

## 7. THE VILLAGE FOOD SUPPLY

The preceding section of this study has dealt with the feeding of a particularly vulnerable, but at the same time a particularly privileged, subset of community members: neonates and weanlings. Their vulnerability stems of course from the exceptionally high degree of behavioral helplessness that makes human infants so different from the offspring of other mammalian species. But this vulnerability is buffered by protective feeding and child-care rules of the kind that we have documented in the village of Kinanbwa.

Because they constitute the touchstone by which people judge their own parental behavior and that of their neighbors, these publicly articulated rules do have the power to affect behavior. But at the same time rules can be broken and outcomes can fall far short of community ideals. The high degree of infant morbidity, mortality, and malnutrition that has been documented with depressing regularity in different parts of Haiti indicates that her symbolically rich and behaviorally precise inventory of child care rules is on the whole not being successfully implemented.

With respect to child nutrition, explanations of suboptimal outcomes can be seen as points along a continuum flanked by two opposing theoretical stances. At one end are those who posit deficiencies in the rules and understandings themselves. "Educate the people and malnutrition will disappear". At the other end are those who place causal emphasis on the material factors leading to an insufficient food supply. "Remove the objective barriers to an adequate food supply and none of your nutrition education' will be necessary. Current village food concepts and food rules would be perfectly adequate to produce well-nourished children if there weren't food supply problems."

Most positions fall somewhere in between these polar extremes. But our exposure to some of the "inner workings" of village belief and behavior make it frankly difficult for us not to tend very strongly toward the second of these positions. We will attempt a balanced, integrated formulation of the problem in the conclusion of the study. But we must state that the food related "belief system" and "rulebook" of the Kinanwa villager are much more impressive in both their detail and their explicit emotional concern for the child than other analogous rural New World complexes with which we have firsthand familiarity. If so many children end up malnourished, it is because of deficiencies not in the rural belief system, but in the rural food supply.

Focusing on issues of food supply, this section of the paper will address itself to the factors that determine the availability of food in village houses. We will begin with a discussion of the types of foods that are consumed in the village and of the sources from which these food types are derived. We will then discuss the manner in which food is prepared, paying particular attention to the structure and functioning of the rural kitchen. This will be followed by an analysis of the very important question of how the food is distributed within and between households once it has been cooked. We shall then take one final look at the children again, showing the manner in which village socialization patterns have been deeply affected by increasing nutritional stress and have evolved in a direction which attempts to prepare children for a lifetime of possible food scarcity.

#### 7.1. Definitions of the Rural Food Dilemma

Most observers recognize that the problem of food scarcity in rural Haiti cannot be accurately discussed apart from the issues of land shortage, population growth, and soil erosion. The task of analysis is to identify the way in which these factors interact. The following paragraph is a brief summary of an integrated approach espoused by many analysts.

"The Haitian peasant is a subsistence cultivator. His main goal in life is the growing of his family's food on his tiny plot of ground. But the size of the individual family plot has now shrunk because of the process of population growth. Through a combination of cultural preference and agricultural labor needs, high family aspirations have been the rule. The resulting population pressure has reduced the size of the family plot below the threshold where the cultivator can meet the nutritional needs of his family. Soil erosion has further undermined the productivity of this plot. Integrated development projects can assist the peasant by helping him to produce greater quantities of more nutritious food from his plot, by teaching his wife better food preparation techniques and child feeding practices and by convincing both husband and wife of the advantages of a two child family."<sup>1</sup>

The above paragraph should be read carefully because 1) it constitutes an integrated conceptual model that joins agricultural experts, nutrition experts, and family planning experts into a joint endeavour; 2) it constitutes a synthesis of much current thinking on the nature of the rural dilemma; and 3) it is either dead wrong or substantially off base on almost every single point.

A more accurate view of the rural dilemma can be approached through a point-by-point reexamination of several of the key propositions of the above paragraph.

1. In a technical sense, the Haitian peasant is not "subsistence oriented." A subsistence cultivator is one who grows most of what he eats and eats most of what he grows. This characterization is certainly not true of Kinanbwa and probably not true of any Haitian peasant community. Haitian peasants throughout the country purchase substantial amounts of their food, including not only essential cooking oil, salt, sugar, and seasoning, but also many of the basic staples themselves. Furthermore peasant households channel substantial amounts of what they grow into the local market system. In Kinanbwa, for example, some major crops such as sugar cane and shallot are planted almost exclusively with a view to sale. But even the locally consumed crops such as rice, beans, and sweet potato are grown with a view to marketing substantial proportions of the crops. Peasants who behave in this fashion -- and

most Haitian peasants to greater or lesser degrees do -- cannot be called "subsistence oriented". Some observers who use the term "subsistence" are merely using it as a synonym for "poverty level". But this is a technically inaccurate and potentially misleading use of the term.

