

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF 'OUTGROWERS'
LINKED TO INDUSTRIAL OIL-PALM PLANTATIONS:
THE CASE OF DIBOMBARI, CAMEROON

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SUMMARY

During the first months of 1980 a study of the functioning of the SOCAPALM/FED Dibombari outgrowers scheme was made. The scheme aims at the creation of 790 ha of oil-palm plantations through contracts with 250 smallholders. Participants in the scheme provide land and labour, SOCAPALM provides 'encadrement' and physical inputs on loans. The participants show a rather clear socio-economic profile in that they are richer, less rural, politically more influential, and enjoy a higher social prestige. It is argued that part of this selection is unavoidable and inherent to the character of the programme.

However, the selection is reinforced by a number of factors, within the reach of influence of the intervention structure.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article is one of the by-products of a study¹, made during the first months of 1980 by a consulting team composed of L. Bissek, a rural economist and myself at the request of SOCAPALM².

The aim of the study was to define means of improving the relationships with and participation of "outgrowers"³ linked to the SOCAPALM-owned industrial oil-palm estates of Dibombari in Cameroon's Littoral Province. One of the hypotheses of the study was that the socio-economic characteristics of the participants would influence the efficacy and future participation in the scheme. Eventually, very "exclusive" characteristics of outgrowers would block the programme because of sabotage of the plantations of smallholders by the rest of the population, or would at least have undesirable social effects, such as a monopoly of certain social groups on the economic resources of the region.

¹ See: SOCAPALM: Le Projet Plantations Villageoises de Dibombari, Douala, 1980.

² SOCAPALM, Société Camerounaise du Palmier à Huile, is a Development corporation (Société de Développement) in which the government of the United Republic of Cameroon is a majority shareholder. SOCAPALM is in charge of the execution of the 'Plan Palmier', aiming at the creation and exploitation of industrial oil palm plantations, linked in a later phase to 'outgrower schemes'.

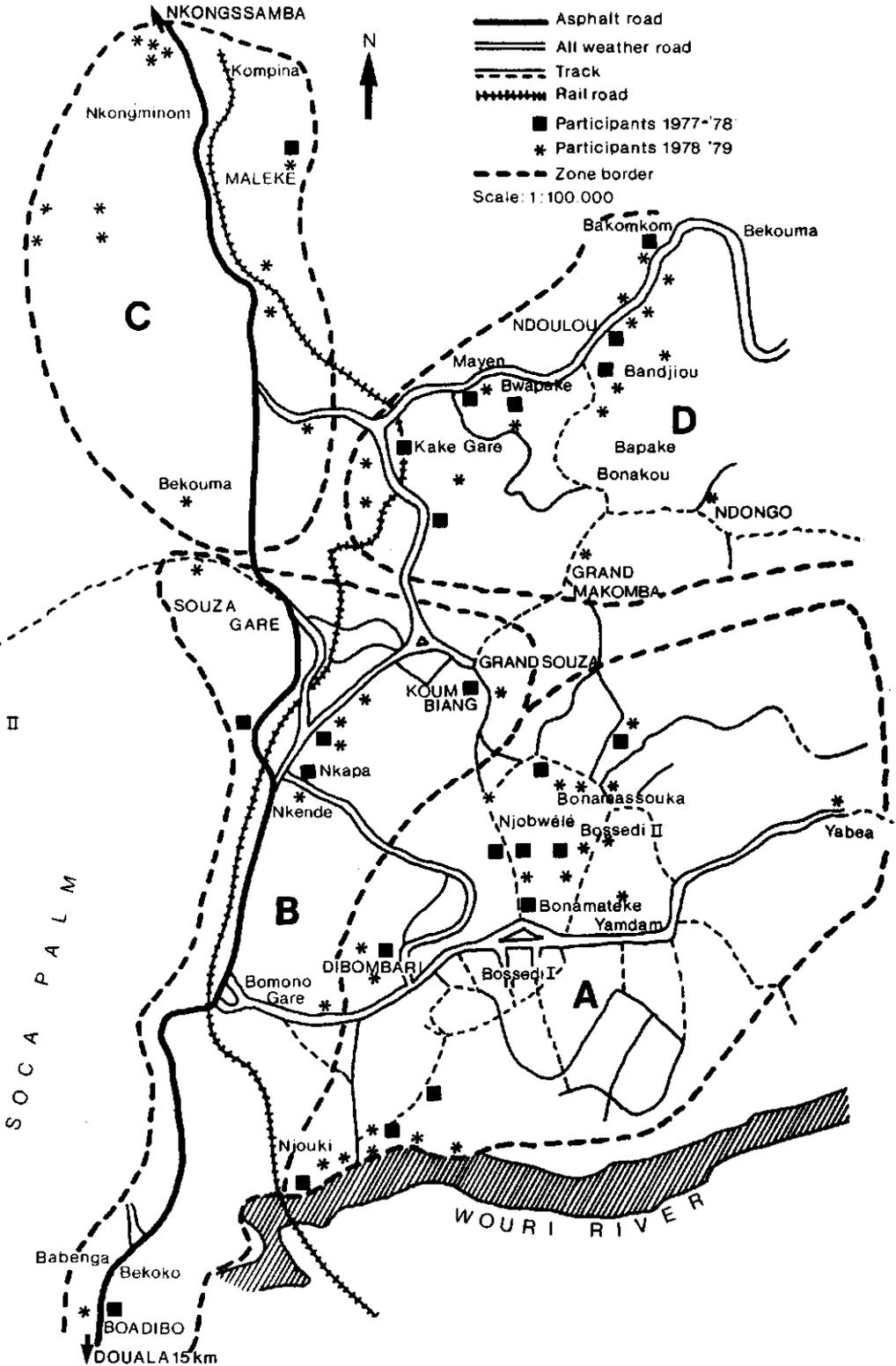
³ "Outgrowers" are farmers linked to an industrial plantation by a contract settling the conditions of creation and exploitation of a supervised agricultural production.

