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RESEARCH PROJECT TOPIC : THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRUGGLES OF THE INDIAN SUGAR CANE FARMERS OF THE SEZELA MILL AREA .

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THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRUGGLES OF THE INDIAN SUGAR CANE FARMERS OF THE SEZELA MILL AREA .

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS) IN THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND.

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C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The South African population is made up of a mixture of people of African, European and Asian origin. Since the Whites took control in South Africa, a series of laws were introduced to separate the people into racial groups. The Population Registration Act of 1950 and its amendments have defined the population into four distinct racial groups, namely, Whites(of European origin); Asians (mainly Indians); Blacks (of African origin) and Coloureds(of mixed black-white origin)(22:25). Each of these groups have made an indelible mark on the social, cultural and economic life of all South Africans. The Indians, the smallest of the four racial groups, make up a little over 2% of the total population of South Africa. Despite being a minority group, they have made a significant contribution to the development of the country.

The vast majority of the Indian population in South Africa are descendants of the indentured labourers, who were brought from India by the British in the nineteenth century, to cultivate the land. The Zulu's in Natal at the time were reluctant to work the fields for the Whites. " In Natal, Whites considered it below their dignity to do manual work" (22:3). Consequently, the White Natalian did not expect to do farm work himself, but to make a living , and sometimes a fortune, by employing other people to do the hard manual work under his direction. Indian labour in other colonies of the British proved very successful. Hence, indentured Indian labour seemed a cheap and viable option for Natal.

Indian agriculture has played an important role in the development of Natal since shortly after the arrival of the first indentured Indians in 1860. During the early years there was a shortage of vegetables for local consumption and the Indian farmers were soon able to get a share of the market. They were able to open up and farm land which was not considered economical or suitable by Europeans. Later they also started to produce sugar cane and today this enterprise is produced on most Indian farms on the North and South Coast of Natal.

Until 1946 the purchase of agricultural land by free Indian labourers and passenger Indians was uncontrolled. A larger proportion of the owners who own land at present, acquired their farms during the permissive era. Since 1946 legislation had made inter-racial property transactions virtually impossible. As a consequence the sub-division of Indian owned units have suffered progressive intensification in order to satisfy the growing demand for farms. Consequently , land.values have risen frequently to exorbitant levels as a result of competition for land . Inheritance has become increasingly important as a means of acquiring land

Thus for Indian agriculture to continue to contribute to the economy as a whole a policy guide line will have to be drawn up in the near future with regards to the land tenure pattern which will have to be adapted. This is a long term approach. In the short-term more land will have to be made available.Further recommendations in this regard will be given later in the project.

In evaluating the contribution of Indian agriculture, the North Coast contributes 4.3% of the Gross Geographic Product (GGP) of the total for Natal. Agriculture plays a significant role accounting for 32.2% of the regional G.G.P. while secondary industry and tertiary activities contributed 28.8% and 22% respectively (12:1).

Hence, the Indian farming community has for more than 135 years formed an intergral though distinctive component of the rural economy of the region. Yet, after that length of residence, sharp economic and social contrasts continue to distinguish the White and Indian farming communities with few exceptions the average Indian farmer caught up in a capitalist free enterprise farming system but subject to severe constraints upon his development, has increasingly failed to achieve levels of prosperity characteristic of his White neighbour."Operating within conditions not uncharacteristic of underdevelopment, functionally peripheral to the mainstream of the national and regional economics and subject to discrimination arising from race, the Indian farmer has found himself in a position of rising and absolute disadvantage "(12:2).

The Indian sugar cane farmer in particular faced innumerable political and economic problems. For decades the small Indian sugar cane farmer had to compete with the capital intensive and government sponsored white commercial farmers. Despite that the Indian sugar cane farmer has survived for so long, without any assistance at all on land that is not ideally suited for agriculture and the fact that he has had to contend with the Group Areas Act as well as losing a market where he could make a reasonable living from due to it being taken away by traders proves beyond doubt that the Indian sugar cane farmer has a valuable contribution to make to the development of South Africa in the future.

This research project will attempt to trace the political and economic struggles of the Indian sugar cane farmers in the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal,with special reference to the Sezela area. An attempt would also be made, by examining present trends in the agricultural sector, of what the future holds for the South African Indian sugarcane farmer.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The rural Indian community as a whole is composed of farming families in their own right, workers on White individual or company owned farms and workers in rural non-farm activity in sugar mills, shops, businesses and other institutions. A proportion of the population though resident on rural land is employed in urban areas. It is with the farming families that this study is mainly concerned. The total farming household population although difficult to estimate is approximately 12 000 persons.

As a result of land excisions adopted in the consolidation of KwaZulu territory and the irregular urbanisation of land adjacent to the main urban centres, it is estimated that the total area of farming land currently in Indian hands is approximately 22 719 hectares. The land is distributed among 1 307 enterprises (12:1).

Thus over the last 35 years, due to discriminatory legislation and expropriation the Indian farming community has lost over 20 000 hectares of agricultural land (12:1). The Indian community has not been able to buy and replace the agricultural land that was lost until just recently. The Group Areas Act in regard to the purchasing of additional land from other race groups has had the most harmful impact on the Indian Community. Indeed, the sacrifices made by the Indian Agricultural Community is the greatest in relation to the total agricultural land in the Republic. The Indian Agricultural Community had to endure tremendous political and economic obstacles in pursuit of their rural occupation.

Due to the number of farmers having remained fairly constant during this period where expropriation has taken place the resultant outcome has been that sub-division of agricultural land has taken place resulting in farms becoming smaller and smaller. Consequently out migration has occurred as farmers have had to

supplement their incomes by earning a living in the urban areas. Secondly, productivity has declined due to the lack of viability on these smaller farms.

Massive technological and capital input may increase output on these small farms, but many farmers do not have the means to achieve this. Financial aid and government assistance has been minimal. It is against this background that this study will be conducted.

2.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research project would attempt to examine the political and economic struggles of the Indian sugarcane farmers in the Sezela Mill area. This would involve an examination of the political and economic constraints that the Indian sugarcane farmer had to endure during the last 35 years, and how this has affected his productivity and role in the primary sector of the economy of South Africa. A paramount part of the study would involve an investigation into the present and future trends in the agricultural sector and its consequence on the Indian sugarcane farmer.

Against this background it is;

1. Absolutely essential to establish a balanced and objective assessment of the impact of the political and economic hindrances on the welfare and production of the Indian sugarcane farmer.

2. Imperative that the researchers assessment of the issue be free of emotionality, sentimentality and prejudice.

3. The quantitative impact of the political and economic obstacles to the Indian sugarcane will be impossible to assess with any accuracy because of the complexity of the problem.

In addition the Indian sugarcane farmer in the Sezela Mill area had to compete with the White commercial sugarcane farmer for land, labour, subsidies, funding technology, education and markets.

Lastly, with the emphasis on the development of black farmers in the new dispensation,the Indian farmer would find himself at the cross-road of agricultural development.

2.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

The primary purpose of the study would be to investigate and critically analyse how the factors below and others (which would become clearer as the study proceeds) had stifled or promoted agricultural development among the Indian sugarcane farmers.

Pertinent political issues during the last 35 years, for the agricultural development of the Indian sugarcane farmer, would involve a critical assessment of the following factors:

1. Acquisition of land.
2. Quality of allocated farms.
3. Land tenure.
4. Labour control.
5. Control of markets.
6. Land restitution.
7. State control and support.
8. Marketing Boards.
9. Community involvement in decision-making.
10. Removal of farming communities.
11. State subsidies.
12. Agricultural development programme.

Economic considerations that have affected the productivity of Indian sugarcane would involve the following factors:

1. Pricing of sugarcane.
2. Financing.
3. Drought / flood relief.
4. Technological assistance.
5. Wages rate.
6. Price of Land.
7. Supply of water.
8. Irrigation.
9. Insecticide/Pesticides.
10. Mechanization.
11. Quota system.
12. Education and extension programmes.
13. Quality control.
14. Transport.
15. Harvest contractors.

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant in many respects:

Firstly, this study could reveal the indifferance of the previous administrations to the develpoment of agriculture among Indian sugarcane farmers.

Secondly, a study of this nature would highlight the negative consequences for agriculture if government assistance and positive intervention is not forthcoming.

Thirdly, a project of this nature would reveal the mutual relationship between peasant production and commercial production. Their contribution to the rural communities and to the economy of the region could be better understood.

Also, to inform farmers and other interested persons of the latest trends in agricultural development.

Lastly, to suggest proposals for future agricultural development in the formal and informal sector.

2.5 THE HYPOTHESIS

The point of departure of this research project is governed by the following hypotheses :

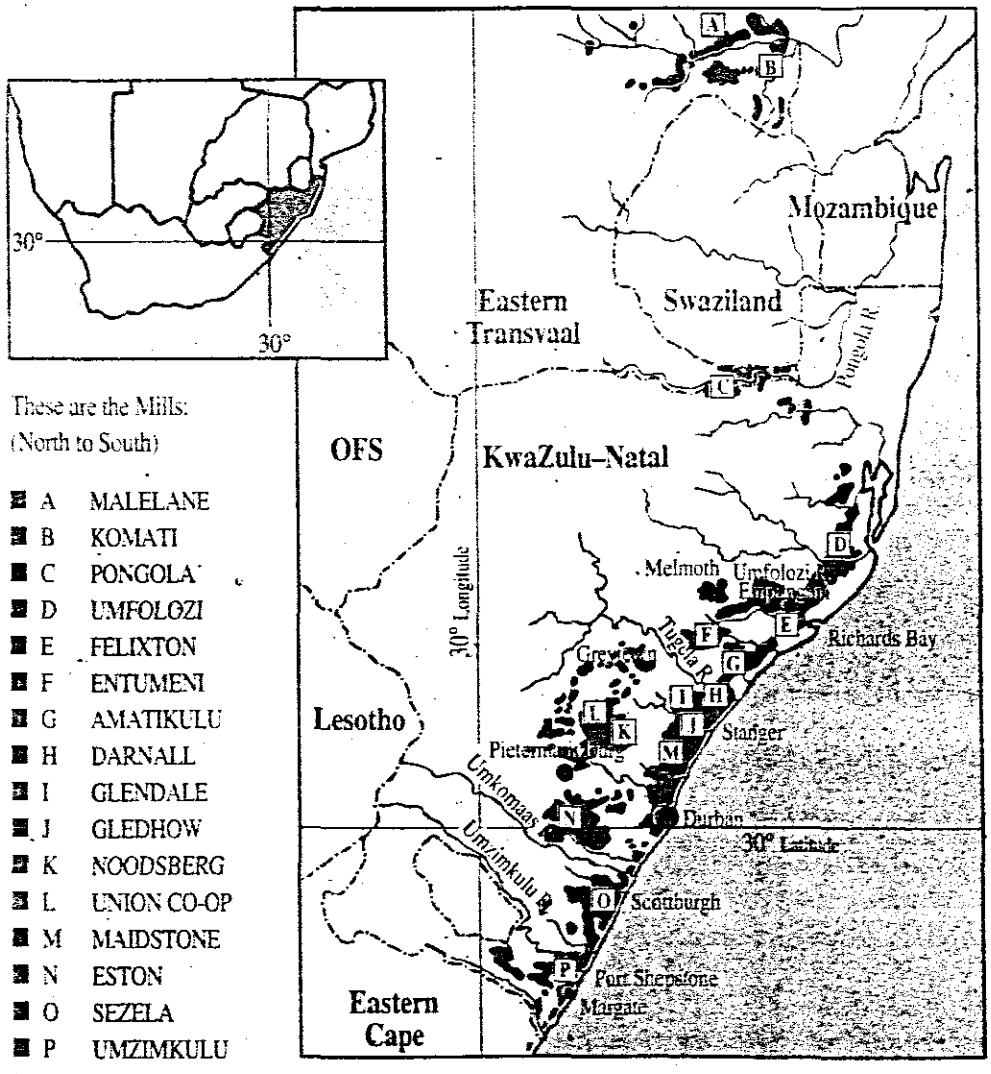
1. Government policy in the past had favoured the commercial White farmers and neglected the agricultural develpoment of the Indian sugarcane farmer.

2. Government policy was deliberately designed to stifle the Indian sugarcane farmer so that he may not be able to compete with the White sugarcane farmers in the open market.

3. In the new dispention the Indian farmer will be marginalised at the expense of developing agriculture among the rural Black communities.

MAP OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR PRODUCING REGIONS

This is the sugar cane growing area of North Pondoland, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Transvaal:



These are the Mills:
(North to South)

- A MALELANE
- B KOMATI
- C PONGOLA
- D UMFOLOZI
- E FELIXTON
- F ENTUMENI
- G AMATIKULU
- H DARNALL
- I GLENDALE
- J GLEDHOW
- K NOODSBERG
- L UNION CO-OP
- M MAIDSTONE
- N ESTON
- O SEZELA
- P UMZIMKULU

FIGURE : 2.1 SOURCE : (40:2)

2.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The South African sugar industry is located in North Pondoland, Kwazulu-Natal and the Eastern Transvaal lowveld. The agricultural section consist of almost 45 500 sugarcane growers of whom about 43 500 are designated as "small growers". These growers are serviced by 16 sugar mills which are located through the sugarbelt (40:3). (See figure 2.1)

On the Kwazulu-Natal South Coast there are approximately 500 Indian farmers. Approximately 62% of these farmers cultivate sugarcane only. About 12% cultivate sugarcane and vegetables. These sugarcane farmers have access to two sugar mills, one at Umzimkulu and the other at Sezela.

