

OPERATION G.R.O.W. (GROWING AND REAPING OUR WEALTH)

Over the years the island has been importing increasingly large quantities of food and agro-based raw materials. During the period 1968 to 1971 the importation of these products rose from \$43.3 million to \$60.2 million. There is no doubt that a significant proportion of these importations can and should be produced locally. The production of our traditional export crops has been lagging and there is, moreover, considerable scope for the development and expansion of export markets in a wide range of crops which can be profitably produced in the country. Operation G.R.O.W. (Growing and Reaping Our Wealth) which collectively encompasses three major production programmes (Project Land Lease, Project Food Farms and Project Self-Help) has been conceived by the Government as one of the major thrusts in agriculture to revitalise the agricultural sector and to redress the existing imbalance.

2. The basic objectives of the programme can be summarized as follows -

- (a) to achieve the fuller use of two of our most important basic resources - land and people;
- (b) to ensure that the agricultural sector substantially increases its contribution to the economic development of the country;
- (c) to produce locally as much of our national food and raw material requirements as is economically feasible, thus reducing our dependence on imports;
- (d) to achieve the widest possible distribution of opportunity for access to the use of agricultural land among bona fide farmers;
- (e) to assist in removing the stigma attached to agricultural work by ensuring that the farmer reaps his due share of the improved living standards which the country as a whole enjoys and to which his efforts have contributed;
- (f) to achieve better health standards for the population through the production of foods of higher nutritional value.

3. An outline

3. An outline of the three projects covered by Operation G.R.O.W. is provided below.

Preamble: (A) Project Land-Lease: This project is designed to assist in achieving a significant and rapid increase in the production of food crops by providing small farmers and others of proven agricultural experience, who are in genuine need of more land, with supplemental tenancies. Small units of land will be rented to these traditional growers of food crops to supplement the farmer's own land. The land will be provided in the following manner:-

- (i) by an appeal to landowners of all sizes to grant leases to Government on lands not currently being fully utilized;
- (ii) through the auspices of the Land Development and Utilization Commission;
- (iii) by Government where the provision of such lands will not hinder development of the projected Government-operated Food Farms.

Administration: The project will be administered by a dollar-a-year Director on loan from Alcan Jamaica Limited who will report to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Director will be assisted in the first instance by three Regional Officers and a Settlement Officer. Each Regional Officer will be responsible for the Project within one of the three established groups of Land Authorities while the Settlement Officer will be responsible for negotiating leases with landowners and supervising other Contractual arrangements. Field supervision will be undertaken by specially assigned Area Officers from each Land Authority. The Area Officers will be assigned full-time to the Programme and will receive their instructions from the Regional Officers.

Land: Lands will be leased by Government from private landowners at economic rentals for a minimum period of five years with an option where possible for a second five-year term. It is intended to lease mainly large parcels but small parcels of good arable land will be considered. In the distribution of land to farmers

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the emphasis will be on the cultivation of food crops - the size of the units being tailored to the immediate needs and ability of the tenant. Additional lands may be granted for pasturage depending on the availability of land and the needs of the tenant. Where the size of the property **permits**, an area will be reserved for expansion purposes. It is envisaged that lot sizes will vary from 1 to 5 acres and these lots will be regarded as supplemental tenancies and should not be considered economic units by themselves.

Tenants:

Although all bona fide small farmer applicants for land will be interviewed, the selection of tenants will be based upon a very thorough and impartial screening. Interviews will be carried out with the assistance of the staff of the respective Land Authorities and selections made in accordance with the assessments of the interviewers. After selection any tenant whose performance is not regarded as satisfactory will be placed on probation. If his performance does not improve to the satisfaction of both the Area and Regional Officers he will be dispossessed of his holding. Exceptions to the rule will be made only on genuinely compassionate grounds.

