing in St Martin, experienced health problems such as headaches, back-pains and dizziness. The older ones especially were encountering health problems.

6.7 Concluding remark

The hucksters are entrepreneurs in all respects⁶⁹. Whether they are successful depends largely on their ability to cope with the difficult social and economic environment in which they have to operate. While at the level of the formal economy, facilities are often created to promote export in the region, the hucksters who operate in the informal sector and, who fill a gap in the market, respond to the need for food and other commodity consumption and contribute to economic development, need to struggle their way through innumerable barriers in order to survive.

⁶⁹ Cuales, Sonia, "Participation in formal and informal sector of the economy: Are women entrepreneurs?", paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Caribbean Studies Association, Barbados, 10-11 May 1989.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.8 Recommendation 1

To set up a pilot project in which traders are pooled together in small groups with the aim of tackling the many problems they are encountering in their work. The long-term objectives of the project are: (1) to increase the control the traders have on their business; and (2) to elevate their economic and social position.

Suggestions for action

- To introduce a division of labour among the traders within each small group. Specialization could be possible in the following fields: (1) purchasing, (2) sorting/grading, (3) packing and (4) marketing/selling overseas.
- Time constraints do not allow the traders to check the produce when they purchase it from the farmers/suppliers. It is not uncommon, therefore, for them to end up with very poor quality produce. When this happens the trader, has no guarantee of reimbursement from the supplier. Legal assistance and collective checking procedures could be put in place in order to protect the trader.
- The huckster has no power to sue vessel operators who dump or handle their produce badly when the boat faces difficulties in rough seas. Mechanisms to prevent such practices could be implemented in co-operation with the vessel operators. The possibility of setting up an emergency/insurance fund to cover loss of produce could also be explored.
- Those activities that are in direct control of the traders could be improved and upgraded. Some traders still use sacks and bags, round wicker-type baskets and wooden crates that do not protect the produce sufficiently and cause their contents often to be compressed. If the hucksters want to improve their market penetration, they should improve their packaging methods.

Prerequisites for the success of the above project

- Carriers, drivers, ship crew/owners and farmers must be included in the project. The hucksters are not in a position to solve all their problems individually or even as a group. Brainstorming sessions with all the parties involved in the hucksters trade are necessary.
- The selection of the small groups should be from among those traders who are members of the DHA and who already co-operate

to a certain extent with each other. Co-operation occurs mostly among traders residing in the same area. Participation must be on a purely voluntary basis. The different groups can at a later stage learn from each other and be fused together.

- A mechanism should be put in place to allow the hucksters to discuss their views: a participatory approach is needed, whereby the hucksters are involved from the beginning of the project. It is important that the hucksters view the project as theirs; they must stay "boss of themselves" and make their own decisions on their work and their future. The role of the project would be to monitor the groups and to provide the necessary information in order to reduce possible mistakes.
- The project should be provided with enough financial backing to ensure the full participation of both male and female traders.

7.2 Recommendation 2

To improve the collection of data on the traders and their trade.

- The sex of the traders should be added to the records of the phyto-sanitary certificates, manifest and shipping bills so that more gender-specific detailed data can be retrieved, such as volume of trade by sex of trader, number of traders by sex, per shipment, etc.
- All the data available from the huckster licence register, shipping documents, files of the DHA and phyto-sanitary certificates should be pooled together in a Database 4 programme at a central place. A suggestion for such a place would be the DHA. The data should be analyzed regularly in order to update appreciation of trends in the trade and to enable necessary adjustments. A computer programme to fuse the available data in one database programme has been initiated by the Women in Development Unit of ECLAC, Port-of-Spain and could be expanded.

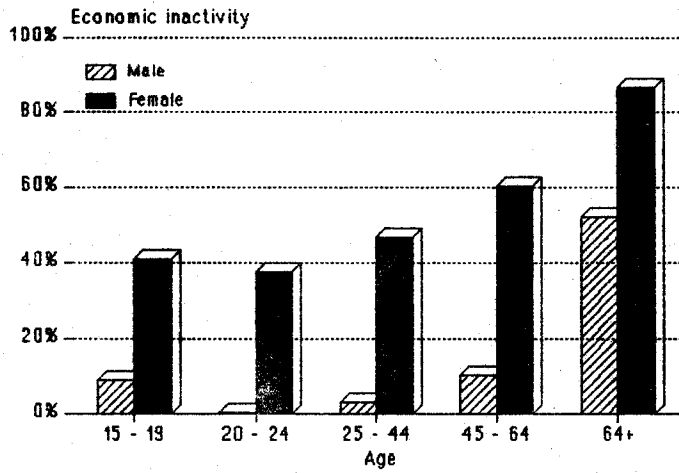


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of economic inactivity by broad age group and sex in Dominica: Census Data, 1980.