2. The peasant's main "goal in life" is not the growing of his family's food. If one had to choose a "main goal" in an economic sense, it would probably be the "earning of a decent cash income", at least for the peasants of Kinanbwa. Some would go further and suggest that even the earning of cash is merely a step on the way toward an even more important "goal in life", which is the purchase of land. But in either case, any analysis which depicts the peasant as a self-enclosed cultivator whose only major economic concern is to grow the crops which will directly feed his family are writing about the wrong part of the world. Caribbean peasants in general, and Haitian peasants in particular, are deeply interested in money. The humid-mountain peasants are more successful in producing significant amounts of their own domestic food supply. But even these peasants could be called "subsistence oriented" only by closing one's eyes to the enormous amounts of coffee, cacao, and other salable produce that are constantly making their way down from the hills into the nearest towns.

3. The notion of the "tiny plot of ground" is also misleading. Any peasant that relied on only one plot of ground would be deemed as either extraordinarily unfortunate or improvident by his neighbors. The typical holding has several plots, cropped with a view to diversifying land types and protecting against crop failure. The very inheritance procedure endows most peasants with some rights to land in different places. But observers have also been impressed by widespread practices of supplementing parentally transmitted land with purchased, rented, or sharecropped plots, creating a situation of feverish, creative local land maneuver that has little to do with the vignette of the humble, resigned peasant peacefully hoeing away at his tiny little plot.

and is compatible with peasant views of life in the romantic, distant past. But the point here is that the dilemma of the peasants is not one of suddenly being unable to grow all of their family's food. The current generations of peasants have for the most part never been growing all of their family's food and would probably not even want to try.

6. The three programmatic recommendations at the end of the summary paragraph represent standard developmental approaches to the issue of malnutrition. Yet each should be treated, if not with suspicion, at least with circumspection. The notion of the "two-child family", which is still heard in many circles, is simply out of touch with local Haitian reality. Given current mortality rates, mobility patterns, and old age insecurity, the peasant couple who wish to ensure themselves of care in their declining years would be insane to settle for two children. Though the matter will not be pursued here, the standard family size aspirations (four to five children) of the Kinanbwa peasants seem perfectly reasonable and realistic from the point of view of their own domestic interest. Family planning programs should not encumber themselves with the conceptually questionable task of "changing family-size preferences." They should rather assist in achieving the quite reasonable parity levels to which most couples already aspire.

7. The notion that Haitian mothers have to be taught how to cook food and feed their children is the most controversial of the three suggestions from the point of view of this research. For nutrition planners aware of widespread malnutrition, the need for nutrition education is almost axiomatic. For ethnographers even remotely familiar with current levels of food knowledge and child concern in rural Haitian mothers, the thought of launching a program of rural cooking lessons seems frankly, unequivocally, and blatantly ridiculous. An effort to develop a balanced approach to the matter of nutrition education will be made in the final section of the report, after the information on current practices is presented.

8. Equally controversial, in our opinion, but substantially more plausible, is the recommendation that the peasant should be assisted to increase his agricultural production with a view to directly improving the content of the family cooking pot. Despite the attractiveness of this suggestion, however, those familiar with the changes that have come over rural Haiti in the past decades will have to point out that most innovations adopted by the peasant have been accepted with a view to improving, not the content of the cooking pot per se, but his own domestic cash flow. Peasants will take most readily to new cropping alternatives when they improve his position in the marketplace. Those interested in agricultural innovation for nutritional purpose might do well to consider carefully the following hypothesis: improvements to the domestic cooking pot will come most readily as the secondary effect of changes whose primary function from the point of view of the peasants is the generation of a higher immediate cash income.

One example of this can be seen in the vegetable economy of Furcy. There entire peasant communities have turned to fertilized vegetable growing as the principal economic mainstay. The shift was made principally because of the enhanced cash income that this cropping practice produced. The improvements to the family food store in terms of a greater variety of vegetables came as a secondary effect of a technological shift that was made principally from cash motives on the part of the peasants themselves. The cropping decisions of the peasants of Kinanbwa are likewise made almost exclusively on the basis of the marketability of the crops, rather than their edibility.