In fact, this hypothesis was based on two observations made by the SOCAPALM management of the outgrowers scheme and by the funding agency, FED⁴. Too many outgrowers, in their analysis, would be high government officials and traders, the group of 'small farmers' being too small. The funding agency was not happy with this situation because its aim was to raise the living standards of the rural poor; SOCAPALM was equally unhappy with this development because the 'encadrement' (a rather authoritarian mixture of supervision and extension) is rather difficult with these socially and politically influential and powerful 'absentee landlords'.⁵ The idea of "encadrement" presupposes a hierarchical situation in which the "encadreur" has a higher status than the "encadré". If this relationship is the reverse, 'orders' given by the encadreur are ignored; plantations belonging to government officials and traders are very frequently less well-maintained for instance, than the plantations of small farmers.

The very frequent bush-fires that destroyed the newly created plantations of some outgrowers, was the second phenomenon that worried both SOCAPALM and FED and gave raise to our hypothesis. The deliberate character of these fires, although suspected by encadreurs, management and outgrowers was rather difficult to prove. This form of sabotage would be caused by envy, especially directed against the 'absentee landlords'.

⁴ FED, Fonds Européen de Développement, is financing through subventions and loans, both the industrial estate of Dibombari, and the outgrowers scheme. SOCAPALM activities in other regions of the country are mostly financed by IBRD loans.

⁵ Compare: Schultz, W.: The Commodity Approach. Sociologia Ruralis, 77, p. 75-8.



2 THE DIBOMBARI OUTGROWERS SCHEME

The Dibombari outgrowers scheme or 'le projet plantations villageoises de Dibombari' is a Cameroonian Government- FED project that is part of a programme of three pilot outgrowers schemes, the other two being situated in Edea and Eseka and financed by World Bank loans. These pilot projects should, in the long run, indicate the methods and means needed to further Cameroon's oil-palm production. This production is sharply falling due to the diminishing exploitation of spontaneous palm trees by the traditional methods.⁶ The idea of outgrowers schemes was inspired by the scheme in the Ivory Coast, where a large part of the oil-palm production is provided by outgrowers.

One objective of the Dibombari scheme is to link a total of 250 outgrowers with 790 hectares of oil-palm, to the existing 6300 hectares industrial oil-palm estate of Dibombari in the period 1977-1982.

Outgrowers are linked to the industrial plantation by contract; the farmers' inputs are land and labour; the project's inputs are know-how (encadrement), young hybrid plants, fertilizer and other physical inputs on credit, bonuses, etc.

The farmer agrees to sell all his produce to the SOCAPALM factory, in Nkapa at a fixed price; reduction of the loan repayment is made on the amount.⁷

The management of the project is the responsibility of SOCAPALM which created a 'Direction des palmeraies villageoises' in Douala at SOCAPALM's headquarters. In the Dibombari sector the project is managed by a sector chief, assisted by 4 encadreurs or zone chiefs.

⁶ The traditional technology of oil production based on a very inefficient extraction of the low productive "spontaneous" Tenera-palms, is a dangerous, time-consuming and hard job, that, in most parts of Cameroon, has been abandoned in favour of more rewarding rural and urban activities.

⁷ Long-term loans are made available through FONADER, Fonds National de Developpement Rural, the farmers' bank. Loans are given for a 13 year period; repayment starts 5 years after creation of the plantation. The interest rate for the farmer is 9%.

3 THE CONTEXT OF THE OUTGROWERS SCHEME

In principle, oil-palm plantations can be created by outgrowers in the area delineated by a circle with a radius of 25 km around the palm-oil extraction mill of Nkapa (see map). In fact, the potential production area is far more limited by: the border between the South-West Province and the Littoral Province⁸, the industrial suburbs of Douala town, the industrial plantations of both SOCAPALM and CDC-Rubber and the swamp areas of the Wouri river.

In addition, two or three villages of the region are not short-term potential extension areas, as the land belonging to these villages has been appropriated by SOCAPALM for the creation of the industrial estate, but the appropriation dues have never been paid.