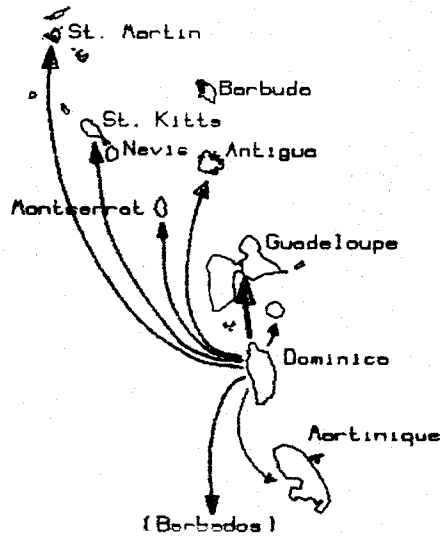


Figure 2. Main markets of the Dominican hucksters

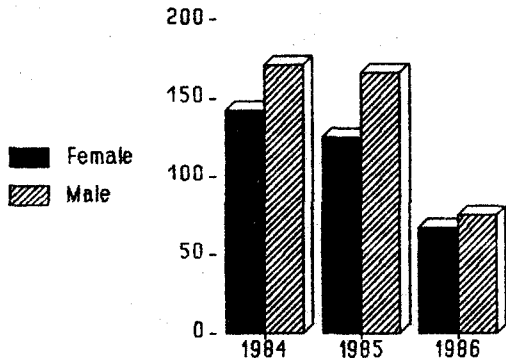


Figure 3. Number of huckster's licence applications for 1984-1986

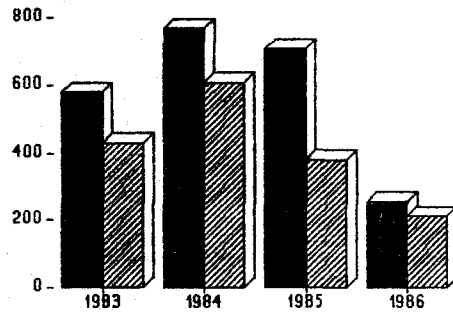


Figure 4. Number of huckster's licence renewals for 1983-1986

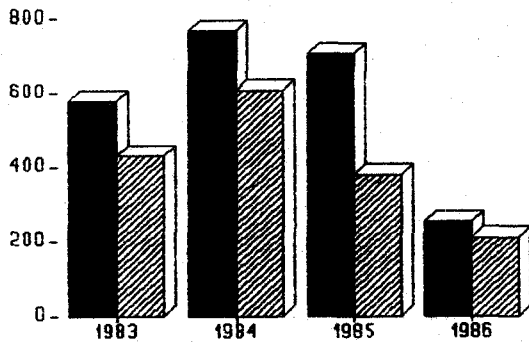


Figure 5. Educational level of Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin

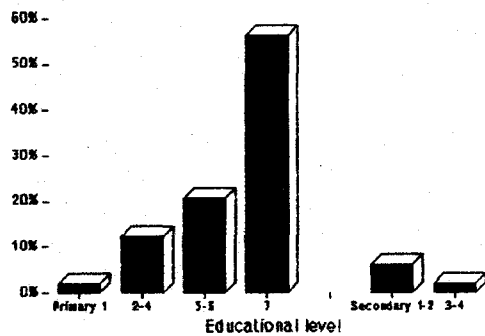


Figure 6. Union status of Dominican hucksters trading with St Martin

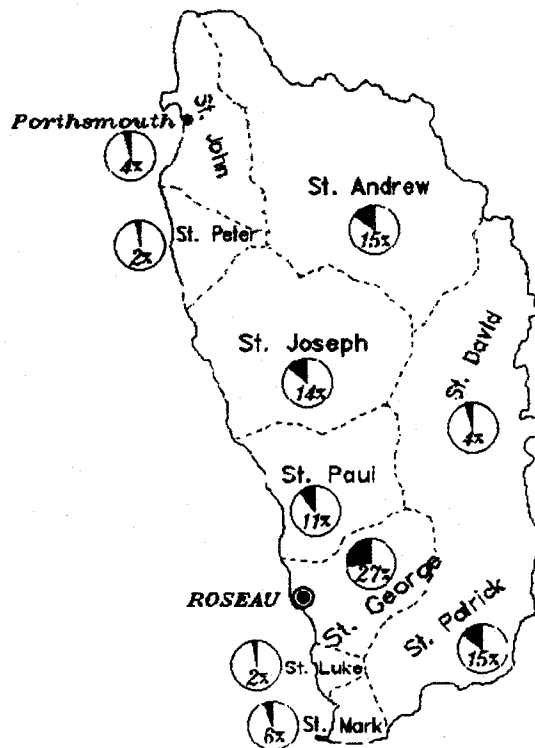


Figure 7. Distribution of hucksters' residence over the different parishes

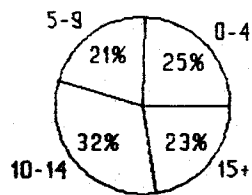


Figure 8. Percentage hucksters by number of years in trade

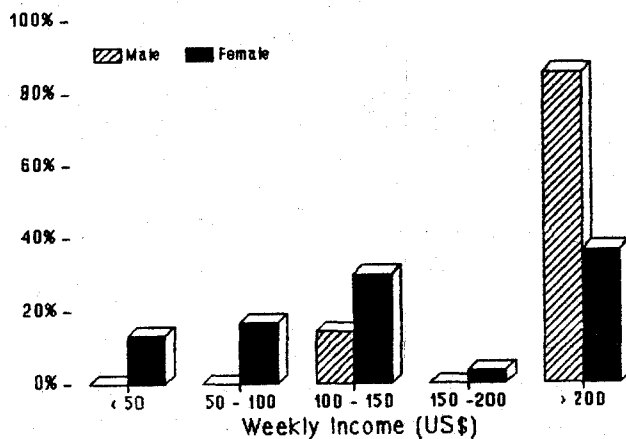


Figure 9. Weekly income (US\$) from trade by sex of hucksters trading with St Martin

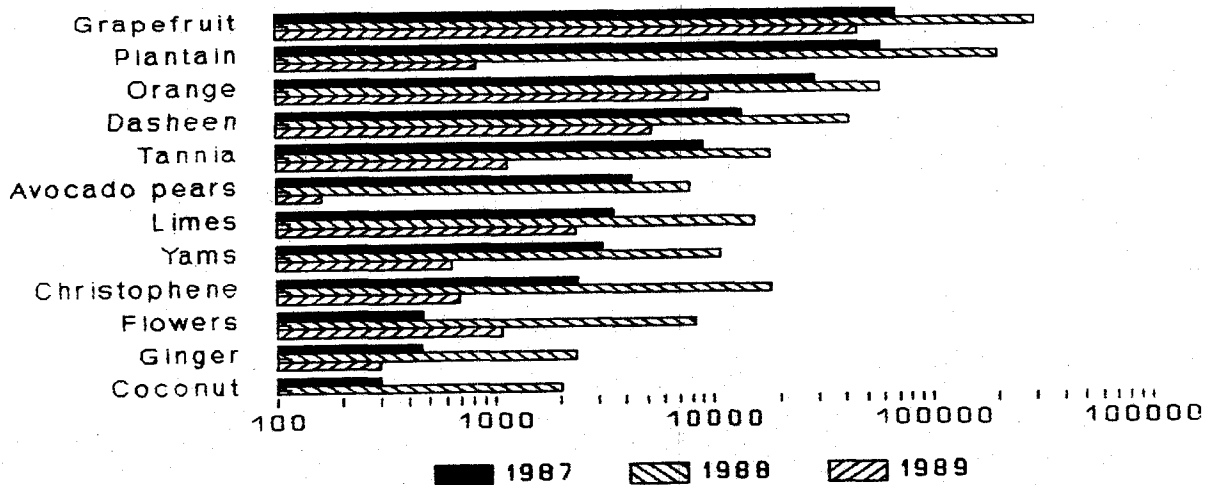


Figure 10. Total quantity (lbs, logarithmic) shipped by Dominican hucksters

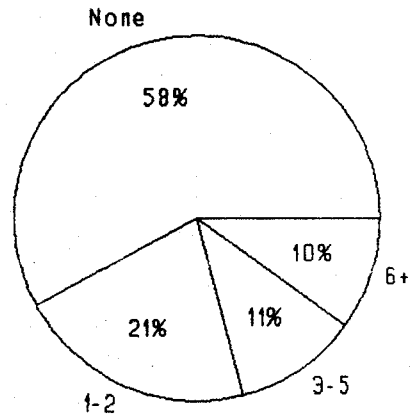


Figure 11. Number of packages imported in percentages

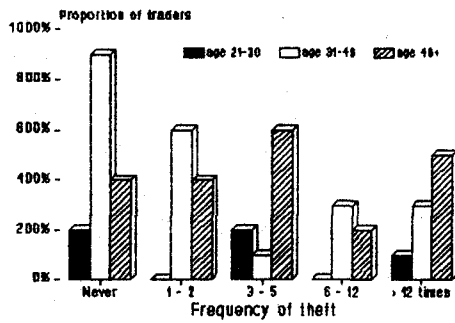
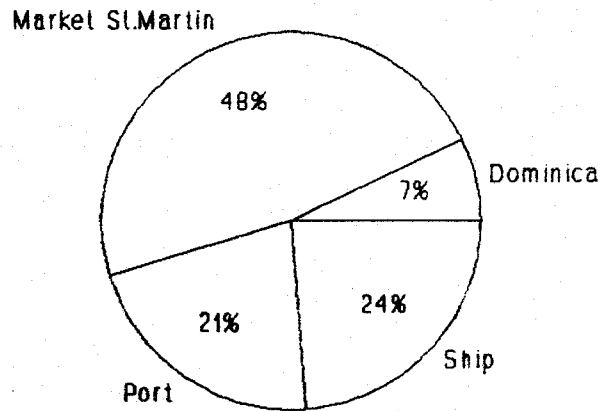


Figure 12. Frequency of theft of produce during 1988 from female traders in various age-groups.



13. Distribution of theft in different places

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