There are approximately 160 Indian sugarcane farmers within the service area of the Sezela sugar mill. Almost 90% of these growers are classified as "small growers". For the purpose of this study 30 Indian farmers within this area responded to a questionaire (see appendix 1). These 30 Indian sugarcane farmers were randomly selected from a total of approximately 160 farmers. Those selected were personally interviewed by the researcher.

2.7 THE STUDY AREA

The study will be confined to the Sezela Mill area on the South Coast of Kwazulu-Natal. The following districts will fall within the boundaries of the study area : Wincanton, Umzinto, Braemar, Ifafa, Hibberdene, Umkomaas and Sawoti. (See figure 2.2)

2.8 LIMITATIONS

The researcher was confronted by a variety of factors that acted as limitations to the study. These limitations will be discussed briefly below.

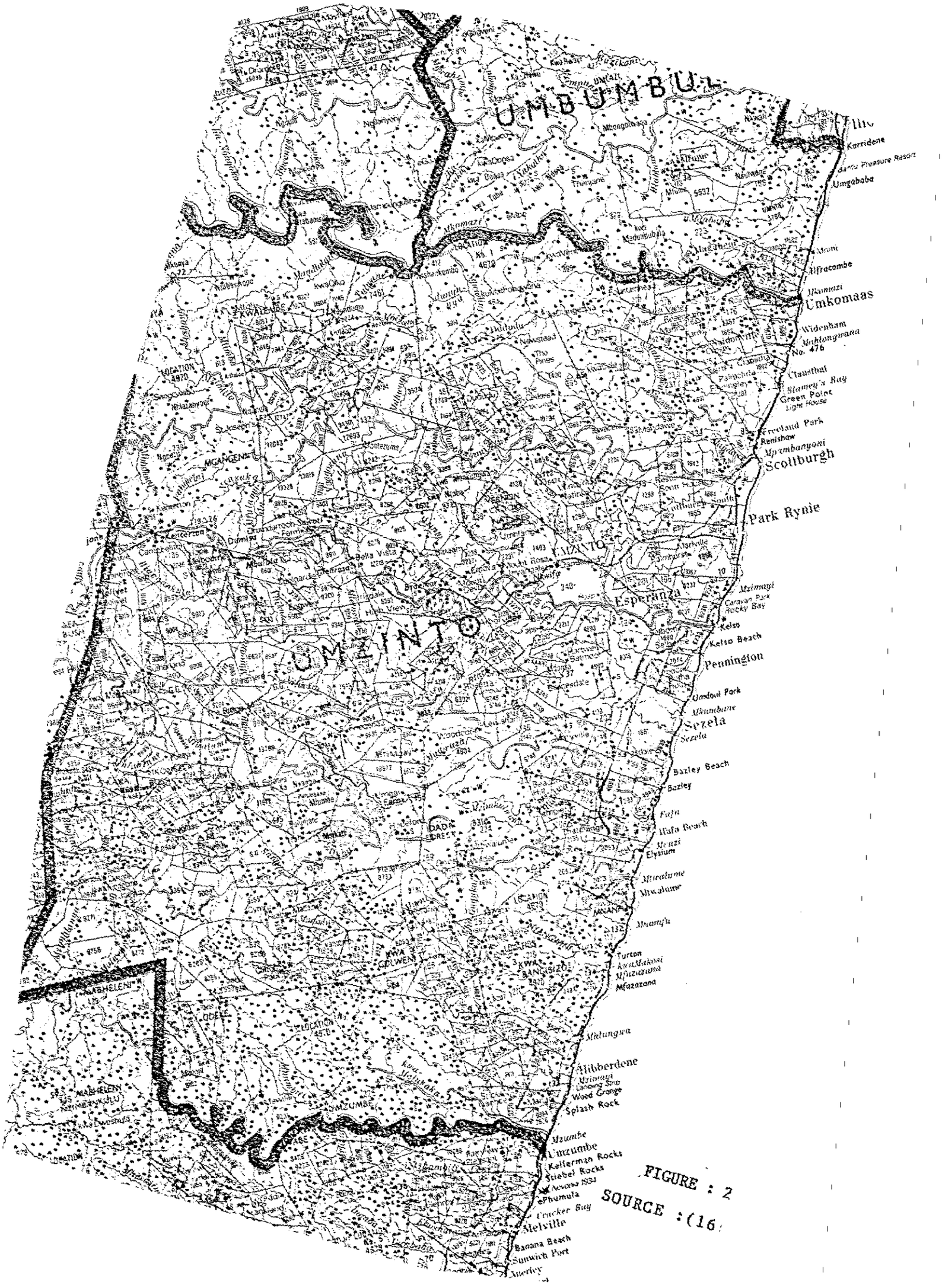


FIGURE : 2

SOURCE : (16)

1. There was a lack of literature on the history of the area, since it was not documented and almost all the pioneer Indian farmers were deceased.

2. There was a lack of proper records of farming activities since most of the farmers were not trained in management and administration of their farms.

3. Many farmers were apprehensive about revealing pertinent information concerning their farming activities, especially with regard to their annual income from cane production.

4. Accessibility to many of the farms was very difficult because of the very poor conditions of the roads and remote location of some of the farm houses.

5. Many of the farmers did not return the questionaires timeously and only did so after many telephonic requests were made.

2.9 METHODOLOGY

2.9.1 Data Collection :

1. The primary source for data collection was the questionaire. The researcher obviously relies on the integrity of the respondent.
2. Documentation from the South African Indian Cane Growers Association were reviewed.
3. Reports from the South African Sugar Association were examined.
4. Attended the Annual General Meeting of the South Coast Indian Cane Growers Association and held discussion with some of the farmers.

5. Contacted the Department of Agriculture, Ex-House of Delegates and examined departmental records.
6. Interviewed and held discussion with extension officers of the area.
7. Visited sugarcane farms in the study area.
8. Studied literature from a variety of libraries.
9. Interviewed Indian sugarcane farmers.

2.9.2 Data Analysis :

The nature of the research project lends itself to to the tabulation and computation of statistical data. Detail tabulation and computation of statistical data will appear at relevent sections of the project.

The analysis of data would involve the following steps :

1. Tabulation and computation of data.
2. Study and examination of relevant information.
3. Analysis of data.
4. Comparative analysis (where necessary).
5. Interpretation and evaluation of data.
6. Conclusion.
7. Make proposals and recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

3. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Natal became a British colony in 1843. India was almost fully colonized by this time. Since its inception as a British colony, Natal in particular was profoundly influenced by the agricultural sector. The climate here was well-suited for the cultivation of crops. The soils was good, temperatures were ideal and there was abundant supplies of irrigation water. Agriculture provided Natal with food, employment, technology input and much needed capital and tax revenue for industry and government respectively. In the 1850's the inability of the Natal colonial authorities to induce sufficient numbers of indigenous blacks to enter the open labour market led to a demand amongst coastal White cash crop farmers for imported Asian labour.

From 1851 repeated requests were made to the authorities for the importation of Indian labourers. In October 1851 , at a public meeting in Durban there was a strong call by the coastal farmers for the importation of the so called "coolies" from the East Indies. However, 2 very influencial pioneer sugarcane farmers, Edmund Morewood and Campbell protested on the grounds that there was no shortage of indigenous African labour. But, there was a reluctance of the Zulu males to take up agricultural work and on the other, from official policy which opposed any attempt to compel workers from the Reserves to enter into service with White colonists.

The matter rested there until 4 years later when Sir George Grey visited Natal in 1855. At a public meeting held in his honour on 20 June 1855 the matter was again raised and this time the motion was carried. Sir George Grey was taken on a tour of farming areas in Natal and he was convinced after having witnessed the success of the Mauritian sugar farmers who used Indian labour, that Natal would benefit likewise. it was Sir George Grey, then, who was instrumental in influencing the powers-that-be in Britain to agree to the importation of indentured Indian labourers to Natal (8:2)

Natal Laws 13, 14 and 15, of 1859 empowered the Government of Natal to introduce indentured labour from India under conditions similar to those applicable to Mauritius, gave validity to contracts made with would-be labourers outside the colony, and enabled private persons to import indentured labour at their own expense (10 : 25). The conditions set out in these laws stipulated that immigrants were to be indentured for a period of five years, two of which could be cancelled through payment of one pound and fifty shillings per year by the labourer. At expiry of the indentured period he would be free to follow any other employment. Ten years after arrival labourers would be entitled to a free passage back to India, or, if they wished to remain in Natal, the Governor could at his discretion grant them land equivalent in value to the return passage.

It took ± 5 years to implement the motion and the first Indian labourers arrived in Durban in the Truro on 16 November 1860. They were immediately allocated to employers.

At this juncture it would help to reflect on just who came from where.

At this time in India, the rural Indian especially, was characterized by a great deal of poverty. The peasant farmers were constantly set back by floods, droughts, famine and disease. He had little choice but to borrow money from the Land Bank of India. When the imporverished farmers were unable to meet their debts to the authorities and landlords they were squeezed out of their farms and their properties were seized.

It was under these circumstances, then, that when the call was made for volunteers to sail to Natal as indentured labourers the impoverished rural Indians eagerly signed the contracts. In addition to this lot there were those who seized the opportunity of running away from their wives, wives from their husbands, doting lovers whose marriage intentions were not approved, thieves, people owing their

landlords money, even murderers (8 : 3). Be that as it may it is estimated by researches that at least 60% of the total number of immigrants who arrived in Natal were engaged in farming activities in various parts of India (22:41).

Indian indenture system was stopped in 1911 after 51 years during which time 152184 Indians were brought to Natal from India . Of this total approximately 70% remained in South Africa and the rest returned.

When the indenture system was initiated in 1860, Natal was producing ± 3000 tons of sugarcane. At this time Madras and Bengal alone were producing 230 000 tons of sugarcane. Therefore, many of the immigrants were already skilled in the production of several Eastern crops.

As mentioned previously, the indentured Indians who arrived in Durban were immediately assigned to employers as fieldworkers in sugar plantations, to households as domestic servants, as chefs in hotels, to government departments such as the port captain's office, the Durban Corporation and the Natal Railway Company.

Immigration of Indian labour was temporarily stopped in 1866, mainly as a result of the Great Depression. Also, in 1871 ten returnees complained bitterly about the harsh treatment by employers and the difficult conditions of employment. The extract below illustrates the ill-treatment of Indian labourers on some sugar estates.

> " I am an indentured Coolie and work for Mr. Thomas Brown, Umgeni Sugar Estate. On Friday . . . at morning muster I was present, and told the manager Mr. John Brown that I was sick, and went home. Half an hour after[,] the white man who is in charge of the Coolies at the mill, came to me, and said come on, at the same time struck me with a whip which he had in his hand,

> and sirdar that I was sick, suffering from loose bowels and was not able to work. So I went to my hut[;] about an hour after[,] the same white man came to my hut. I was at that time just entering my hut when he (the white man) caught me by the neck, and struck me three times on the back with a stick (two marks shown) after which I snatched away the stick and ran into the cane. I went to Verulam court on Monday morning and at 9 a.m. I met the Indian constable there who said the magistrate is not here today, come tomorrow, and on Tuesday when I went to the court house, the same Indian constable told me that the magistrate would not be in that day also, and said try and come again tomorrow. I went the next day and made my statement to the interpreter of the court, after he had taken down all that I had to say, he told me to go back to my master's estate. I said I would not go back till my case was settled, and if I did not get proper satisfaction I would go to the Protector of Immigrants at Durban[,] which I have done.
>
> I have been twice during the Christmas month to complain at the Verulam court, and the first time the interpreter would not take down my complaint but he did so the second time I went with a large mark on my left shoulder."(19:4)

But, the White colonial farmers could not manage, they desperately required more indentured labourers. The Coolie Commission was set up in 1872 to investigate the complaints and in 1874 the government of India decided to re-introduce the indenture system under new and improved conditions:

1. The appointment of the protector of Indian immigrants.
2. The formation of Indian Immigration Trust Board.
3. Improved health care and the compulsory provision of rural clinics for labourers.
4. The labourers received better rations and better pay.

