

A CASE STUDY OF A SMALL VEGETABLE FARMER

Ottingue Md. Masnar

Vegetable is one of the most important sources of human food. It is the only cheapest source of protein and minerals for the human body. For a number of years the Philippines has been seriously confronted with a big problem of food insufficiently for its increasing population. The growing realization of the great possibility of vegetables in supplying the nutritional needs of our people can very well spur the planting of these crops over a wide hectarage of land. This will not only bridge the nutritional gap but also improve the income of the country.

It is fortunate that since the year 1972, there has been an increasing trend in vegetable production with a corresponding increase in the average yield. This progress is probably associated with the improvement in technology played by the agricultural sector in the country. Although it is felt that the advancement in vegetable technology is a great achievement, the number of farmers growing vegetables is relatively small. In fact they are found only in some parts of the islands where favorable climate prevails. On the other hand, there are portions in the country with resources suitable for vegetable growing, but somehow vegetable industry is not a popular venture there. In this regard, it is beneficial to orient the populace on the value of vegetables as well as the practices in raising these crops.

The present case study has been conducted in order to learn how a vegetable grower survives. It was made on a smallscale vegetable grower of San Roque, San Pedro, Laguna. The subject

has been selected in this study because he was characteristically a typical vegetable grower.

Community Profile

Geographic profile. San Roque, San Pedro, Laguna is about 30 km south of Manila. By using land transportation, one takes less than an hour to reach the town from Metro Manila. The place is classified under type A climate, in which the two seasons are very pronounce; one dry from November to April and the other wet during the rest of the year. Its nearness to Laguna Bay makes it occasionally experience flooding, which destroys crops and other properties. The soil is loamy in the lower elevations and sandy-loam in some slightly elevated portions.

Demographic profile. San Pedro has a population of 60,658 as of 1979 with 52.6 per cent composed of women and only 47.4 per cent men. Based on age structure, about 3.2 per cent are of ages less than one, 15.9 per cent from 1-6, 25.2 per cent from 7-14, 43.7 per cent from 15-44, 8.3 per cent from 45-59 and 3.6 per cent from 60 and above. The principal occupation of the people are : employment, farming and fishing, while their secondary occupation are : mining quarrying, duck raising, selling and peddling.

The predominant crop planted by farmers is rice. Vegetables, corn and fruit trees are also planted but the area for these crops is relatively small. Among the vegetables grown, watermelon ranks first in the area, quantity and value of production.

There are 11,039 households in San Pedro. Of the total population, 10,526 are employed, 5,632 are self-employed and 3,574 are unemployed.

The town has 395 professionals. Around 7.3 per cent are medical doctors, 9.6 per cent are midwives, 52.6 per cent are engineers, 1 per cent is a draftsman, 23 per cent are nurses, 4.1 per cent are dentists and 2.3 per cent are architects.

Socio-economic profile. San Pedro has a total area of 2,022 hectares. Of this area, only 615.7 ha is cropland with 70.3 per cent devoted to rice production, 24.4 per cent for vegetables, 4.9 per cent for corn and 0.4 per cent for fruit trees. The value of vegetable production was approximately P 1,320,500 with watermelon contributing about 85 per cent. The remaining 15 per cent of the production value was contributed by pole sitao, eggplant, garlic, pechay and onion.

Of the 615.7 ha cropland, only 28 per cent is irrigated, which is provided by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

San Pedro has 9 elementary schools, 5 high schools, but no colleges. It has also 6 public clinics and 1 public market.

The town is very accessible to transportation facilities. As of 1979, the total number of motor vehicles in the whole town was 1,976. Two highways are available for the immediate transport of the commodities to Metro Manila.

Some government agencies are involved in developing the place. Some of them are : BAEx, BAI, MSSD and others. The Luzon Development Bank and the Rural Bank of San Pedro are extending loans among deserving recipients.

Profile of the Subject and his Family

The subject was 42 years old, born and raised in Barangay San Roque, San Pedro, Laguna. His experience in farming started since childhood. Married to a woman (39 years old) of the same place, he has three sons and three daughters, age 1/6 to 18. His children's ages and educational attainments are as follows :

CHILD	AGE	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
First	18	High School III
Second	14	High School II

Third	13	Grade VI
Fourth	9	Grade III
Fifth	7	Grade I
Sixth	1/6	None

The subject works on a 500-square meter farm composed of two parcels. One parcel is about 300 m² and the other is 200 m². The land he tills is inherited from his parents and therefore he is an owner-operator of his farm. He plants about three times a year and his effective crop area is 1,500 square meters. He plants onion, eggplant and sweet corn every year but his farm is primarily rainfed.

The subject owns a carabao, plow, harrow, hoe and other small tools which he uses during land preparation and other farm operations.

His total income is derived from vegetable farming and partly from fishing.