Crops:

The crops to be planted must be approved by the Area Officer who will whenever possible accede to the wishes of the tenant. The list of crops from which selections may be made will be determined to a considerable extent by the Agricultural Marketing Corporation in collaboration with the Specialists of the Ministry of Agriculture. Emphasis will be placed on "low risk" crops in the initial stages.

General

Conditions:

No cash disbursements will be made to the tenant. Credit will be in the form of services and materials, e.g. costs of land preparation will be undertaken by the Government's Farm Machinery Pools or private contractors and will be supervised by the Area Officers. The cost of land preparation, etc. will be debited to the tenant's account. Where mechanical tillage is involved the tenants will be placed in possession of their holdings after the land has been prepared but before Survey. Possession will be made by placing

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stakes at locations that will provide lots of the approximate size recommended by the Extension Officers during the screening process. Plans Table Surveys will be undertaken subsequently by a three-man team. In open country approximately 40-50 acres can be surveyed per day by this method. Tenants will be encouraged to market their produce under contract with the Agricultural Marketing Corporation. The minimum requirements will be a Contract to cover the estimated indebtedness of the tenant at the time of reaping of the crop. Any farmer who breaks a Contractual arrangement with the Corporation will be liable to be dispossessed of his holding. It must be appreciated that, since all the lands occupied by tenants are leased, the tenancies will eventually come to an end. Some tenants will qualify for Settlement Lands where available, but in other instances the tenants will be required to surrender their holdings. All tenants will be required to sign an acknowledgment of this fact when they sign their Tenancy Agreements. In this regard it must be remembered that this is a special programme (similar to the wartime agricultural production drive) intended in part to help the country overcome its balance of payments difficulties.

Targets: The aim is to plant an average of 500 acres per Land Authority per planting season for three planting seasons or a total of 19,500 acres. However, due to the late start of the project this year, it is estimated that only about 2,000 - 3,000 acres will be planted during the 1973 Spring planting season, or a total of approximately 15,000 - 16,000 acres over the period.

Farmers: At an average of 2 acres per tenant it is estimated that some 8,000 farmers will be brought under the programme within two years.

(B) Project Food Farms: Under this project the Government proposes to utilise approximately 50,000 acres of land currently owned (or in the process of acquisition) by it to produce a wide range of crops, depending on the use capability of the land. Approximately 25,000 acres will be developed during the first year of the project while the remaining 25,000 will be developed over the next two years. Of the acreage already owned by Government, approximately 20,500 have

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been identified as suitable for the production of food and vegetable crops, tree crops, beef, milk and forestry. The lands are situated in different parts of the island and involve some eighteen properties. Each of these properties will be operated as a complete entity in the first instance with no sub-divisions, but it is the plan and intention of the Government to encourage group and cooperative activity and ultimately to develop a system of long-term leasehold tenure.

The development of these properties is being planned by a multi-disciplinary team. Development programmes have been prepared for the Cape Clair-Konnigsburgh (2,690 acres), Sweet Water (1,800 acres) and New Hope (558 acres) properties. Land use programmes will shortly be completed for the Spring Valley (713 acres) and Biscayne (787 acres) properties.

Administration

A Farm Manager will be appointed for each of the properties to be developed who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations on the farm. However, where the establishment of tree crops and other similar specialised operations are involved, he would be expected to work in close collaboration with the appropriate Specialist in the Ministry of Agriculture. Field supervision for the project will be undertaken by Extension staff from the various Land Authorities while overall coordination will be carried out by a Project Officer from the Extension staff of the Ministry.

(C) Project Self-Help: This project is an expansion of the Self-Supporting Farmers' Development Programme, details of which have already been presented to Parliament. Under the expanded Programme it is estimated that loan assistance of the order of \$15m. will be made available to farmers.

In respect of the period ending 31st March, 1973 expenditure under the three projects listed above will be met from funds

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currently available to the Ministry from the 1972/73 budget allocations. The Honourable House will be informed in due course of the bases on which the projects will be financed during 1973/74.

Ministry of Agriculture
8th February, 1973