On completion of their indentures, Indian labourers had 4 options open to them :

1. They could re-indenture to the same employer or another of their choice; or
2. They could apply for licences to leave Natal for other parts of South Africa and many did to the gold and diamond fields;
3. They could enter the field of agricultural production on their own account; or
4. They could take up employment in a non-agricultural sector; or

5. After 10 years of indenture when they become "free" Indians they could claim a free return passage to their town or village of origin in India. Off-course, many decided to remain in South Africa and either leased or bought small plots of land and planted vegetables, fruits and cereals (8:5)

The first lot of "free" Indians from the 1860 lot were permitted by the colonial authorities after considerable pressure on the Natal Government to take up plots of Crown Land in exchange for a free return passage to India. 53 plots of 15 acres each were identified in Braemar on the Natal South Coast. But, soon thereafter, this rule was cancelled. In any odd event, taking up land in far away Braemar in the 1880's when road access was very poor - even non-existant - was of little use to the Indians. As producers of fresh-produce they had to market it in Durban were it was most required and transport in those days was mostly via the popular "banga" carried on their shoulders or on spring-carts which few could afford. They therefore found it more profitable to purchase half acre lots in Durban rather than to accept the 15 acres gratis.

Although the conditions of indenture permitted Indian labourers to commute their free return passage to India for land of equivalent value the promise of land was rarely implemented. Official indecision on the size of grants and in which part of the Colony they would be allocated, appeared to be the reasons for this situation.

In 1872,the Coolie Commission dealth with the question of land for Indians. It recommended that Crown Land, in pieces of about eight to ten acres, in the neighbourhood of Durban be granted to free Indians, as it would be convenient for them to market their produce.

"Free Indians" in the 1870's and 1880's quickly established themselves as productive market gardeners along the entire coastal belt of Natal. In the vicinity of Durban Indian market gardeners became the chief supplies of fresh vegetables and fruit.

In 1872 it was found that half the "Free Indians" who chose to remain in South Africa continued to work on the plantations (8:6). They were allowed to cultivate small plots of land close to their barracks. These were used to grow a great variety of fruit and vegetables not only for their own consumption but the surpluses were sold.

In addition small White farmers leased to "Free Indians" 10-20 acre plots while the sugar plantation owners leased to them 5-10 acres of sugar land. The leases were normally for periods of 5-7 years. A condition of the leases was usually that they worked on the estate during the day and cultivated their smallholdings in their own time ie. evenings and weekends. Their wives and their children helped as well. When it was observed in the 1870's that the Indian market gardener had established a virtual monopoly of the sale of vegetables and fruits in Durban and that he preferred to farm in close proximity to Durban, The Collie Commission recommended to the Natal Government that grants , of 8-10 acres each should be made to the "Free Indians" in the neighbourhood of Durban in lieu of a return passage to India. But, the Natal Government at the time still hoped that blacks would supply the labour requirements of the colony, thus making Indians superflous. Therefore, no attempt to set aside land for Indian occupation occured in the 1870's

In order to settle White farmers in Natal much of the Crown lands were sold in the 1860's to large land Companies. These companies sub-divided these lands into smallholdings of between 40 to 80 acres. However, by White standards a viable farm unit was a few 100 acres. Also, because of the small size of their plots, relatively poor soils, steep terrain , droughts and floods,

the White smallholders were unable to profitably produce their crops of maize, beans or tobacco and therefore, from the early 1870's many sold out to Indians.

By 1885, "Free Indians" had become the largest group of market-gardeners around Durban. The Wragge Commission estimated there were ± 2000 "Free Indians" occupying land within 2 miles from the limits of the Durban borough (10:26). By that year almost the total supply of fruit and vegetable to Durban and Pietermaritzburg was in their hands.

Initially, lack of capital precluded the outright purchase of land. The free-holders concentrated on annuals. After having harvested crops for a few years many of the tenants were in a position to hire-purchase their plots over a 10-15 year period. This greater security permitted them to change to perennials such as citrus, avocados and sugarcane. This saw the emergence of the Indian farmer from a market-gardener.

Since most of the leased land was generally waste land and covered with thick indigenous bush and grass. They had to expand considerable labour and energy to get the plots viable. The large land companies welcomed this since they hoped these improvements would make the farms more attractive to White buyers (8:8). But, the failure of White immigrants to settle the 1000's of acres of reserved Crown lands by the 1890's led the land companies to decide to sell off the land to the "Free Indians" instead. In any event, the gradual demand for land by the Indians pushed the purchase price of Crown land up by 4 or 5 times. Although the upset price for Crown land at the time was 10 shillings an acre it was not uncommon for the "Free Indian" to offer 4-5 pounds an acre. At such prices very few Whites were willling to buy and thus the Indians rapidly increased their holdings.

In 1877, the resident magistrate of Umlazi wrote :

> "Indians on smallholdings in Clairmont and along the main South Coast Railway line grew maize, tobacco and sweet potatoes. These market-gardeners have entirely shut-out European competition. Those located near the town of Durban and villages in the Umlazi division entirely monopolized the growth and sale of vegetables for which they obtained very remunerative prices" (8:9).

In 1885,the Inanda magistrate wrote :

> "One cannot also help being struck with the fact that, putting aside the sugar estates, the large amount of cultivation..... ... is almost entirely the work of the imported Indian, and... ..... the agriculture of the district is chiefly in the hands of the Indians" (8:9).

By then, it was clear that land ownership by the "coolies" was becoming increasingly prevalent. More and more "Free Indians" were buying land instead of leasing. Evidence given before the Land Commission in 1902, for example, makes mention of more than 2000 acres sold to Indians in the Weltevreden, Stanger, Compensation and Doornkop areas, while there were more than 600 Indian farmers in the Umhlali district in 1901. By 1900, approximately 14000 acres of land belonged to Indians in the Verulam and Tongaat areas (10:26).

In 1900 the protector of Indian immigration stated that "Free Indians" had a monopoly in the cultivation of mealies, beans tobacco and a host of vegetables. By 1904 there were some 7000 Indian cultivators, gardeners and fruit farmers. The Natal Blue Book estimated they cultivated 38 268 acres. By 1907 this figure grew to 50 000 acres of which they owned outright some 20 000 acres. By growing high density cash crops and by practising intensive cultivation Indian farmers reached a level of productivity which surpassed most of their settler and peasant contemporaries.

In 1908, the Government of India decided to prohibit immigration of Indians to Natal because of dissatisfaction with the manner in which indentured labourers were treated by the Natal authorities. On representations of the Natal Government, however, India agreed to permit the immigration of indentured labourers until 1911 when it finally ceased.

Although it was admitted that the Indians were exemplary farmers, there were growing fears among Whites that the "Free Indians" would soon buy off all of the Natal Coastal Belt. Growing opposition to Indian agriculture in the first decade of this century made it more difficult to get freehold land. Pressure from Whites finally led to the appointment of the Lange Commission in 1920 which recommended that Indian-owned farmlands be restricted to a belt 20-30 miles along the Natal coast.

After the indenture system was stopped in 1911 one saw a gradual decline in agricultural activities by the Indians. There were several "push-pull" factors which contributed to this :

1. They were attracted to urban life and left the estates and smallholdings for the cities and towns to enter semi-skilled occupations.
2. The indentured Indians, since their arrival, placed very great emphasis on formal education. As their children became educated they branched out into other skilled, semi-skilled and professional occupations. Many entered the field of education themselves and became teachers and lecturers.
3. More and more of the peri-urban land was expropriated for development. Land rates rose sharply. Their farms were becoming smaller and smaller for efficient production. The displaced market-gardeners were forced to move further out to places like Hammarsdale or Cliffdale.
4. During the period 1936 - 1946, at least 4 000 Indians left the field of agriculture.

5. They were given absolutely no exposure to any form of agricultural extension services. Production methods and the uneconomic marketing system could not be improved on.
6. Certain discriminatory laws gave the White farmers an unfair advantage over their Indian counterparts. Firstly, there was a discriminating rail structure which enabled inland White farmers to rail their fruit and vegetables to the Durban market at negligible rates. Indian farmers were denied this opportunity. Secondly, White farmers had access to cheap sources of finance such as the Land Bank of South Africa and also to government subsidies and loans for irrigation and erosion protection.
7. The imposition of the Groups Areas Act in 1946 put paid to any further expansion of Indian agriculture. Now, every bit of land which he had was valuable. He had no choice but to expand cultivation up the steep slopes, to the detriment of the valuable top-soil. Soil conservation structures were difficult to construct on the steep slopes. In Langabilela, farmers moved rocks by hand and crow-bars to make place for pineapples and pawpaws.

In 1913 the Immigrants Regulation Act No. 22, of the Union Government for all practical purposes put an end to further Indian immigration and to inter-provincial movement of Indians in South Africa (10:27). Between 1914 and 1927 the authorities gave prominance to emigration as an effective means to halt the acquisition of land by Indians. By 1927 Indians owned only 1 out of every 125 acres in Natal. It was estimated then that they owned 89 841 acres of the 11,3 million acres in Natal. According to the 1930 census reports there were 1 300 cane growers; 2 900 market-gardeners and 1 000 mixed farmers farming on approximately 88 000 acres(8 :12). Although the Indians owned less than 1% of the agricultural land at the time, there was growing conflict between Whites and Indians over land

acquisition and trading rights.

In spite of efforts to encourage emigration, the period between 1911 and 1930 represented a peak in the acquisition of land by Indians on the Natal North Coast. The following reasons,according to Davies (10:28), contributed to the trend :

1. Labour shortages following the prohibition of Indian immigration led to increases in wages and enhanced capital accummulation which enabled them to acquire small holdings.
2. Purchases increased in anticipation of restrictions upon rights of land acquisition.
3. Restrictions imposed upon the expansion of business interests made land an attractive avenue of investment.
4. Increases in the demand for land and high land prices encouraged White and Indian land owners to sub-divide holdings for sale.
5. After 1927, the Cape Town Agreement was seen by the Indian community as a recognition of the South African Indian as a permanent part of the population and as such, encouraged the investment of capital in South Africa.

Continued pressure of White agitation against the acquisition and occupation of property by Indians led the Union Government to appoint fresh commissions of enquiry. The government first adopted a temporary expedient in the form of a Pegging Act (1943) designed to maintain the existing distribution of property between Europeans and Indians in urban areas. This was followed in 1946 by the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act which provided for the demarcation of areas, outside of which no Asiatic might acquire the ownership or residential occupation of land from a non-Asiatic save under permit. This was the first act to control the acquisition and occupation of land by Indians in Natal and its effect was reflected in a sharp decrease in the number of farms bought

by Indians from Whites after 1946.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 superceded all previous legislation on the acquisition and occupation of immovable property by Indians and was the culmination of a long European agitation for compulsory segregation.

Until 1961 Indians were treated as aliens in South Africa and no effort was spared to encourage their return to India. In that year, however, the government adopted a new policy concerning the Indian community. In 1962 the Department of Indian Affairs was established and the Minister announced that the Indians were the responsibility of the government and that their needs must be catered for in the same way as those of other racial sections of the community. For the first time government policy reflected an awareness of the need to identify development problems among rural Indians and the Indian farmer. Government policy and the degree to which Indian farmers received assistance and guidance would become clearer in subsequent chapters of this research project.

In 1984 the Department of Agriculture - House of Delegates was established under the Tricameral System of Government. Farmers were hopeful that they would receive greater Government assistance and guidance in agricultural practice and social and economic development.

The Indian farmers look to the 1990's with great expectations. The abolition of the Group Areas Act and the Land Acts in the early 1990's have been widely welcome by the Indian farmers and indeed by everyone. In the new dispensation, the acquisition of land for production purposes is no longer a hindrance. In the New South Africa the Indian farmer will be faced with many fierce challenges and competition. The farmer that shows initiative and uses his land most productively will succeed in the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ISSUE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Agricultural production requires three inputs : land, labour and capital. Land is the most obvious input in agriculture, and land issues are vital to agricultural development. This chapter will examine how various features of the land system has affected the Indian sugarcane farmer. The specific objectives in the study of the land system were to:

1. determine land ownership and its effect on agricultural development;
2. establish the extent to which individual properties or family farms are either nucleated or fragmented;
3. determine how Indian sugarcane farmers have acquired land and the availability of additional land;
4. determine land use patterns among Indian sugarcane farmers;
5. determine the quality of Indian agricultural land and its influence on sugarcane productivity;
6. establish how the size of agricultural land impacts on sugarcane production of Indian growers.

4.2 LAND OWNERSHIP

Four categories of land ownership was distinguished for the purpose of the study.

1. Individual owner - the farm is owned by a single owner.
2. Family farm - the farm is owned by a group of individuals, usually members of a family.
3. Lease farm - the farmer does not own the farm, but holds a lease on the farm for a specific period from the title deed holder.
4. Rented farm - the farmer rents the farm from the title deed holder.

TABLE : 4.1 DISTRIBUTION OF FARM OWNERSHIP		
Type of ownership	No.of farms	Percentage
Individual owner	25	83.3
Family farm	4	13.3
Leased farm	1	3.3
Rented	0	0
TOTAL	30	100

Of the 30 randomly selected sugarcane farmers of the Sezela Mill area, 25 farms were individually owned, amounting to over 83% of the total number of farms. Slightly over 13% of the farms were owned by a group of individuals, all members of an extended family. Only 1 farm was leased from an Indian land owner. None of the farms were rented.