To sum up the preceding: the most realistic mind-set which nutrition planners can adopt when approaching the Haitian peasant is one which fully recognizes the peasant's involvement in a cash-cropping and marketing system which place a heavy emphasis on cash incentives and payoffs. The attention of cultivators and their commercially active wives is constantly drawn to the marketplace. Educational attempts to draw peasants' attention on other matters, including nutrition, stand a greater chance of success to the degree that program designers have succeeded in linking these new areas to the strong pre-existing concern which rural men and women feel toward their deteriorating economic situation.

## 7.2. The Identification of Nutritionally Relevant Variables

The preceding paragraphs have argued for the nutritional relevance of the market oriented character of Haitian peasant economic organization. But local nutrition planning has to be able to deal not only with the Haitian peasant in general but also with specific regions. The planning process will be more realistic to the degree that the planners are capable of identifying region-specific features that may have nutritional relevance. To exemplify this type of observation, we shall introduce the particularities of the research village by showing the manner in which certain apparently unrelated "anthropological" variables can in fact exert a strong impact on the local food supply or on the manner in which food is prepared and distributed to children.

### 7.2.1 Lowland Ecology

Unlike most Haitian communities in which research has been carried out, Kinanbwa is a lowland community on the Cul-de-Sac Plain. The village contains a population of some 1,300 individuals spread out into some 225 households. The nature of local ecology creates a paradoxical double bind situation with respect to water. On the one hand the location of the village several kilometers to the south of an east-west mountain chain places it in a rain shadow and gives it a low annual precipitation of only some 800 millimeters of rainfall a year. This means that the agricultural potential of land is extremely constrained on plots that have no access to additional water.

This problem is solved in two ways. Much of the land cropped by the villagers is irrigated by a groundwater irrigation system dating from the French colony, supplemented by more recently created systems drawing water from local springs. Dry land that has no access to irrigation will generally not be cropped. But in addition to this irrigated land, there is also a great deal of local land that is naturally marshy. Such land is considered as having very high cash generating potential, especially with respect to the planting of rice and sweet potatoes.

But irrigated land is vulnerable to scarcity of groundwater, and marshy land is vulnerable to flooding when the rain comes. In years of scant rainfall the river that feeds the main irrigation system that serves the village will have insufficient water to satisfy the needs of all users. In years of abundant rainfall the rice and sweet potatoes planted on marshy land is frequently destroyed. Furthermore the village is located on a part of the Plain that has some sections actually below sea-level, creating a very high local water table. This high water table has two effects: it creates serious drainage problems and standing-water problems during heavy rains (problems for which local technology has come up with its own mound-building system), and it creates frequent salinity problems because of leaching. This salinity in turn has led to the planting of sugar cane rather than food of many places. Thus the food production system of the village is heavily influenced by certain features of low land ecology which create challenges unknown in the mountains.

#### 7.2.2 Nucleated Settlement

But other more "remote" anthropological variables can also exert an impact. Communities can generally be characterized in terms of the density of settlement and the proximity of houses to one another. The modal pattern throughout the mountains is residential dispersal. But in the region where Kinanbwa is located, the modal pattern is for houses to be built close to each other and for farmers to move out each day into surrounding fields. Villagers explain this pattern as simply a custom. But an ecological reason can also be found. The communities tend to be located on stretches of ground that are slightly higher than the surrounding fields and which are therefore slightly less vulnerable to the inundations that plague the region during especially heavy rainy seasons.



But if the causes of this nucleated settlement are somewhat arguable, its possible nutritional consequences are nonetheless clear. In the first place the proximity of houses to each other and the formation of a large nucleated compound has led to the suppression of the "vegetable garden" tradition which characterize many mountainous regions of Haiti. In this latter setting the pattern is for households to plant vegetables and other foodstuffs next to the house with a view principally to domestic consumption. The rightly packed proximity of houses precludes such a tradition in Kinanbwa, and the contents of the family cooking pot reflect this ecologically determined absence. Secondly, however, and of perhaps even greater nutritional significance in the opposite direction, the presence of large numbers of contiguous houses means that children are always within visual and auditory reach of an adult or older child caretaker. The lonely young children that one frequently sees in mountain communities in houses where both parents are momentarily absent are rarely to be found in Kinanbwa. Children are almost constantly within visual distance, not only of parents, but also of close kin and neighbors.