The housing of the respondent is a medium typical Filipino house with some household properties, namely: refrigerator, television, radio-phonograph, gas stove, common kitchen utensils, chairs and tables. He said his income is low but he got those household properties on installment.

The subject smokes, drinks and goes cockfighting every week.

Subject as a consumer

The average expenses of his family is P 7,320. per annum. However, he said that this might not be accurate due to the absence of a record. He gave the rough estimate based on their daily expenses. It appears that food comprised more than 50 per cent of expenses, followed by education and clothing. Since the value of vegetable plants cannot cover all expenses due to their low volume of production, additional income by fishing served the purpose.

Subject as a Farmer

Production. The land that he cultivates is planted three times a year bringing his effective crop area to 500 square meters. His total production in 1978 was estimated to be 2,700 kg (excluding sweet corn) with an estimated value of P4,860.00.

Of the total production income, onion contributed the largest share. However, his net income derived from vegetables is not sufficient for his family needs because the crop area is too small to permit a large volume production.

Due to the small crop area, he does not hire a laborer. Two members of his family are working on the farm.

The subject has a cropping sequence based on the suitability of the crop on a given climatic conditions. He starts planting onion in November or December. When the onion is harvested, eggplant is then planted. The last crop to be planted is sweet corn.

Marketing. Marketing the produce is not a problem since the middlemen from Metro Manila just come during harvests and collect the commodities. These middlemen are the people extending loans without interest so that the grower will sell them his produce. The commodities are usually packed in *kaing* (usually, large rattan baskets) to minimize postharvest losses.

Problems encountered. The subject said that agricultural supplies are available in many stores. However, the costs of these chemicals are getting higher while the prices of vegetables are maintained.

He said that sometimes the production is low due to unfavorable weather conditions. Due to the close proximity of the farm to Laguna de Bay, there are times of flooding which can completely destroy the crop.

Subject as a Borrower

Source of financing. The subject uses his cash on hand in

financing his farm activities. When his savings are not enough, he needs to borrow from private money lenders such as the middlemen in Metro Manila. He prefers to borrow from private money lenders since transaction is easier. You can just tell them how much you need and this will be given to you without many questions. He has heard of the banks extending loans but he does not know the procedure in obtaining them. Besides, the bank is charging interest while the middlemen do not require it.

Purpose of the credit. The amount that he borrows is primarily intended to finance his expenses in the farm. There are also times when he needs to borrow for household expenses.

Problems encountered in financing. The subject said that when adverse weather conditions prevail, this would cause failure of his crop. Consequently, this would affect his succeeding farming activities since he has no capital to buy agricultural supplies. This situation would necessitate his borrowing money. Even though there is no problem in obtaining the loan from private money lenders, the borrowing would force him to sell his produce to these people who oftentimes dictate the price.

Conclusion

The overall situation of the subject is rather good. One would be impressed by just looking at his house. Although he has only a very small crop area, he has managed to improve the socio-economic life of his family. Although he confesses to a very low income, one would not believe him easily due to the kind of living he enjoys. In a number of ways, he makes his family better-off than the others.

However, it is necessary for him to increase his land area and adapt improved technology so that his production may further increase. If he changes some of his cropping pattern relative to market price fluctuation, he may partly improve his income. It is

also important that a capital is available to him so that the middlemen would not interfere with the marketing scheme of his farm produce.

Table 1. Average family expenditures of the Subject by type of expenses, 1978.

ITEM	AMOUNT (P)	PER CENT
Food	4000	54.64
Education	1000	13.66
Clothing	1000	13.66
Taxes	200	2.73
Household furnishings	300	4.10
Medical care	200	2.73
Light and Water	150	2.05
Transportation	100	1.36
Household operations	50	0.68
Gifts and contributions	70	0.95
Recreation	100	1.36
Miscellaneous	150	2.05
TOTAL	7320	100.00

Table 2. Production of different vegetables of the subject, 1978.

VEGETABLES	VOLUME (KG)	PRICE/KG (P)	VALUE (P)
Onion	1200	2.80	3360
Eggplant	1500	1.00	1500
Sweet corn *	—	—	—
TOTAL	2700	3.80	4800

* Sweet corn is not sold but rather consumed by the family.

Table 3. Cropping pattern of the Subject.

Crop \ Months	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	Onion	-----										
Eggplant				-----								
Sweet corn							-----					

Table 4. Cost of production of the different vegetables grown by the Subject 1978.

ITEM		COST (P)
Labor (family labor)		900.00
Land preparation	150	
Planting	150	
Weeding	300	
Spraying	200	
Harvesting	100	
Materials		
Seeds		140.00
Onion	100	
Eggplant	20	
Sweet corn	20	
Fertilizers		250.00
Manure	100	
Urea	70	
Complete	80	
Pesticides		128.00
Folidol	32	
Hostathion	32	
Endrin	32	
Sevin	32	
TOTAL		1418.00