Ownership of the farm is a significant factor in agricultural development, especially among Indian farmers. Since there seems to be a relationship between type of ownership and productivity. This assumption was not scientifically tested but is based on information gathered during interviews with managers of the 4 family farms. This will be elaborated on below.

Family farms were usually owned by the father and his grown up sons or by a group of brothers who inherited the farm from their deceased father. Usually the eldest member of the family served as the manager of the farm. Interviews with the managers of the family farm have expressed the view that they would be "more productive" if they were the sole owner of the farm. They stated that productivity was affected by disagreement and "interference" by the other shareholders of the family farm. Members of the family farm have differing views on farm management and administration.

One farm manager had this to say, " My younger brother who is a share-holder of the family farm and knows very little about farming, likes to tell me how to manage the family farm. I have been involved in farming with my late father since I was a little boy".(36)

There is a whole range of issues on which members of a family may differ in their opinion on how the family farm should be managed and administrated. Some members of the family may prefer traditional methods of farming, whereas others may be more innovative in their approach. Some prefer a higher degree of mechanization whereas others prefer labour intensive farming. They differ in their opinion concerning erosion control, use of fungicides and herbicides, time to harvest, production cost and financial input, labour issues, profit sharing, farm loans and credit, land use, use of contractors, extension services, etc.

An extension officer interviewed was of the opinion that Indian owned family farms would be more productive if members of the family are in agreement concerning the above issues.He also stated that these differences of opinion among family members & the traditional system of farms being inherited by a group of individuals of a family stifles agricultural development among Indian cane growers. (7)

The one farmer who had a leased farm expressed feelings of insecurity, since he had a 10 year lease period which expires in 3 years time. Interestingly, he sold off his 5 acre plot that he owned to his brother because the small plot was not economically viable and he had "problems" with his brother. He felt that he would be more productive and prosperous if he farmed on his own. His insecurity stems from the possibility that the lease contract may not be renewed by the owner, since he has turned a low productivity farm into a relatively productive enterprise. Although lease farms account for only 5% of the of the farms in the sample area, security of land tenure must be urgently addressed by the decision makers, as security of land tenure would affect agricultural productivity.

4.3 ACQUISITION OF LAND

TABLE 4.2 ACQUISITION OF LAND BY PRESENT OWNER.

How land was acquired	No. of farms	Percentage
Purchased by farmer	9	30
Inherited by farmer	21	70
TOTAL	30	100

TABLE 4.3 INHERITED LAND: ACQUISITION BY PREVIOUS OWNER

How did your forefathers acquire the land?	No. of farms	Percentage
Purchased by forefathers	19	90
Received Crown Land	1	5
Unknown	1	5
TOTAL	21	100

Thirty percent of the farms in the survey area were purchased by the present owners as compared to 70% of the farms were inherited by their present owners, as indicated in Table 4.2. But, a more comprehensive picture of land acquisition may be obtained by examining Table 4.2 and Table 4.3. Although 70% of the present owners inherited their farms, Table 4.3 reveals that 90% of these farms inherited by their present day owners were purchased by their forefathers. Therefore, by simply adding the number of farms purchased by present owners from Table 4.2 to the number of farms inherited by present owners, but purchased by their forefathers from Table 4.3, reveals that over 93% of the farms from the survey area were purchased some time or the other.

One farmer who inherited his farm did not know whether his forefathers had purchased the farm or had received Crown Land. Of particular interest, one farmer who inherited his farm stated that his forefather had received Crown Land from the Natal Government at the time. He was unable to supply the exact date when his farm in Braemar was received by his forefather.

The acquisition of agricultural land has always been one of the major obstacles to agricultural development among Indian farmers. A brief look at the past reveals that, only in 1882 did the Natal Government allot 50 lots of 15 acres to "free" Indians. These were at Braemar, 100 kilometres from Durban. As the recipients were market gardeners supplying the port, they found it more profitable to purchase ½ acre lots near Durban rather than accept 15 acres in far away Braemar. Therefore very few Indian farmers accepted this offer. In any case, this was the only land grant that was made and one year later in 1883 the Natal Government did away with land grants.(2:64)

Therefore, Indian farmers were obliged to either rent or lease land from White farmers. On the South Coast of Natal White farmers leased to Indians 10 - 20 acre plots and the plantation owners leased to them plots of 5 - 10 acres of sugar land. These were normally for periods of 5 - 7 years.

Indian farmers had to hire-purchase agricultural land since the lack of capital precluded the outright purchase of land. Having harvested crops for a few years many tenants began to hire-purchase their plots over a 10 - 15 year period.

Indians had to pay exorbitant prices for farm land. The acute demand for land by Indian growers pushed the purchase price up four or five times over the price of Crown land. According to Arkin (2:65), though the upset price of Crown land was 10 shillings an acre, it was not uncommon for them to pay 4 to 5 pounds an acre.

A number of restrictions were placed on Indians who wished to acquire land for agriculture. In 1920 the Lange Commission recommended that Indian owned farms should be restricted to a belt 20 - 30 miles wide along the Natal Coast. In 1943 the Government introduced the Pegging Act to restrict Indians from buying land in the periphery of urban areas for agricultural purposes. This was followed in 1946 by the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act which provided for the demarcation of areas, outside of which no Asiatic might acquire the ownership of land from a non-Asiatic, except by a permit from the Government.

As a result of this act there was a sharp decrease in the number of farms acquired by Indians from Whites after 1946. According to Davies & Greyling (10:28), there was evidence that transfers of farms to Indians that did take place were confined to those areas that were predominantly Indian-owned prior to the introduction of the act.

The final nail in the coffin, was the Group Areas Act of 1950 which deprived the Indians of their right to retain fixed property acquired over 80 years of settlement."The Indian farming community has lost over 20 000 hectares of agricultural land through expropriation" (12:2).

Therefore, the lack of additional land for Indian farmers have adversely affected the development of agriculture among existing farmers and has inhibited new farmers from entering the agricultural sector.

However, the majority of the farmers interviewed (70%) were optimistic about the future. The White Paper on Agriculture for KwaZulu-Natal 1996 : General Principles for policy; Piont 1.8 states, " The Government is in the process of making state land available to people who previously did not have access to agricultural land. Special support programmes will be instituted to ensure that new entrants to agriculture have the support services and credit required to make a success of farming." (13:9)

4.4 SIZE, SUB-DIVISION AND FRAGMENTATION OF INDIAN OWNED SUGARCANE FARMS.

The Indian community has not been able to buy and replace the agricultural land that was lost by the implementation of the Group Areas Act. The number of farmers has remained fairly constant during the period of the implementation of the act ie. 1950's to the early 1990's. Due to the number of farmers having remained fairly constant during this period where expropriation has taken place the resultant outcome has been that sub-division and fragmentation of agricultural land has taken place resulting in farms becoming smaller and smaller. More importantly, productivi- has declined due to the lack of viability on these smaller farms. According to the Department of Agriculture: House of Delegates (12:20), enterprises 60 acres and larger were generally accepted as economically viable units.

TABLE 4.4 SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN OWNED FARM UNITS AT PRESENT

Farm size (acres)	No. of farm units	% of farm units	Cumulative percentage	Total area (acres)	% of Total area	Cumulative percentage
1-10	4	13.3	13.3	26	1.80	1.80
11-20	10	33.3	46.6	138	9.54	11.34
21-30	6	20.0	66.6	130	8.98	20.32
31-40	2	6.7	73.3	74	5.11	25.43
41-50	2	6.7	80.0	88	6.08	31.51
51-60	2	6.7	86.7	104	7.19	38.70
61-100	1	3.3	90.0	95	6.57	45.27
101-200	1	3.3	93.3	174	12.02	57.29
201-300	1	3.3	96.7	247	17.07	74.36
301+	1	3.3	100.0	371	25.64	100.00
TOTAL	30	100		1447	100	

Pertinent information relating to the size distribution of the 30 randomly selected farms in the survey area are tabulated in Table 4.4 . Of the 30 farms in the survey area, 26 of the farms are smaller than 60 acres. Or stated differently 86.7 of the farms are smaller than the economically viable criteria laid down by the Department of Agriculture : House of Delegates. 66.6% of the farm units are smaller than 30 acres, which is considered to be very small for the viable production of sugarcane. The small farm units range in size from 4 to 60 acres

Although, farm units of less than 60 acres in extent account for 86.7% of the total number of farm units, they occupy only 38.7% of the total area of land in the study area. Also, farm units of less than 30 acres in extent account for 66.6% of the total number of farm units, they occupy only 20.32% of the total area of land in the survey area. Farm sizes ranging from 1-10 acres, account for over 13% of the total number of farms, but occupy less than 2% of the total land area.

The larger farms, ie over 60 acres account for slightly over 13% of the total number of farms. Very economically viable farm units, ie 100 acres and over number only 3 out of the total of 30 farms. The farm sizes range from 95-371 acres among the larger farms. The range is greater among large farms as compared to small farms.

The 4 largest farms, which account for only 13% of the total number of farms, occupies 61.3% of the total land area in the survey area. The largest farm alone, occupies 25.64% of the total land area. In other words, one farm occupies more than a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the land and the other 29 farms occupy less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total area,within the study area.

As can be seen from the discussion, farm size among Indian farmers in the Sezela Mill area are extreme in range, from the smallest farm unit being 4 acres in

extent to the largest farm unit being 371 acres in extent. Also, almost 87% of the farms are considered to be small for viable sugarcane production. The small size of the majority of Indian sugarcane farms impinges on all facets of sugarcane production. This would become clearer in later chapters.

Sub-division and fragmentation of farmlands is one of the major factors contributing the the small size of farm units. 50% of the farmers interviewed stated that their farms were sub-divided some time or the other. These farmers now own one or two pieces of a once larger farm.

Two factors have contributed to the sub-division and fragmentation of farmlands.

1. Some farmers who found themselves in financial difficulty decided to sell-off part of their farm in order to pay off debts to creditors. In some cases private money lenders, repossessed part of the farmers land in order to recover debts. The difficulties experienced by Indian cane farmers, as far as availability of credit is concerned, will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

   The acute shortage of agricultural land among Indian farmers, also contributed to the sub-division of land. Some farmers who needed cash, but did not want to borrow from unscrupulous money lenders, decided to sell-off part of their land since the demand for land was great and they would receive a very favourable price.

2. The second, but most significant factor is the inheritance of farms. Almost all of the farmers who had sub-divided plots (14 out of 15 farmers - 93%) attributed the system of inheritance as the reason for sub-division of their farmlands.

4.5 LAND USE PATTERNS

TABLE 4.5 FARMING SYSTEM

Agricultural activity	No. of farmers	Percentage
Sugarcane only	18	60
Sugarcane and vegetables	9	30
Sugarcane and fruit	2	6.7
Sugarcane and timber	1	3.3
Sugarcane, vegetables and fruit	0	0
TOTAL	30	100

The most important farming system is the monoculture of sugarcane on 60% of the farming enterprises. (Table 4.5). These 18 farmers were generally satisfied with the income they received from farming cane. Their farms were generally small and if they diversified they would reduce the land available for sugarcane cultivation even further.

However, 40% of the farmers diversified their farming activity. The production of sugarcane and vegetables together is undertaken on 30% of enterprises. The reason given by these farmers for cultivating vegetables as well as sugarcane was that they sell well, they were easy to grow, it can be used for household consumption and there were no deductions in raising vegetables in comparison to sugarcane.

Only 2 farmers cultivated sugarcane and fruit, mainly bananas. They also stated that bananas were easy to grow and required less care.

One farmer cultivated sugarcane and wattle trees and intends to convert more of his canelands to wattle plantations. The predominant reason for turning to wattle trees to replace cane was also the ready market which is perceived to exist. In addition, he felt that trees are easy to grow and there was no hidden costs as compared to sugarcane. He also felt that the wattle plantations would provide him with a "good" retirement fund in 8-10 years time.

None of the farmers interviewed cultivated sugarcane, vegetables and fruit.

4.6 LAND USE DISTRIBUTION

TABLE 4.6 TOTAL AREA USED FOR EACH LAND USE TYPE

Land use type	Total area (acres)	% of total area
Sugarcane	1114.2	77
Vegetables	130.2	9
Fruit	14.5	1
Wastelands	188.1	13
TOTAL	1447	100

Table 4.6 demonstrates the dominance of land used for sugarcane cultivation which occupies 1114.2 acres or 77% of the total area. Small areas are used for the cultivation of vegetables (9%). Only 1% of the total area of agricultural land in the survey area was used for fruit production. However, 13% of the total area is left fallow as wasteland despite the high demand for agricultural land and the limited size of the majority of farms.

The reason for 13% of the total area of land being uncultivated and left as wasteland is that this land is absolutely unsuitable for cultivation because of the very steep gradients commonly encounted on Indian land.

4.7 LAND QUALITY

The poor quality of agricultural land among Indian farmers has always created problems for the farmer. It has increased his production costs and reduced productivity.