On the one hand this means that they will be regularly in groups where they can benefit from the food sharing that goes on within the village. This presence in groups would alone be at least a slight nutritional boon, especially to children in poorer families. But of equal importance, the constant visibility of children to other kin and neighbors places an additional pressure on parents not to leave the child hungry. The hunger cries of the child and the constant appearance of the child asking for hand outs at nearby kitchens is a source of embarrassment to parents and is in fact one insult that participants in a village argument hurl at their adversaries. Thus we see that nucleated settlement patterns may play an important positive role in the nutritional status of the child by adding an important element of social pressure to buttress the child care norms that village custom holds up as an ideal. Ideals are more easily ignored when several hundred meters and a grove of trees separate your house from your neighbor's. But the constant visual contact between neighbors under conditions of nucleated settlement renders such violations more vulnerable to social criticism.

### 7.2.3. Uxorilocal Postmarital Residence

Another prominent anthropological feature of this region of Haiti is the practice whereby couples, after establishing a conjugal union, set up residence close to the house of the woman's parents rather than the man's. These uxorilocal residence patterns of the Plain differ from the more common virilocal patterns prevalent in the mountains, by which couples live close to the house of the man's parents. Under the more common virilocal patterns residential clusters entail the proximity of adult male siblings. But the uxorilocal patterns in Kinanbwa produce residential clusters that are more likely to be protective of the child: clusters of adult sisters. Children are more likely to receive supplementary care from aunts than from uncles or uncles' wives. Under virilocal patterns, aunts however will have married out. Under the uxorilocal patterns of Kinanbwa, in contrast, the child's next door neighbors will frequently be his mother's sisters, under whose surveillance and care he will regularly fall. The even the postmarital residence rules, which nutrition researchers rarely have occasion to examine, may in fact exert some impact on the nutritional status of children.

### 7.2.4. Caribbean Conjugal Patterns

Throughout the Afro-American Caribbean there exists a mating system in which most procreation takes place in the context of extralegal, consensual cohabitation, and in which legal/ecclesiastical marriage tends to be the more "proper" alternative to which individuals will turn either later in their conjugal career or when economic conditions permit. The rural Haitian is a variant of this broader system and is characterized by the preponderance of two locally recognized union types: legal marriage (mariaj) and informal unions (plasaj). In Kinanbwa some seven out of ten unions are of the consensual plasaj type, and though the vast majority of individuals will have entered one or more unions in their lives, most will never "marry".

The majority of individuals will have had children, not by just one, but by more than one partner. This creates a pattern in which large numbers of children spend parts of their childhood in a house in which one of their biological parents is not present. To a growing degree, of course, with increasing divorce rates, this is true of children in industrialized countries as well. But we will present evidence showing that in the food-scarce context of Kinanbwa the absence of either biological parent from the house results in statistically significant lower nutritional status, even controlling for the economic status of the household. Thus the mating system itself, incorporating a high degree of conjugal instability especially in the early years of the mating career, constitutes yet another pre-existing social pattern that exerts an impact on the nutritional status of young children.

#### 7.2.5. Female Trading Activities

Earlier reference was made to the heavy cash-cropping orientation of the Haitian peasant. But an additional design feature of rural life is an exceptionally heavy involvement by rural Haitian women in the physical transportation and marketing of agricultural produce, a generalized practice which creates an economic career that is quite different, for example, from the economic career of the rural Dominican woman just across the border.

These marketing patterns frequently entail long-distance travel and extended absence from the home. The first part of this study showed the manner in which increasingly early weaning in Kinanbwa is directly related to the increasingly stressful conditions of trade, making thus the marketing system one more important "determinant" of toddler nutrition. But extended absences can also exert an impact on the feeding of older children as well, making children dependent on other caretakers. But the generally negative nutritional impact that could be expected from the use of maternal surrogates can be simultaneously compensated by the ability of the mother to supply her family with food purchased on her trading voyages. We shall see that in Kinanbwa long-distance food shipments from itinerant marketwomen constitute during several months of the year the mainstay of the diet of virtually the entire village.

To sum up the preceding sections, the nutritional well-being of children is here viewed as an outcome variable affected by a complex of intervening economic and social patterns which influence the way in which adults produce or distribute food. On the one hand, there is the general cash-cropping orientation which to a greater or lesser (usually greater) degree dominates the food-producing activities of Haitian peasant households. But on the other hand,

certain "anthropological" variables such as settlement, pattern, postmarital residence, conjugal patterns, and female trade, may serve to enhance or depress the likelihood of positive nutritional outcomes in children.

