

SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENTIATIONS, AGRICULTURE, AND LABOUR:
IMPLICATIONS FOR DIET AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRESCHOOL
AGE CHILDREN IN SOUTH MARAMA, BUTERE

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists have continuously carried out investigations, without apparent unanimity, on etiology of nutritional problems particularly in rural economies. What has emerged gives no determinate association between the socioeconomic variables investigated and nutritional outcomes. This underscores the primacy of looking at each case from its experience, hence providing this study with a major cause for departure.

This is a micro-level study undertaken in South Marama location of Butere Division. It is confined to the agrarian, labour and dietary parameters, all analysed against socioeconomic gradations. Statistical evidence reveals profound heterogeneity in the socioeconomic differentiations of the households, resulting in a positive skew. A paradoxical situation here is the outpointing of households participating in commercial sugar cane production by those engaged in food production with regard to socioeconomic scores. This introduces the relevance in conceiving contingencies between the general market sector and improvement in living standards.

The findings also reinforce the conventional contention on adverse nutritional status resulting from sugar cane production. This, it is concluded, is a consequence of the demands put upon cane crop management which in effect makes it more resource-diminishing than resource-generating; and the farmers' lop-sided agricultural strategy which is less favourable to the food sector. It is further observed that, the already insecure food situation notwithstanding, a considerable percentage of the households, led by sugar cane producers, delocalize farmfoods in exchange for cash. This nullifies positive nutritional status as in effect, foods imported are comparatively low quality and quantity.

The potential for employment resources in strengthening purchasing capacity is further underlined. It is observed that piecemeal payments lead to a stable linear purchasing power, and subsequently better nutritional status. A major conclusion here is the need to establish institutions within the location which will enhance opportunities for employment.