TABLE 4.7 PERCEPTION OF SOIL QUALITY

Grade of soil	No. of farms	% of farms
Good	2	6.7
Satisfactory	19	63.3
Poor	9	30
TOTAL	30	100

Only 6.7% of the farmers rated their soil quality as good. The majority of the farmers (63.3%) perceived their soils to be satisfactory. 30% of the farmers insisted that their soils were of poor quality. The poor quality of the soils of these 9 farms means, increased production costs for the farmer. Additional fertilizer would have to be applied at more regular intervals. The cost of fertilizer is constantly increasing.

Soil texture seems to vary according to districts. The worst soil texture was found to be in the district of Braemar. The Braemar farmers complained about the sandy texture of their soils. Sandy soils do not hold water and the land dries up too quickly after the rains have come and gone. The farmers do not have irrigation facilities on their farms and as a result of the dry sandy soils, these farms have low levels of productivity (23). The Wincanton, Umzinto and Umkomaas districts tend to have clayey soils. Farmers in these districts claim that the soils become too hard and dry during winter and inhibits healthy root growth , reducing productivity. However, good quality loam soils are found

in Sezela, Ifafa and Hibberdene.

The other aspect of land quality, and probably the most significant, is the gradient of the land. An examination of Table 4.8 below, illustrates that over 88% of Indian owned sugarcane land has a slope gradient of greater than 15%. A slope gradient of over 15% is considered to be too steep for agricultural cultivation (6). The Department of Agriculture (12:16) has recommended that slopes greater than 15% should not be cultivated with sugarcane because of the high rates of erosion associated with sugarcane cultivation. However, because of the small size of Indian farms and the shortage of additional land, most farmers in the Sezela Mill area cultivate lands with slopes greater than 15%.

Only 10% of the land in the study area have moderate slopes of between 10-14%. Two percent of the land can be described as gently sloping, ie less than 10% slope.

The steep gradients of slopes on Indian owned land has serious implication for productivity on these farms. These steep slopes makes the use of mechanization almost impossible. It increases soil erosion and reduces the depth of top-soil, lowering productivity. It increases production costs because farmers have to embark on soil conservation projects; contour banks, gabion baskets and waterways have to be erected.

TABLE 4.8 SLOPE GRADIENT

Slope classification	Percentage
Flat 0%	0
Gentle 1-9%	2
Moderate 10-14%	10
Steep 15% +	88
TOTAL	100

Depth of top-soil is affected by these steep slopes because of erosion. Top-soil with depths of less than 25cm are considered to be shallow, top-soil of between 25-50cm is medium and top-soil greater than 50cm is deep. The depth of top-soil of Indian land in the study area ranged from shallow to deep. But, 63% of the farmers felt that the overall depth of top-soil on their land was medium. Only 8% of the farmres considered their top-soil to be deep and the balance indicated that the depth of the top-soil on their farms were shallow.

This chapter highlights the problems associated with the issue of agricultural land for Indian sugarcane farmers. The problems are many and varied.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ISSUE OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT, RELIEF AID, SUBSIDIES AND CAPITAL.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Capital and credit facilities form an indispensable part of the development and progress of a farming enterprise and are of particular importance in a situation such as pertains among Indian sugarcane farmers, where a majority farm on small properties and earn a limited income from farming. The problem basically relates to an inability to break into the poverty circle of lack of capital, low productivity, lack of physical development, low income and low savings.

Agricultural credit facilities may be classified into 3 categories, namely : Long-term credit, Medium-term credit and Short-term credit.

1. Long-term credit which is required for purchasing land, effecting permanent improvements and for refinancing existing debts. Loans are normally taken up against security of mortgage bonds over fixed property. The terms depend upon the purpose of the loan and are usually redeemable over ten years or longer periods. Where land is purchased the period of redemption most frequently extends over 30 years or longer.

2. Medium-term credit which is required for purchase of agricultural implements and transport vehicles or the purchase or creation of assets which do not yield dividends until several years have elapsed. Medium-term credit is usually required for a period of between two and five years, but may extend up to ten years.

3. Short-term credit which is required for the purchase of items such as fertilizer, seed cane, fuel and for paying

wages. Sugarcane farmers receive income periodically and short-term credit normally extends over a cropping season. In the case of sugarcane the period may be as long as two years in the case of the first crop.

According to Davies & Greyling (10:134), white farmers had access to a whole range of sources for credit. White farmers could get credit from insurance companies, the Land Bank, other farmers, the Government, commercial banks co-operatives, other financial institutions, finacing corporations, private persons, auctioneers and dealers.

This study reveals that a number of credit sources listed above are not available to Indian farmers. Farmers claim that the lack of long-term credit for the purchase and development of farmers and short-term credit facilities to finance seasonal production costs presents serious problems to agricultural development in the Indian rural areas. The main source of loans to Indian farmers include private individuals, financing corporations, commmercial banks, sugar mills and local businesses. In 1973 the Financial Aid Fund was established by the South African Sugar Association to assist small cane growers. More recently Indians gained access to the Agricultural Credit Board and the KwaZulu Finance Corporation.

5.2 AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

TABLE 5.1 INCIDENCE OF LOANS

Incidence of loans	No. of farmers	%
Current loan	25	83
No loan	5	17
Total	30	100

Table 5.1 demonstrates that 17% of the farmer do not have loans. Two of these farmers did not need loans because they were financially secure and could finance their farming operations. However,the remaining 3 farmers claim that they needed agricultural credit in order to upgrade and improve their farming operations. Of these 3 farmers, 2 of them stated that although they needed loans, they were reluctant to mortgage their properties against bonds for fear of losing their properties if they could not meet the repayments. The other farmer stated that all attempts to obtain a loan were unsuccessful.

83% of the farmers interviewed , currently have loans. These loans range from short-term to long-term loans. They claimed that these loans were essential for the day to day expenses of the farm and for the upgrade and improvement of their farm enterprise. One farmer secured a bond to purchase a farm from a White farmer in 1994. However, the majority of the farmers claimed that it was difficult to obtain a loan because of bureaucracy and delays in the processing of applications for loans. Also, the qualifying conditions stipulated by the credit institutions for loan approval was too stringent and many farmers were unable to satisfy these conditions and therefore failed to qualify for assistance. Lastly, farmers felt that there was limited access to loans because many credit institutions in the past did not grant loans to Indian farmers. Therefore, many farmers turned to private persons, local businesses and financing corporations for short-term and medium-term loans.

5.3 SOURCES OF CREDIT FOR INDIAN FARMERS

TABLE 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

Credit sources	No. of loans	%
Private persons	4	10
Financing Corporations	3	7
Local Businesses	2	5
Commercial Banks	9	22
Sugar Mills	13	32
Land Bank	0	0
Financial Aid Fund	5	12
Agricultural Credit Board	3	7
KwaZulu Finance Corporation	2	5
TOTAL	41	100

As mentioned previously 25 farmers had taken loans from various sources. Many of these farmers have taken credit from more than one source. Therefore, 41 loans were taken by these 25 farmers.

4 farmers had taken short-term loans from private persons, usually at very high interest rates. Although the interest rates are high, it is the most accessible source of credit in the short-term without security. According to Davies & Greyling (10:137), 38% of Indian farmers had loans with private persons and financial corporations in 1978. But now, with slightly improved credit facilities for Indian farmers, they are reducing their dependence for loans on private persons. 7% of the loans were taken from Financing Corporations , also at high interest rates. In addition, the agent (usually an attorney) charges a raising fee, and there are registration and cancellation fees in respect of mortgage bonds.

Some small farmers obtain extensive credit from local businessmen, purchasing all their requirements and only settling their accounts upon receipt of their sugar cheques. However only 5% of the loans were taken from local businesses. According to some of the farmers interviewed, local businessmen in the past lent money against the title deeds of the farm. They recall that some of their colleagues had lost their farms because they could not repay their debts.

Commercial Banks are favoured by many farmers as a source of credit. These loans are usually short to medium-term overdrafts. However, the limited period over which credit may be extended, the reluctance on the part of farmers to register mortgage bonds and the high level of security demanded by banks are important factors which preclude or discourage farmers from taking advantage of the credit facilities offered by commercial banks. Nevertheless, 22 loans in the form of overdrafts were taken by farmers from commercial banks.

The most popular source of short-term loan is the sugar mills. 32% of the loans were issued by the sugar mill.The sugar mill allows farmers short-term credit on cession against the forthcomming crop for the purchase of fertilizer and other production requirements. Upon request some sugar mills will do specific production operations, such as land preparation, planting, weeding, fertilizing and cutting and note the charges against the subsequent crops.

In 1965 the Land Bank announced that it would make available loans for specific projects to Indian farmers in the same way and on the same conditions as it assists White farmers. The Land Bank loans are made available on a long term basis only. Loans are granted against mortgage bonds, the farming units must be of an economic nature, and the Bank reserves the right to exercise a measure of control over borrowers and to ensure that loans are put to the use for which they are granted.But the great majority of Indian farmers, being small scale

operators on uneconomic units, fail to qualify for such assistance. It is this group which is especially hard hit by the lack of working capital and which finds it virtually impossible to improve farming standards.None of the farmers in the sample group had received loans from the Land bank.

The Financial Aid Fund was established in 1973, for the purpose of assisting those growers who maybe eligible as determined by the Sugar Association from time to time in consultation with the Minister. Although, Paragraph 5 of the preamble to the administrative rules of the Financial Aid Fund reads:

> "It is envisaged that ultimately the Fund will ensure maximum benefit for the developing sections of the Sugar Industry and the creation of improved living standards, opportunities for training, and the assumption of full responsibility for the management of the own affairs at the earliest opportunity." (41:2)

Many Indian sugarcane farmers are disappointed with the Fund .Originally interest on loans were at the rate of 3% per annum for the first four years and at the rate of 5% per annum for the following 6 years. The loan period extended to a maximum of 10 years.

Now the interest rate is 16% per annum and is redeemable within 5 years. Table 5.2 illustrates that 12% of the loans are obtained from the Financial Aid Fund. If the Financial Aid Fund expects to fulfil its promise in the preamble, it would have to reach far more than 12% of the farmers, since the majority of the farmers are small cane growers.

Of the 41 loans granted to the sample group, 3 loans were issued by the Agricultural Credit Board. The Agricultural Credit Board issues loans to acquire land up to a maximum of R500 000 and is redeemable over a 20-25 year period at a rate of 8% per annum. Short-term loans are also offered at 14% interest

over a 2 to 4 year period. The maximum short-term loan is equivalent to 60% of production cost.

The most recent credit institution to offer loans to Indian farmers has been the KwaZulu Finance Corporation. The KwaZulu Finance Corporation grants loans for production and the purchase of agricultural machinery. Only 5% of the loans in the sample area were obtained from the KwaZulu Finance Corporation.

5.4 UTILIZATION AND PURPOSE OF LOANS

TABLE 5.3 PURPOSE OF LOANS

Term of loan	Purpose of loan	No. of loans	%
LONG-TERM	Purchase of land	1	2.43
	Permanent improvements	1	2.43
	Refinancing existing debts	3	7.31
	SUB-TOTAL	5	12.17
MEDIUM-TERM	Purchase of agricultural implements	4	9.75
	Transport vehicles	2	4.86
	Irrigation equipment	0	0
	Boreholes	4	9.75
	Dams	0	0
	Soil Conservation	0	0
	SUB-TOTAL	10	24.36
SHORT-TERM	Planting (ratoon management)	4	9.75
	PRODUCTION (diesel, seed fertilizer, wages, chemicals)	22	53.66
	SUB-TOTAL	26	63.41
	TOTAL	41	100

Short-term loans (table 5.3) account for the majority of the loans taken by the farmers in the survey area. It is evident from the table and from discussions with these farmers that they have very little savings. Most of the farmers have taken their short-term loans from the Sugar Mill for the purchase of fertilizer, wages and production operations, on cession against the forth coming crops. After the mill has deducted its charge, the farmer is issued with a cheque The farmers claim that this is inadequate for their subsistence. Therefore, a further loan would have to be taken for the next crop. Many of these farmers are caught in this cycle of continous debt.

Almost 10% of the loans, were required for re-planting. It is usual practice to re-plant cane every year. But, most of the Indian farmers in the Sezela Mill area, normally re-plant every 10-12 years, because of the high cost of re-planting, which requires larger capital and labour input (± R4500 per hectre). Many farmers put off re-planting, if they have outstanding debts or if loans are not available.

Ratoon management which is done after each harvest is less costly,(± R1400 per hectre/ per annum) yet 53.66% of all loans were for production. This gives an indication of the economic status of these farmers.

Medium-term loans account for slightly under 25% of the total number of loans. Of these 10 medium-term loans 8 were for the purchase of agricultural implements and for the drilling of boreholes.

Just over 12% of the loans were long-term. One farmer received a loan from the Agricultural Credit Board for the purchase of a farm (R500 000), which is repayable over a 25 year period at 14% per annum. However,3 loans were taken to refinance existing debts. These farmers had to apply for long-term loan in order

to settle outstanding short and medium term loans.

Although 63.41 % of the loans were short-term and only 12.17% were long-term, the monetary value of long-term loan were greater than the short-term loans.