The very nature of these variables--their inaccessibility to program modification--generates impatience in certain planners, who would prefer analyses which attribute causal power rather to variables that can be manipulated by benevolent institutional intervention. Where villager "ignorance" is identified as the cause, for example, the nutrition planner can simply pull out his flip-chart and swing into energetic pedagogic action. But analyses that point to the impact of such exotic variables as postmarital residence and conjugal patterns seem to leave the planner quite frankly in the dark.

But in these matters nutrition planners should get used to the dark, because in fact the problem with which they are professionally concerned is unfortunately caused by a cluster of remote variables most of which cannot be controlled by standard program intervention. There are promising programmatic "short-cuts" which should be explored but they should be undertaken in full awareness of the nature of the causes, rather than by a sleight-of-hand opportunistic redefinition of the causes along lines more in line with planning bias. The two types of variables discussed in this section--the overall domination of Haitian peasant economy by market considerations and the behavioral implications of certain pre-existing region-specific economic and social patterns--should be accepted as constituting the basic framework which ultimately determines the types and quantities of food that are fed to children. It is now time to show how the food supply system generated by these variables actually functions in Kinanbwa.

7.3. Food Acquisition Options that are Little Used

Looked at from the point of view of the individual household, villagers can recite a long list of strategies that can be used to provide food for the family cooking pot. Though not all of these are employed, the list itself is interesting:

- Grow the food
- Buy the food
- Receive gifts of food
- Receive food as a form of wages
- Borrow the food
- Gather the food wild
- Extract the food from one's animals
- Hunt the food
- Fish the food
- Steal the food
- Draw the food from a neighbor's garden or storeroom (by magic).

Of these eleven food-acquisition measures, only three contribute in any significant way to the diet of Kinanbwa villagers: growing food, buying food, and receiving gifts of food.

The other eight strategies are deserving nonetheless of brief comment. Food received as wages is common in those parts of Haiti where Food for Work programs are in effect. But even in these settings most of the food thus acquired tends to be sold in local markets. The Kinanbwa villagers, however, have not had recent or regular access to this form of food. Borrowing food from neighbors is extremely rare, as is gathering food wild. There are few remaining edible items in Haiti that grow wild and are not defined as somebody's property.

One's own animals could theoretically be a source of food either through:

1. slaughtering and butchering:
2. drinking the milk; or
3. eating the eggs.

But what is possible in theory occurs little in fact. The cows, pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens that are raised are raised almost exclusively for sale. There are only two special occasions on which animals will as a rule be killed and immediately consumed. We have already seen the custom of killing goats (and chickens) after the birth of a child. And we have also mentioned that villagers dedicated to the cult-service of the spirits of the local folk-religious pantheon will also make occasional sacrifices of animals. When these sacrifices occur, the meat is cooked and consumed by family members and neighbors. But these events occur with too little frequency, and the food consumed by each participating individual is too small in quantity, to warrant classing these rituals as a significant source of protein in the village. The milk which one's cows provides is likewise generally sold rather than consumed. And chickens who lay eggs are appreciated, not because they are providing another element for the family's food, but because they are providing an item that can be sold.

The disappearance of wild animals throughout virtually all of Haiti has of course eliminated hunting as a significant food gathering strategy, though it was an important element in the diet of the aboriginal population. Fishing in contrast is done locally from large bodies of fresh water not too far from the village. The quantities of fish caught are small however, and are almost always destined for sale in the nearby town market. Most fish found in village cooking pots enter there via purchase.

There are two forms of food theft which villagers discuss: ordinary theft and magic theft. Thievery has become a problem in recent years, most food thefts occurring from the gardens themselves. Bananas and plantains

nearing maturity will be cut at night, and other types of food approaching harvest will be removed by thieves. Probably the most frequent occurrences of such food removal occur when adolescent sons will "preharvest" some of the food growing in their father's gardens. The logic is: "the food is on land which I will inherit someday, and besides I have sweated to help the old man grow the food. I have a right to some of the food". Fathers disagree, and though such removals when discovered are rarely brought to the local authorities, they nonetheless tend to be considered as "thefts" by the offended parent. But again, such thefts -- be they by outsiders or by family members -- cannot be considered a significant element in the village food distribution system.

