

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Objective

In April 1966, a team of ten final year rural stream students, of the Department of Economics of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, undertook a field research survey into the socio-economic aspects of Sekinchan, in the district of Kuala Selangor, Selangor. Each of the students was allocated a specified field of study. The writer carried out this survey with the following objective:

To study the various aspects of marketing of farm products from the producers' perspective in Sekinchan with a view for improvement.

Information was sought mainly on product, production, supply, selling, pricing, financing, grading, cleaning, drying, packing, storing, weighing, handling, transporting, risk-taking and market information.

Definition of Marketing

There are as many definitions of marketing as there are of economics.

Some people define marketing simply as the business of buying and selling. But this can only be accomplished in the presence of people with money and desire to buy and sell.

For the purpose of this survey, marketing can be defined as covering all business activities necessary to effect transfers in the ownership of goods and to provide for their physical distribution. It embraces the entire group of services and functions performed in the distribution of goods from producer to consumer, excluding only operations relating to changes in the form of goods normally regarded as processing or manufacturing operation.

The various methods by which these services are rendered, together with the performance of the marketing functions, are necessarily integral part of the subject of marketing.

Method of Survey

This survey, it could be said, was based on commodity approach which includes all the basic functions and to a certain extent the institutional approach as well. But it needs to be stressed here

that in this survey much more emphasis was placed on producers' view point rather than the wholesalers' or retailers' or consumers': it includes all the important aspects of marketing from producers perspective.

The field work carried out was on a Block basis. This exercise is a study of marketing of farm products from the producers' perspective, in Block S4, Sekinchan.

The method of approach was as follows:

(a) Locate Block S4 with the help of Sekinchan Irrigation Area Map.

(b) Locate the houses of some of the farmers owning as well as operating lots in Block S4. The main source of information was the Site B list, prepared partly by the pilot survey carried out some time earlier and partly by the second and final year students during the first week of the stay.

(c) Carry out the survey by visiting some of the houses located in (b). During each visit interview was made with the farmers, information obtained and data collected. No sampling system was adopted.

(d) Carry out the survey by visiting some of the lots in Block S4, during which interviews were conducted with the farmers, information obtained and data collected as in (c). Again no sampling system was adopted.

(e) Visit two vegetable dealers in Sekinchan in order to obtain the average gross profit made by them per kati of produce and other miscellaneous informations concerning marketing.

(f) Visit the Long Yip Cooperative Rice Mill Society Ltd., Sekinchan, for certain specific information or for clearing certain doubts regarding the marketing of padi.

(g) Visit two provision shops, whose owners are also the private ^{posi}dealers, to clear points about "financing" and marketing of padi.

¹We, together with a group of second year students, stayed nearly three weeks in Sekinchan. During the first week, we carried out the Census Survey of Padi Farm in Sekinchan (Tanjong Karang Farm Survey Phase V); after which only the second year students continued with the Census Survey, while the final year students were allowed to concentrate on the graduation exercise.

In carrying out the above stages of research, contacts were made with Chinese farmers, Malay labourers, vegetable dealers, shopkeepers/private padi dealers, some committee members of Long Yip Cooperative Rice Mill Society Ltd. Sekinchan, lorry drivers, handlers, D.I.D. inspector, D.I.D. overseer, junior agricultural assistant, livestock farmers and others.

Scope of Investigation

A total of 25 farmers were interviewed and seven types of farm products studied. The farm products chosen were padi, chili, long beans, ladies finger, pumpkin, maize and sweet potato. The investigations were confined to the last season padi crop (i.e. roughly between June and September, 1965) and the last off-season crops under the system of single cropping (i.e. roughly between April and October, 1964). To avoid any misunderstanding the word "last" was stressed or used rather than the date.

Research work in the field was done between 16th April, 1966 and 25th April, 1966, a total of 10 days. The time allocated for the survey has been roughly divided into three periods. Briefly, the first day was devoted to the location of Block S4, and the houses of the farmers; the next six days to the interview of the farmers and the remaining two days to the interview of vegetable dealers, shopkeepers/private padi dealers and the committee members of the Long Yip Cooperative Rice Mill Society Ltd., Sekinchan.

Difficulties Encountered

Most of the material collected was obtained from direct interviews. During the course of the field investigation, the writer came across a few cases of uncooperative and fierce farmers, especially women, and with whom the writer did not waste any more time and effort than were necessary. On the whole there was a high degree of cooperative and response, although it must be mentioned that there was a general air of suspicion and indifference particularly in the case of local vegetable dealers and shopkeepers/private padi dealers.

One of the difficulties was in interviewing the farmers due to language problem. This was overcome by interviewing only those farmers who were able to speak a reasonably good colloquial Malay. Fortunately most of the farmers visited could converse in simple colloquial Malay, mainly because they have been in contact with the Malay labourers for years. The local vegetable dealers and shopkeepers/private padi dealers were able to speak colloquial Malay.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty was in contacting the farmers. Many of them were not at home in the morning or evening since it was a harvesting period for padi. This difficulty was solved by visiting their houses in the afternoon or late in the evening and also by going to the lots in Block S4 where there were farmers harvesting.

Another difficulty encountered was in collecting the data on size of plots, yields, volume marketed, prices and others. This was mainly due to the fact that farmers did not have any records of all these items. The only solution left was to rely on their memories. It could be argued therefore that the data are presented with certain amount of inaccuracies. But, this was the best that could be done in such a situation.

Experiences Gained

The writer, in the course of his survey, came into direct contact with people from all walks of life. From Chinese farmers and Malay labourers to vegetable dealers, shopkeepers/private padi dealers, some committee members of Long Yip Cooperative Rice Mill Society Ltd. Sekinchan, D.I.D. inspector and overseer, secretary of Sekinchan Town Council, junior agricultural assistant, postman, teachers, nurses and others. Field work necessitated visits to farmers' houses and padi lots and the writer was thus afforded a chance to observe the conditions in which Chinese farmers live which are quite different from those of Malay farmers in Kelantan with which the writer is very familiar. The contact and observations made not only enriched the writer's personal experience, but also enabled him to understand better the economic and social problems associated with Malayan rural areas.

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