5.5 DISASTER AID

Table 5.4 DISTRIBUTION OF DISASTER RELIEF AID

Type of aid	No. applied	No. received	%
Flood relief Aid 1987	30	22	75
Drought Relief 1991 - 1993	30	24	80

Table 5.4 indicates the distribution of Disaster Relief Aid received by the sample group for the 1987 floods and the 1991-1993 drought. In both instances all the farmers applied for aid, however, only 22 or 75% of those who applied for Flood Relief Aid actually received them. For the 1991-1993 drought 80% of those who applied received aid. The most common reason given by farmers who were refused aid was, that the department concerned notified them that they do not qualify for Relief Aid. The farmers did not give specific details.

With reference to Table 5.5, 96% of the farmers complained that the compensation did not even cover their input costs. Only one farmer indicated that the compensation received more or less covered his production loss.

Farmers were asked if they had ever received agricultural subsidies. None of the farmers in the sample group ever received a subsidy of any form.

It is evident from the above that Indian sugarcane farmers, who were affected by disasters were not treated sympathetically by the state or fairly compensated. Also, farmers with special needs were not given subsidies. Therefore, Indian cane farmers had to struggle to compete with the White farmers.

Table 5.5 GENERAL PERCEPTION OF COMPENSATION RECEIVED FOR DISASTER AID

Compensation received	No. of farmers	Percentage
More than adequate	0	0
Adequate	1	4
Less than adequate	23	96
TOTAL	24	100

CHAPTER SIX

THE ISSUE OF PRODUCTIVITY, PRICE AND INCOME.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Table 6.1 CLASSIFICATION OF FARMERS.

Classification	No.	%
Quota growers	3	10
Small cane growers	27	90
TOTAL	30	100

Of the 30 farmers in the sample group, 27 farmers are classified as rural cane growers, amounting to 90% of the farmers. The remaining 10% (3 farmers) are classified as quota growers. However, discussions with the extension officer of the area reveals that 95% of the Indian cane growers in the Sezela Mill area are small growers.

6.2 LOCATION OF FARMS

In the study area, productivity varies from farm to farm and from district to district. Therefore, for the purpose of convenience farmers will be divided into 2 groups:

1. Coastal farms -- are those farms located close to the coast, which includes the district of Umkomaas, Umzinto, Ifafa, Sezela and Hibberdene.
2. Inland farms -- are those Indian farms situated approximately 30 km inland, at Wincanton, Braemar and Glenalby.

Table 6.2 demonstrates that 37% of the farms in the study area are inland and 83% are coastal.

Table 6.2 LOCATION OF FARMS

Location	No.	%
Coastal	11	37
inland	19	63
TOTAL	30	100

6.3 PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity on Indian sugar cane farms are generally low in absolute and relative terms in comparison to White farms. White farmers produce on average 80 tons of cane per hectre, per annum on their farms (12:8).

The average annual yield, per hectre on Indian coastal farms is 68 tons as compared to 55 tons for Indian owned inland farm (7).

Table 6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF YIELD ON COASTAL FARMS

Average yield tons/ hectre per annum.	No. of farms	% of farms
50	0	0
51 - 60	2	10.5
61 - 70	14	73.7
71	3	15.8
TOTAL	19	100

Table 6.4 DISTRIBUTION OF YIELD ON INLAND FARMS

Average yield tons/ hectre per annum.	No. of farms	%
< 40	0	0
41 - 50	2	18.2
51 - 60	8	72.7
61 >	1	9.1
TOTAL	11	100

An examination of Table 6.3 and 6.4 respectively, reveals that almost 74% of the Indian farms on the coast produce between 61 - 70 tons of cane per annum, as compared to the inland farms, where almost 73% of the farms produce in the region of 51 -60 tons of cane. Also, only 15.8% of the coastal farms produce more than 70 tons of cane per hectre. Although, the conditions on coastal farms are slightly better than inland farms, 10.5% of the farms on the coast produce between 51 -60 tons per hectre even though they are on the upper range of this catergory, these yields are very low.18.2% of the farmers of inland farms produce less than 50 tons of cane per hectre per annum and only 9% produce over 60 tons per hectre per annum.

There are a number of reasons why production on Indian farms are lower than those of White farms. Some of the reasons for low productivity on Indian farms have already been discussed in previous chapters. But, a brief discussion will be presented here. Indian sugar cane farms are characterized by steep slopes, which makes the use of mechanization impossible on large portions of the farms.

The steep slopes increases the potential for erosion. However, soil conservation structures require capital. The lack of capital and limited availability of credit prevents the effective conservation of soils. Therefore, top soil depths are often shallow on these slopes.

The soil quality on these farms range from poor to moderate. Poor soils require large inputs of fertilizer. But, in order to cut down on production costs, very few farmers test their soil regularly and apply the correct amount or type of fertilizers.

In most areas the soils are of the poor sandy and clayey texture. Crops cultivated on these soils need to be irrigated. But, none of the farms in the sample group were located near a dam or a major river. A few were located near small streams which could supply some water for irrigation, but the availability of capital and credit to purchase irrigation equipment is scarce. As noted earlier only one farmer had irrigation facilities on his farm. Therefore, most of the Indian farmers employ the dry land farming technique.

Increased use of mechanization could increase productivity. But, the use of mechanization is limited to slopes with gradients below 15%. Where mechanization is possible its application is restricted again by the lack of capital and limited availability of credit, for the purchase of these agricultural machines. The alternative to mechanization is labour intensive farming. But, the rising cost of labour and the seasonal shortage of labour is an inhibiting factor.

Adopting scientific farming methods have proved to improve productivity. But, here again socio-cultural factors, accentuated by political idealogies of the past has retarded productivity and agricultural development in general. "In

his investigation of the social aspects of the Indian farming situation L. Roux found that Indian farmers were traditionally orientated. This no doubt, has resulted from their historical background since most of them originated from peasant communities" (12:19). Indian farmers, especially those 50 years or older are reluctant to change their farming methods. The acceptance of and successful application of the scientific is limited by the standard of education achieved by the Indian farmers. (see chapter 8)

Productivity is also influenced by the standard of management, level of innovativeness and leadership qualities. However, political injustices of the past have deprived Indian farmers of agricultural education and training. (see chapter 8)

Limited access to agricultural extension services has also perpetuated low productivity. Agricultural extension services should reach all farmers not just a few of the big farmers. (see chapter 8)

TABLE 6.5 : PERCEPTION OF INDIAN CANE GROWERS ON HOW TO INCREASE YIELD PER HECTRE, IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

How to increase yield per hectre	Order of priority - %						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	TOTAL
Suitable land	81	15	3	1	—	—	100
Need irrigation system	16	68	12	3	—	1	100
Need financial aid	3	16	79	2	—	—	100
More mechanization	—	1	4	82	10	3	100
Need more advice on growing cane	—	—	1	9	79	11	100
Improve farming method	—	—	1	3	11	85	100
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	

It is interesting to note the perception of Indian cane farmers (Table 6.5) on how they could increase their productivity. The respondents were presented with suggestions on how to increase productivity. They were asked to arrange them in order of priority, from most important to least important.

1. 81% of the farmers placed "suitable land " at the top of their list of priorities, as the most important requirement in order to increase their productivity.
2. 15% placed "suitable land" second on their list of priorities.
3. 16% placed "need irrigation system" as their first priority.
4. 68%of the farmers placed "need irrigation system " as the second most important requirement for increasing productivity.
5. Only 1% of the farmers placed "need irrigation system" sixth on their list of priorities.
6. "Need financial Aid" was placed third in order of priority by 79% of the farmers.
7. Interestingly, "Need more advice on farming cane"was placed fifth on their list of priorities by 79% of the farmers.
8. 85% of the farmers placed "Improving farming methods" sixth on their list of priority.
9. Lastly only 1% of the farmers placed "Improving farming methods" third on their list of priorities.

6.4 PRICE

It is important to note that of the 45 500 sugar cane growers in South Africa 43 500 are designated as " small growers" , representing 95.6% of all growers in South Africa (40:3)

A farmer who produces more than 420 sucrose tons per annum is considered to be

a Quota grower. Quota growers had to register their land and received a quota from the Mill. The actual quota varies from farmer to farmer.

The majority of Indian farmers (90%) in the sample group, felt that the present pricing formula employed by the Sugar Association of South Africa favoured the quota growers to the disadvantage of the small cane growers. An attempt will be made below, to illustrate this point of view.

For the sake of simplicity and convenience, 420 tons will be considered to be the average quota per Quota grower and 10 tons of cut cane would be equated to one ton of sucrose.Prices are calculated on the basis of sucrose tons.

The South African Sugar Association diverts sugar into two pools:

A - pool, for domestic consumption,

B - pool, for the international market.

Current prices for A - pool sugar is ± R865 per sucrose ton and ± R707 for B - pool.

Example : one

Assumptions : Farmer X - is a Quota grower.

Production - R500 sucrose tons per annum.

Farmer X would be paid A - pool prices for the first 420 sucrose tons. And B - pool prices for the balance, ie. 500 - 420 = 80 sucrose tons.

A - pool : 420 X R 865 =	R 363 300
B - pool : 80 x R 707 =	R 56 560
Gross Income	R 419 860

Example : two

Assumptions : Farmer Y - is a small cane grower

Production - 100 sucrose tons per annum

Farmer Y would be paid the average of A - Pool and B - Pool prices.

$$\text{Average price} = \frac{\text{A - pool price + B - pool price}}{2}$$

$$= \frac{\text{R 8 6 5 + R 707}}{2}$$

$$= \text{R 786}$$

$$\text{Gross income} = \text{Yield x Average Price}$$

$$= 100 \text{ x R 786}$$

$$= \text{R 78 600}$$

Farmer Y produces 1/5 (100 tons sucrose) of Farmer X's total production (500 tons) . Therefore Farmer Y would expect to receive 1/5 (R 83 972) of farmer X's gross income (R 419 860). But in actual fact Farmer Y receives only R 78 600 a difference of R 5 372.

It is this discrepancy in price that Indian small cane growers are dissatisfied with. Although the difference in price may seem small, to a small grower who is battling against all odds, this is a significant amount. However, in 1992 this pricing formula was changed and small growers now receive A - Pool prices for their cane.

6.5 INCOME

Income derived from Indian farms are generally low. Table 6.5 indicates Gross Income before deductions. The income indicated in the table was not supported by documentary evidence. Gross income ranged from under R 5000 to well over R 100 000. Almost 43% of the farmers earned less than R 20 000 last year. The

majority of Indian cane farmers, 67% received less than R 30 000 in 1995.

Table 6.5 DISTRIBUTION OF GROSS INCOME (1995)

Distribution of gross income	No.	%	Cumulative %
R 10 000	4	13.4	13.4
R 10 001 - R 20 000	9	30.0	43.4
R 20 001 - R 30 000	7	23.4	66.8
R 30 001 - R 40 000	3	100	76.8
R 40 001 - R 50 000	2	6.7	83.5
R 50 001 - R 60 000	1	3.3	86.8
R 60 001 - R 70 000	1	3.3	90.1
R 70 001 - R 80 000	1	3.3	93.4
R 80 001 - R 90 000	1	3.3	96.7
R 90 001 - R100 000	1	3.3	100
TOTAL	30	100	100

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ISSUE OF OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EXTENSION SERVICES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The lack of proper operational infrastructure is another stumbling block for most Indian farmers. This chapter will examine the problems associated with labour, transport, mechanization, water, soil conservation and pests and diseases.

7.2 MECHANIZATION

Table 7.1 LEVEL OF MECHANIZATION ON INDIAN CANE FARMS

Level of mechanization	No.	%
1. Self -sufficient	2	6.7
2. Partially (Basic machinery)	19	63.3
3. Minimal	9	30
TOTAL	30	100

Mechanization on Indian farms are generally low. Only two farmers in the survey group were self sufficient in terms of agricultural machinery. A large proportion (63.3%) of farmers have only the very basic machinery, usually a tractor and ploughs. A few farmers had crawlers, which are absolutely essential when ploughing steep slopes, since tractors would not be able to negotiate these steep gradients. 30% of the farmers had minimal machinery, usualy an assortment of land tools, like cane knives and forks.

7.3 USE OF CONTRACTORS

Table 7.2 USE OF CONTRACTORS

Use of contractors	No.	%
For most operations	9	30
Some operations	19	63.3
Do not use contractors	2	6.7
TOTAL	30	100

An examination of table 7.1 and 7.2 respectively reveals a correlation between the level of mechanization and the use of contractors. Those farmers who were self sufficient in agricultural machinery do not use contractors. However, the farmers who were partially mechanized (63.3%) made use of contractors for one operation only,whereas others required contractors to perform almost all their operations. (The usual operations involved ploughing, weeding, fertilizing and transporting.)

The pertinent issue concerning the use of contractors is the problems associated with them. Firstly, contractors fees are expensive and cost much more than it would have, if the farmer had the necessary machinery. The use of contractors therefore, reduces the profit margin of the farmers. Secondly the workmanship of some contractors are not up to acceptable standard, resulting in lower yield and profits.