Nor, of course, can the magical thefts which villagers attribute to sorcery. If one's sweet potato garden has produced little and that of one's neighbor is bulging with produce, it may be assumed of the neighbor that he has used magical means clandestinely to transfer some of the produce from the neighbor's garden to his own. This is called "drawing a garden" (ralé jadin). It is occasionally claimed that individuals who practice this will draw produce right from their neighbors' food depots. If you hear funny crackling sounds coming from the depot at night and nobody is there when you go to investigate, it may be suspected, not that there are animals or smaller parasites at work in your food, but that somebody is "drawing your depot". When you investigate in the morning, you may be certain that there is less food there than the last time you looked. As with ordinary theft, however, it is unlikely that this ritual maneuver is a significant element in the local food supply system.

#### 7.4. Home Production of Food and Post-Harvest Sales

This leaves us with the three remaining food acquisition options which constitute the major strategies by which the villagers of Kinanbwa provide food for themselves and their children: growing the food, purchasing the food, and becoming involved in exchange networks where food will frequently be received as a gift. We will discuss each of these three options in turn.

In an earlier section we have already identified as highly questionable the still-widespread practice of referring to the Haitian peasant as a subsistence cultivator. Neither the peasants of Kinanbwa, nor the peasants of most other regions of Haiti, can be accurately characterized as "producing what they consume and consuming what they produce". They are instead deeply involved with the market, both as an outlet for what they grow and as a source of food for the family cooking pot. During the post-harvest period, a greater proportion of the contents of the Kinanbwa cooking pot will be home-grown. But there are other months when all foodstuffs must be purchased.

Is this pattern really any different from what is found in peasantries around the world? Are not all peasants, by anthropological definition, economically linked to the outside world through markets? A certain degree of market orientation does characterize virtually all modern peasantries on which information is available. But the case of the Haitian peasant in general, and even more strongly the Kinanbwa cultivators in particular, must be placed toward the far end of the cash-oriented continuum. We have firsthand experience, for example, in mountain communities of El Salvador and highland Guatemala. There peasant involvement in the cash market took the form of seasonal labor migration. But in terms of their food producing activities their corn plots and their bean plots were planted principally with a view to producing the annual food supply of the family. Not all families manage to do this, but a substantial number of families in such communities do. And what is very important, the goal of producing one's annual food supply is still the economic ideal which guides the basic cropping decisions of these Central American corn and bean growers. It is to such communities, whose economic behavior and ideals include practical attempts for "growing what they eat and eating what they grow", that the term "subsistence peasantry" may appropriately be applied.

No peasant household in Kinanbwa even attempts to grow its food for the entire year. The following generalizations would be an accurate characterization of the Kinanbwa strategy.



1. During the entire year the cooking pot will contain some staple items that have been purchased, in addition to the purchased seasonings, salts, oils, and sugars that peasantries in most world regions purchase.
2. During certain months of the year the staples in the cooking pot will all have been purchased.
3. Most of the produce from the gardens will be sold rather than home consumed. Even locally consumed grains such as rice and beans will for the most part be sold off at harvest, only a small percentage being saved for home consumption.
4. For peasants under 50 years old, the notion of homegrown nutritional self-sufficiency is part of the legend about life in the distant past, but is no longer seen as possible nor even desirable in any practical sense. Peasants with enough land to grow all of their food will still opt for involvement in the market and the subsequent dependence on food purchase which that entails.

These generalizations are certainly valid in Kinanbwa. But our research in other parts of Haiti, our experiences in the rural areas of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and our familiarity with the literature on Cuba, Jamaica, and other islands of the lesser Antilles, leads us to suspect that these generalizations are valid of the entire rural Caribbean. However, they are certainly not true, for example, of many mountain peasant communities in Central America. That is, they are not "trivial" generalizations that apply to all peasantries, but rather empirically important distinguishing characteristics of Caribbean peasantries in general, and of the Haitian peasant in particular.

But to say that homegrown self-sufficiency is no longer either the rule or the community ideal is not to state that all home-production of food has been eliminated in Kinanbwa. Dependence on the market is seen as being intimately associated with hunger, and the "favorite" times of the year are the postharvest times when there is abundant food in the family depot and children are given liberty to make extra meals on their own with small quantities of recently harvested food which they are allowed to take from the family store while parents indulgently "look the other way."