Thirdly, some contractors refuse to contract, especially after the rains when it becomes very risky to operate machinery on the very steep slopes. Even under pleasant weather conditions, contractors refuse to operate the machinery in remote and inaccessible parts of the farm.

Lastly, during peak periods, there are frequent delays with contractors and farmers deliver their cane late to the Mills. Sometimes the delays are so prolonged, that the mills close for the season before the farmer can get his cane to the Mill.

7.4 WATER SUPPLY

The mean annual rainfall recorded at the Durban Airport weather station, is 957 mm. (13 :38) Although the East Coast of South Africa receives higher rainfall than the rest of the country, rainfall is erratic and unreliable. Therefore, irrigation facilities are necessary especially during the dry season and during periods of drought.(last drought 1991 - 1993)

However, Indian farms are generally situated far from any major river or dam. Therefore, the collection of rainwater and water from boreholes is the most common source. A few farms are situated close to small streams . But, there are a number of problems associated with irrigation. Firstly, assuming irrigation facilities were available to extract water from the streams, during the dry season when water is needed most, these streams run dry . Secondly, dams could be built along these streams, butthe majority of Indian farmers do not have the capital to build them. To date no subsidies have been issued in the survey area to these farmers, for the erection of farm dams.

However, recently subsidies for the construction have been made available. The Inkanyezi Development Trust subsidises 2/3 of the cost of the farm dam, up to a maximum of R 7500. Also, the Cedara Engineering Section would provide technical assistance and advice to farmers intending to construct farm dams. Lastly, it is difficult to pump water up steep slopes, with a small water pump. The subsidy that was introduced in 1993, cover 2/3 of the cost of a small standard pump. Very powerful heavy duty pumps are required, which are very costly.

7.5 LABOUR

The farmers in the sample group use labour in varying degrees. The three biggest quota growers employ full time labourers and part time labourers , as the need arises. They employ ± 20 labourers at a time, depending on the stage of operation, size of farm and task involved. However, 3/4 of these labourers are Togt labour, eg. cutters and weeders. Normally tractor, crane, crawler and grabloader drivers are full time employees.

These drivers receive approximately R300 per month, in addition they receive a food ration of ± R50 per month. The bigger farmers also have an Induna who is paid ± R250, plus ration. The bigger farmers stated that they generally do not have a problem in obtaining labour. However, the labour shortage do occur, mostly during peak periods, ie. during August when these farmers prefer to harvest.

The small farmers (87%) employ part-time labourers, when required and also contract out, some of the farming operations to private contracters or to the Sugar Mill. The small growers employ between 6-10 labourers per day, depending on the task involved and the size of their farms. About 50% of the small growers stated that they have difficulty finding labour after June each year.

Both the quota growers and the small growers agreed that the two problems associated with labour is: 1. The raising cost of labour ;

2. the seasonal shortage of labour.

Labour cost are constantly rising and labourers are now demanding higher prices for their labour. Full-time labourers and drivers are demanding, better wages, improved ration, fringe benefits and even housing. Part-time labourers are demanding, better wages and better working conditions. The implementation of the

Labour Act would mean that farmers would have to provide labourers with, Workmens Compensation, protective clothing and a minimum wage. Farmers already claim that labour accounts for almost 50% of production costs.

During peak season, Indian farmers do experience labour shortage. Labourers are attracted by the higher wages offered by White farmers during the peak season. Indian farmers claim that they cannot compete with White farmers on the issue of wages, since they make higher profits per hectre than Indian farmers.

7.6 SOIL CONSERVATION

Soil conservation is a major problem on Indian sugar cane farms. As mentioned previously the topography on their farms is hilly and the slopes steep. Therefore, the potential for erosion is great, especially during times of heavy rainfall and floods. Also, the use of traditional farming practices accentuates the problem. Over many years of soil mismanagement, farmers are left with shallow top-soils. Despite, this very little soil conservation measures are taken on the majority of Indian cane farms. Table 7.3 illustrates this point.

Table 7. 3 SOIL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Soil conservation measures	No. of farmers	%
Contour banks	-	-
Gabion baskets	-	-
Waterways	-	-
Strip cropping	-	-
Contour roads	16	53
None	14	47
TOTAL	30	100

The only soil conservation measure undertaken by 53% of the farmers was the cutting of contour roads. 47% of the farmers had not embarked on any acceptable soil conservation programme. However subsidies are now available, to those farmers who satisfy the conditions of the Soil Conservation Act, from the Inkanyezi Development Trust.

So, why then did Indian cane growers not take advantage of these subsidies ? Firstly, these subsidies have only recently been made available to small cane growers. Secondly, most of the Indian cane growers do not satisfy the conditions of the Soil Conservation Act, because of the steep gradientof their land. Thirdly, the subsidies cover approximately 2/3 of the cost of the soil conservation programme. Again the of capital was an inhibiting factor. Fourth, the construction of contour banks on slopes makes the use of tractors and crawlers impossible. Lastly, since the majority of Indian cane farms are already small, the construction of waterways would create a wastage of valuable space. For eg. recommended waterway, should be 12 metres wide and at least 200 metres in length. This would mean 2400m^2 of wasted agricultural land.

7.7 TRANSPORT

Table 7.4 AVAILABILITY OF TRANSPORT

Transport	No.	%
Own transport	4	13.3
Hired transport	26	86
TOTAL	30	100

Almost 87% of the farms hire transport from either contractors or private individuals. As mentioned previously, the hiring of transport is costly and contributes to lower profits for small cane growers. According to Davies & Greyling (10 : 126), "Cost for reaping and for transporting cane of White growers, over six miles was 60 cents, or approximately half of what most Indian farmers paid in 1965" This has subsequently changed and the current cost of transporting cane within a 12km radius of the Sugar Mill is R 10 per ton, using Hilo transportation. The transport rate per ton decreases as one goes further away from the mill. Therefore, a farm 20 km away from the mill will pay R9 per ton for transportation. The transport formula therefore, benefits the farmers who are situated far from the mill, unlike in the past.

7.8 EXTENSION SERVICES & AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

The first extension officer was appointed by the South African Sugar Association in 1965, to advice Indian cane growers on production techniques and conservation layouts of sugar cane fields. Indian Quota growers paid levies to the South African Sugar Association for this service. But, the service was only provided to the Quota growers and the small growers and the small growers were ignored. Besides, one extension officer could not possibly serve all the Indian cane growers

In 1968, the Department of Agricultural Technical services appointed an extension officer to the Pinetown office to service all Indian farmers (cane, vegetable and fruit farms) in Natal. A daunting task to say the least.

The Sugar Mills have field officers (they are not proffessionally trained extension officers) who are mainly concerned with administrative matters.

In 1987, the then House of Delegates, Department of Agriculture, had 8 extension officers on its staff to serve all Indian farmers. However, these extension officers were asked, not to get involved with sugar cane farmers, since they were considered to be unsuitably qualified in the field of cane farming. (6)

A venture between the Department of Agricultural Extension and the South African Sugar Association was embarked on this year to provide an extension officer for the Sezela Mill area, exclusively for cane growers .

Interviews with farmers reveal that they seldom get visits from extension officers. (Table 8 1)

Table 7.5 FARM VISITS BY EXTENSION OFFICERS

Frequency of visits	No.	%
Regularly	-	-
Occasionally	4	13.3
Seldom	16	53.4
Not at all	10	53.3
TOTAL	30	100

10 of the farmers in the sample group have never been visited by an extension officer, as far as they could remember. Two meetings was held in 1995 between extension officers and the farmers. However, the extension officer interviewed revealed that the respond was very disappointing.No meetings was held this year

Farmers were asked to rate the services provided by the extension officer. Many respondents did not answer this question. However, the majority of those who did, rated the service as " satisfactory ".

Table 7.6 PRIMARY FUNCTION OF EXTENSION OFFICERS

Primary function	No.	%
Advice / education for growers	3	10
Help the farmer	10	33.3
Provide financial aid	17	56.7
TOTAL	30	100

Farmers were asked to state what they thought was the primary function of the extension officer. Interestingly 56.7% of the farmers thought that the primary function of the extension officer was to arrange financial aid. Only 10 % selected "advice / education for growers" as the primary function.

This illustrates that farmers generally have the wrong perception of the primary function of the extension officers. This might be attributed to the limited contact between farmers and extension officers or to the fact that the majority of farmers approach extension officers only when they need financial aid.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDATIONS

1. It has been established from the study that one of the major problems hindering agricultural development among Indian farmers is the issue of land: small size of their farms, the poor quality of their soils and steep slopes and the lack of availability of suitable agricultural land.

It is recommended that the government make available state land for agricultural purposes. Also, the state should purchase additional land from white farmers who have their land up for sale. This in turn would be sold to Indian farmers who could not afford the property as a whole but who could purchase $\pm$ 100 hectares at a time.

2. Large amounts of agricultural land has been lost as a direct result of urbanization. An intergral part of the above problem is compounded by the fact that there is continued use of Indian agricultural land for informal housing purposes, largely shack developments. It is thus necessary for urgent steps to be taken to prevent the loss of agriculturally productive land to formal as well as informal urbanisation.

The state should establish a definite urban fence so that both long and short term planning of agricultural enterprises can be undertaken without interference. When agricultural land is to be withdrawn from agricultural usage, considerations should first be given to land bordering existing urban centres particularly where production is marginal. Good agricultural land should be jealously protected.

3. The insecurity of some farmers who are occupying and farming on leased and rented land must be addressed. Security of land tenure is vital for the overall improvement in the standard of living of the rural population and for agricultural development. Security of land tenure is an important

cornerstone for sustainable agricultural practices. Land degradation and inadequate capital improvements are more pronounced on land where users are unsure of their continued tenure. Long-term planning and the improvement of assets are best achieved under conditions of secure land tenure because inter alia the user knows he/she will reap the benefits of his/her work and investments, while the expected income stream and fixed assets can serve as collateral (13:11).Therefore, the government must pass legislation to ensure security of land tenure.

4. The distribution, size and spatial arrangement of land holdings arising from a laissez faire approach to land development in the past, are inhibitive to agricultural development. The existing organization of the land resource base contributes directly and indirectly to low productivity. The need for rational settlement planning and organization is imperative.

5. The subdivision of small properties and hence fragmentation of existing small holdings has resulted in these units becoming economically non-viable and creating high levels of indebtedness. The availability of additional land and credit for land acquisition will reduce subdivision and fragmentation of farm land.

It is also recommended that suitable provision be made for a programme of reform to bring about the timely consolidation of existing uneconomic units.

6. The quality of Indian agricultural land is generally poor, because of the steep slopes, poor soil texture and shallow to medium soil depths. Improved sugarcane production is only possible if techniques such as bench terracing and contour banks are employed in order to conserve soil.This requires considerable financial outlay which is usually beyond the means of many Indian farmers.

Greater application of fertilizer and spray irrigation systems would improve soil quality and increase productivity. Availability of state subsidies and greater accessibility to credit facilities on favourable terms is needed.

7. Due to the poor rainfall experienced in certain areas, supplementary irrigation is required. The absence of extensive irrigation facilities effectively precludes other more intensive farming systems at present. There is a need for financial assistance to farmers in terms of subsidies with regard to sinking of boreholes, as well as construction of small dams for irrigation purposes.

Dam sites should be earmarked (with minimum loss of productive land) and constructed on major rivers and irrigation schemes be planned to assist farmers in obtaining increased yields.

8. Limited access to capital and credit has inhibited agricultural development among Indian sugarcane farmers. There is a need for greater accessibility to state subsidies, agricultural credit and Disaster Aid.

Existing financial institutions at present provide an adequate framework through which future growth and development of the agrarian system could take place and which could serve to intergrate the Indian rural economy more effectively. Access to development capital and credit facilities is constrained to very low levels for the majority of farmers. Cognizance must be taken of the fact that the majority of Indian sugarcane farmers are small growers.

The present system of agricultural finance needs to be reviewed, since it works against the benefit of small growers. Should present conditions prevail in future, little improvement can be expected to take place in the agrarian

system.

9. It has been found that insufficient income is being generated by a large proportion of farming families, with small holdings. In some cases it is below a minimum subsistence level.

Low levels of income among Indian sugarcane farmers is not only due to the small size of their holdings, but to a complex series of interrelated political, economic social and physical factors.

There is a need to improve the income levels of rural Indian families. A shift away from the monoculture of sugarcane to diversification of crops is advised.Where water resources permit supplementary irrigation, more renumerative crops maybe grown. In the remaining areas where no potential for irrigation exists but where slopes are moderate enough to permit annual cropping a range of crops maybe produced.

The final selection of crops which may most profitably be grown will have to be considered carefully. This will be determined not only by the enviromental conditions, but economic conditions such as available markets, demand and price.

As a last resort, rural families may seek outside employment in order to supplement their income and farm on a part-time basis.

10. Sugarcane productivity is below desired levels both in output per unit of land and per unit of labour on the majority of enterprises. Indian sugarcane farmers in general compare unfavourably in productivity with their White counterparts in the region.