At a general level this interest of the village children in between meals "snacks" is no different from the habits of children in industrial society. But whereas urban/industrial children pressure parents for sweets and other pleasure foods that are seen as a relief from the ordinary staple fare, the children of Kinanbwa view it as their most sought-after privilege to be given extra between-meals quantities of the same foods that are prepared in the family cooking pot. Non-staple snacks, such as mango and sugar cane, are also sought and appreciated. But parental indulgence reaches its heights in the postharvest season, when the door to the family depot, ordinarily kept closed under lock and key, will "accidentally" be left open and groups of young children will "surreptitiously" abscond with small quantities of food which they will cook on special fires of their own. Such parental indulgence is practiced only with the homegrown food. When food has been purchased with hard-earned money, then the door to the family depot is kept carefully locked and attempts by children to abscond with uncooked staples will be met with vigorous reprimands. Children learn quickly that they can take these liberties only with manjé ki sot nan jadin, "garden food".

If this garden food were available all year long, the nutritional status and general well being of the village children would be quite different from what it is. But this garden food is restricted both in types and seasons. With respect to types, the only major foods which home-grown production supplies to the family cooking pot in Kinanbwa are rice, beans, and sweet potato. Two other staples commonly grown in other parts of Haiti -- corn and millet -- have not been traditionally grown in large quantities by the peasants of this part of the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Though the past five years have seen the introduction of some improved corn seed into the region and the efforts on the part of some lowland peasants to grow corn, the overwhelming majority of the corn-meal, which constitutes the most important item in the Kinanbwa diet, comes not from one's gardens but from the marketplace.

The period of greatest abundance in Kinanbwa comes toward the end of the year. It is in this period that rice and bean crops will be harvested, and that households will simultaneously be earning cash from the sale of their sugar cane. The months of November, December, and January are months of plenty. The largest amounts of food will be in the family depot, and the greatest amounts of cash will flow into the domestic coffers during these months. In contrast, the months of July and August are the hardest months in the village, the *sézon grangou* ("hunger season").

The quantities of rice, beans, and sweet potatoes produced by some households would be large enough to cover substantial parts of the annual food supply. But there are at least three factors operating to discourage against efforts to store food.

1. Absence of Adequate Storage Techniques. All three of the major homegrown food crops -- but especially beans and sweet potatoes -- are subject to rapid infestation with a variety of pests. Farmers know they are taking a serious risk if they attempt to store beans for more than several weeks. Cultivators will frequently be "tempted" to store beans -- not for home use, but for sale when the postharvest glut will have receded and prices will have begun to rise. But the dangers of infestation are too great and the safest path will generally be taken: that of selling the beans. Beans that are *piká* (infested) are of little use, either commercially or nutritionally.

2. Need to Pay off Debts. Recent years have seen an increasing tendency on the part of Kinanbwa households to go into debt during the off months of July, August, and September. Creditors lend money knowing that harvests are coming in. But this means that the crop allocation decision is already constrained beforehand. The harvest must be sold, at least in part.

3. Need for Capital for the Domestic Economy. But even if infestation dangers were removed and farmers had no debt to repay, most families would still sell off substantial parts of their harvest, even knowing that this will entail purchasing back the same foodstuffs at higher prices later in the year.

This is simply because they are participating in a rural economy where economic advance cannot be aspired to without substantial amounts of capital. There are two general strategies by which a household can move forward or upward, and both require money. The first strategy is agrarian in character and entails the purchase of land. The harvest profits will be invested in livestock (which serve as a rural banking system, the production of offspring). These livestock will be sold when the opportunity to purchase a plot of land arises. The second mobility strategy entails the amassing of money to permit the women of the house to engage in trade. (In many parts of Haiti, a third capital-demanding strategy entails financing the migration of a family member. This has not yet taken on the importance in Kinanbwa that it has in other regions of Haiti).

This involvement of the peasant in a system where capital is the sine qua non of economic advance means that he will simply be on a "wavelength" that is substantially different from that of well-meaning nutrition educators. The nutrition educator may find it either irresponsible or insane for the peasant to make post-harvest food sales that will result in subsequent hunger periods for his children. But the peasant knows well that his economic future -- and that of his wife and children-- depend on making one's capital grow, even if it entails tightening one's belt for several months of the year. The nutrition educator may erroneously interpret post-harvest food sales as the absence of "future orientation", whereas in reality this willingness to take economic risks comes only because the peasant is future-oriented. His own view of where the brightest future lies merely happens to differ from that of the well meaning but uninformed (and economically secure) outside adviser.