A farming system based predominantly upon dry land sugarcane cultivation discords with characteristics of the available land resource base, taken in relation to the size of farming enterprises (12:17).Sugarcane cultivation is less productive than other more intensive farming systems could be. But, low productivity reflects low levels of efficiency in farm management, innovation, technology, and infra-structure.

11. The level of farm management is generally low among the older farmers, this is a reflection of the level of education. Many farmers are poorly educated and some are illiterate. This is a manifestation of the lack of educational opportunities for rural Indians before the 1960s (22:109).

Poor agricultural education and poor technical knowledge has resulted in poor farming practice. However, there is no doubt that considerable improvement in management is possible. This could be achieved through schooling and with the support of an effective agricultural extension service.

Coupled with improved management through education, maximum intensification of land use should be the basis of the reform programme. This maybe achieved by using land capability as a foundation for planning.

The influence of improved management on farm income maybe judged by calculating the increased returns which would accrue if the productivity of Indian sugarcane farms, in terms of tons of cane per acre per annum, was equal to the average for the whole industry. It was noted that Indian farmers reap 5 tons of cane per acre per annum less than the industrial average (12:21). This additional income would improve the financial circumstances of farmers.

12. The use of technology and technical skills is limited to a few of the large cane growers. But, the level of technical skills among the majority

of Indian cane farmers was generally low. Many of the older Indian farmers are reluctant to experiment with innovative farming methods. However, limited extension services is another contributing factor to low innovative levels. It is recommended that the Department of Agriculture , the Sugar Association of South Africa and other organizations should expand the Agricultural Extension Service by appointing additional trained personnel. In this regard the extension programme will have to be expanded to include education at school and college level. This willresult in increased technical flow of information to farmers who would benefit from increased yields by using more appropriate technology.

13. The high unemployment rate in KwaZulu-Natal has resulted in an abundant supply of labour. However, Indian farmers do experience seasonal labour shortages. It is recommended that the right balance is found between the use of labour and mechanization. The advantages of increasing the use of labour include increasing employment, reduction of capital investment, stabilization of, and better quality of life in, rural communities. Small cane growers and quota growers make extensive use of hired labour. Small cane growers also make use of contractors, whereas bigger cane growers made partial use of mechanization.

14 Relatively few farmers owned machinery and equipment above the level of simple tools. There was a close relationship between ownership of machinery and equipment and enterprise size. Scarcity of operating capital was a serious hindrance to mechanisation. It is recommended that farmers group together to purchase and operate farm machinery and equipment co-operatively.

15. A high proportion of transport was hired for transporting sugarcane, other agricultural produce and for personal use. This increases costs and lowers profits. Since the majority of Indian farmers could not afford to purchase their own transport vehicles and were not classified as bona fide farmers, they could not benefit from the concessionary price of diesel that other farmers enjoyed.

8.2 CLOSING STATEMENT

It is evident from the study that Government policy in the past had favoured White commercial sugarcane farmers and had neglected the Indian sugarcane farmer. It is also evident from the study that the Indian sugarcane farmer had to overcome many political and economic constraints in the past and that these constraints had retarded his agricultural development. Further, previous administrations were slow to address the problems of the Indian sugarcane farmers. However there seems to be reason for Indian farmers to be optimistic for the future. Since an extract from the White Paper on Agriculture for KwaZulu-Natal 1996, reads:

> "..... the whole spectrum of farmers will be served equitably:
>
> * Small- scale farmers, including communal farmers, through to large-scale farmers all play a vital role in providing for national and household food security, and in contributing to the Province's economy.
> * Small-scale farmers, who outnumber large-scale farmers by about 40 : 1, have not enjoyed the level of service that large-scale farmers have enjoyed in the past." (13:7)

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH SURVEY - INDIAN SUGARCANE FARMERS OF THE SEZELA MILL AREA

1. Total size of farm (hectares) .....

2. Ownership of farm :

Individual owner	
Family farm	
Lease	
Rent	

3.If leased or rented, state....

FROM WHOM		PERIOD	AMOUNT
White owner			
Indian owner			
Black owner			
Tribal land			
Mill			

4. If individual owner or family farm, state how it was acquired and when.

		YEAR
Purchased by you.		
Inherited by you.		

5. If the land was inherited, was it .....by your forefathers.

Crown Land received	
purchased	
Unknown	

6. Is your farm a piece of a large farm that was sub-divided previously.

Yes	
No	
Unknown	

7. Is your farm fragmented or one consolidated piece. If fragmented, state number of fragments.

One consolidated piece		No.of frag.
Fragmented		

8. What is your farm land used for? Also, state approx. area in acres and %.

LAND USE		AREA(acres)	AREA %
Sugarcane			
Vegetables			
Fruit			
Timber (wattle/pine)			
Pastures			
Open veld/waste land			
Other			

9. How would you describe the quality of your land?

9.1 Soil quality :

Good	
Satisfactory	
Poor	

9.2 Soil texture :

Rocky	
Sandy	
Clay	
Loam	

9.3 Gradient/Slope :

Steep	
Moderate	
Gentle	
Flat	

10. Did you apply for agricultural credit?

Yes	
No	

11. If your answer to question 10 was No ,give reason. .....

.....

.....

12. If your answer to question 10 was YES, state year, amount, purpose, institution and whether it was granted (✓) or not (✗).

INSTITUTION	GRANTED	YEAR	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
Agricultural Credit Board				
Land Bank				
Insurance companies				
Co-operatives				
Farmers				
Private persons/Fin.Corp.				
Commercial Banks				
Other Financial Instit.				
Sugar Mills				
Businesses				
Financial Aid Fund				
KwaZulu Finance Co-op.				
Other sources.....				

13. Did you ever apply for Disaster Relief/Aid ?

YES	
NO	

14. If you answered YES for Question 13, state type of aid.

Drought relief	
Flood relief	
Other	

15. Was the application successful ?

YES	
NO	

16. If you answered YES to question 15, state year, amount and whether you consider the compensation to be adequate or not.

YEAR	AMOUNT

COMPENSATION	
More than adequate	
Adequate	
Less than adequate	
Too little	

17. Did you receive a State Agricultural Subsidy ?

YES	
NO	

18. If you answered YES to question 17, state year, amount and purpose.

YEAR	AMOUNT	PURPOSE

19. Are you classified as a Quota grower or a Small Cane Grower.

Quota Grower	
Small Cane Grower	

20. Total annual sugarcane production (cut cane).

Size of caneland:Hectares	Average yield:Tons/Hect	Total yield : Tons

21. Total sugarcane production (sucrose ton), price per ton and gross income.

	Total yield sucrose tons	Price	Income
A - Pool			
B - Pool			
		Gross Income	

22. Do you think your average cane yields can be increased.

YES	
NO	

23. Suggest ways to increase cane production. Arrange in order of priority.

High priority (6)---------- Low priority (1).

Suitable land	
Improve farming methods	
Need irrigation systems	
Need financial aid	
Need more advice on growing cane	
Insufficient land	
More mechanization	

24. Are you a full-time or part-time farmer ?

Full-time	
Part-time	

25. Do you derive income from any other economic activity? Specify.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	INCOME
Employment(non-farming)	
Sale of livestock	
Sale of vegetables	
Sale of fruit	
Sale of timber	
Contracting	
Other.....	

26. Perception of income from cane.

Very good	
Good	
Fair	
Poor	
Very poor	
Don't know	

27. Are you satisfied with the price of cane ?

YES	
NO	

28. If your answer to question 27 was NO give reason.

Price too low	
Price fluctuation	
Other reason	
.....	
.....	

29. Do you employ labour ?

YES	
NO	

30. Number of labourers and the daily wage rate.

No. of labourers	Wage Rate	Total Cost

31. Do you have difficulty obtaining labourers ? Reason.

YES	
NO	

REASON : .....

.....

32.Do you consider labour to be a major cost of production.

YES	
NO	

33. LAND PREPARATION :

	Ploughing	Planting	Weeding	Fertilizing	Cutting	Transporting
Self/family						
Hired labour						
Contractors						
Development agency/mill						

34. Farming method :

Labour intensive	
Highly Mechanised	
Partially Mechanised	

35. Do you own any agricultural machines.

YES	
NO	

36. Number of agricultural machines :

Tractors		Crawlers	
Lorries		Grabloaders	
Ploughs		Cranes	
Trailers		Ridgers	

37. Do you have problems with contractors?

YES	
NO	

38. Types of problems with contractors :

Refusal to contract	
Late/Delay (contractors)	

39. Do you use fertilizer?

YES	
NO	

40. Amount of fertilizer used per acre :

<100kg	
100–200kg	
201–300kg	
301–400kg	
401–500kg	
500+	

41. Total cost of fertilizer :

R 0 - R 999	
R 1 000 - R 1 999	
R 2 000 - R 2 999	
R 3 000 - R 3 999	
R 4 000 +	

42. Is your canelands under irrigation ?

YES	
NO	

43. If your answer to question 42 is NO give reason.

Cost factor	
Geographical location - (distance from river)	
Hilly topography	
Other	

44. Do you have serious erosion problems ?

YES	
NO	

45. If your answer to question 44 was YES, have you taken any soil conservation measures.

YES	
NO	

46. If you answered YES to question 45, state type of soil conservation measures.

Contour Banks	
Gabion basket	
Other	

47. If you answered No to question 45, state reason.

Cost factor.	
Contour Banks makes use of tractors impossible.	
Other	

48. Transportation of cane to mill :

Own transport	
Hired transport	

49. If you hire transport, from whom ?

Contractors	
Mill	
Private individuals	

50. Cost of transport : per ton / per km.

COST PER TON	NO. OF TONS	AMOUNT
COST PER KM	NO. OF KM	AMOUNT
	Total Cost	

51. Water supply :

Piped water	
Boreholes	
Bucket/Drums	
Rainwater	

52. If you collect water by buckets or drums, state distance of dam or river.

Distance from dam/river.	

53. Did your major source of domestic water supply fail in the previous year?

YES	
NO	

54. Did the failure of rainfall result in crop failure? If YES, state when.

YES	
NO	

YEAR				

55. Have you had crop losses through diseases ?

YES	
NO	

56. Crop loss through diseases : state when and extent of loss in tons and value.

YEAR	Extent of loss/tons	Extent of loss/value

57. Do you spray your crops with pesticides ?

YES	
NO	

58. If you stated NO for question 57, give reason.

Too costly	
Lack of labour	
No crop sprayers	
Not necessary	
Other	

59. How often do Extension Officer make personal visits to your farm ?

Regularly	
Occasionally	
Seldom	
Not at all	

60. From which organizations where these Extension officers ?

Department of Agricultural Technical Services	
South African Sugar Association	
Sugar Mill	
Fertilizer manufacturing firm	
Sugar Experimental Station - Mount Edgecombe	
Other	

61. How often have you been invited to meetings and demonstrations by the above organisations.

Regularly	
Occasionally	
Seldom	
Not at all	

62. How often have you used the soil testing facilities.

	Last 10 yrs	Last 20 yrs	Last 30 yrs
One time			
Two times			
Three times			
Four times			
Five times			
More than five times			

63. Do you implement the advice/suggestions of the extension officer.

All the time	
Most of the time	
Sometimes	
Seldom	
Never	

64. How would you rate the services provided by the extension officer.

Very good	
Good	
Satisfactory	
Poor	

65. What would you consider to be the primary functions of the extension officers. Arrange in order of importance. Most important (5)————————Least important (1).

Advice/education for growers.	
Help the farmer.	
Provide financial aid.	
Experimental research on soil and seeds.	
Provide a link between the grower and the mill	

66. Do you keep proper records of all aspects of your farming activities?

YES	
NO	

67. If you answered NO to question 66, state reason.

Don't know how (education)	
Feel that it is not necessary	
Other.....	

68. Innovative farming methods.

68.1. Do you use soil analysis as a basis for the application of fertilizer?

YES	
NO	

68.2 If NO, provide reason.

You know how much fertilizer to use.	
It is not necessary to do soil analysis as it makes no difference to output.	
Difficult to get the soil analysis done.	
Other.....	

68.3 Do you treat sugarcane setts with a fungicide before planting?

YES	
NO	

68.4 If NO, provide reason.

No real advantage in using fungicide.	
Increases production costs.	
Other.....	

68.5 Do you compact the soil after planting the sugarcane setts ?

YES	
NO	

68.6 If NO, state reason.

Not necessary/makes no difference.	
Increases labour costs.	
Black labourers require continous supervision.	
Other.....	

68.7 Do you trash the sugarcane during harvesting?

YES	
NO	

68.8 If NO, state reason.

Burning is easier.	
Difficult to obtain labour.	
Increases labour costs.	
Other.....	

69. Farmers level of education.

No formal education	
Primary education	
Secondary education	
Tertiary education	

70. Age of farmer.

20 – 29 yrs.	
30 – 39 yrs.	
40 – 49 yrs.	
50 – 59 yrs.	
60 – 69 yrs.	
70 +	

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