The area is favourable for the growing of oil-palm. The region has high rainfall figures (2600 mm/annum) rather evenly spread throughout the year with a drier period from October to March, flat and sandy alluvial soils, crossed by strongly meandering streams and swamp areas. Average temperatures are high and humidity, except in the drier season, is always close to 100 per cent.

The productivity of oil-palm is mainly limited by the lack of sunshine during the wet season. High-yielding hybrid dwarf varieties of oil-palm such as the variety used by SOCAPALM, can produce up to 12 tons of fruits per hectare.

From an administrative point of view, the area in which the outgrowers scheme is situated is, in the main, identical to the Dibombari 'arrondissement'. This 'arrondissement', covering 736 km², has a population of 25.000. The original population of the region belong to the Abo, Bakoko and Pongo tribes. They consider themselves members of the Douala tribe, mainly because the Douala tribe is considered in the coastal regions as the most 'civilised', because 'they were the first to see the whites'. In these 'Semi-Douala' groups, urban values prevail, such as a very high appreciation for education and the educated, urban and European way of life, and a disdain for rural life and traditional agriculture. Among these groups rural urban migration is very high. Approximately 80 per cent of the native population of Dibombari, especially males between the

⁸ For historical reasons (e.g. British and French colonial rules) most organizations and institutions are still incompatible in the anglophone South-West and the francophone Littoral. SOCAPALM is limited to the francophone part of Cameroon, for this practical reason.

age of twenty and forty, live in Douala and other urban centres. Nearly all the male native inhabitants of Dibombari have lived for several years in a town or in an industrial centre. There is a tendency towards urban rural remigration at about the age of forty, especially for those who did not successfully integrate in town. They often return to the land and to agriculture after the death of their father.

These 'semi-Douala' groups, although very important for the outgrowers scheme, as they are the 'owners' of the land, are minority groups in the region. The majority of the population, especially concentrated along the road and the railway line from Douala to Nkongsamba, are immigrants. They constitute the spearhead of Bamiléké and Beti immigration.

During early colonial times, forced labour, for railway construction, forest exploitation and plantation agriculture brought thousands of strangers, mainly from Beti and Bassa, to the area. During the twenties, the 'Douala' landowners hired additional labourers of Bamiléké origin for the creation and maintenance of vast coffee plantations. The emerging social structure with 'Douala' landlords, highly educated, and a class of landless labourers of different ethnic origin, was disturbed by the 1930 crisis, when coffee prices fell sharply. The Douala landlords, refusing to diminish their standards of living, pledged their coffee farms to the Bamiléké workers, because they could no longer afford to pay their wages. The result was, that by 1935 nearly all coffee land had become the property of their former Bamiléké labourers.^{9,10}

So far, the social and economic situation in the region has been highly influenced by these events, reinforced by the anti-colonial uprisings and rebellion of the fifties. We find a sharp social cleavage between Bamiléké (and other immigrants) mainly working on their coffee plantations and as agricultural and industrial workers on the one hand, and an urban-oriented group of 'semi-Douala' with a disdain for agricultural labour, often depending upon very complex economic relationships with family members in town. Between these two groups there is very little exchange, and clear territorial separations exist. Bamiléké and other

⁹ Coffee farms are, however, only a minor fraction of all available land (about 5 %). So far, immigrants have had more problems in obtaining access to agricultural land than "natives". "Claiming" and "Occupation" of unoccupied or fallow land is for them very difficult.

¹⁰ Compare: Dugast, G.: Inventaire ethnique du Sud-Cameroun, Paris, 1949.

immigrants may live in recently created towns such as Nkapa and Kompina, or in separate quarters. Local political influence is monopolised by the educated and 'native' semi-Douala groups.

Agriculture of the semi-Douala group in Dibombari is special in that it lacks a perennial cash-crop. In the surrounding areas, cocoa and coffee-farming is the major source of (male) cash income. Dibombari agriculture however is dominated by food-crop production, especially cassava (sold as 'miondo', fine sticks of leaf-wrapped and boiled cassava flour, that is one of the bulk foods of Douala town) and vegetables.

These crops are typically women's activities, and men are neither engaged in production (except for the clearing of the bush and the felling of trees and scrubs) nor in the selling.

Men's activities are mainly limited to the exploitation of the natural oil-palm forests, on which individual claims exist. Major male agricultural activities are the production of palm-oil and palm-wine. Traditional palm-oil production is hampered by a very low productivity of natural palm trees and a very low extraction rate of the fruits. Being a labour intensive activity giving a low labour income, men are turning away from oil production, preferring jobs on the oil-palm estates and in town.¹¹ Palm-wine tapping, although giving a better income is disdained as an economic activity. It is normally not done by respectable and respected people, because it 'is the servant who presents palm-wine to the master'.

¹¹ However, as we will see in the next chapter, most of the outgrowers' plantations are created on land with "spontaneous" palms.

4 RESULTS OF THE SOCAPALM DIBOMBARI OUTGROWERS SCHEME

Having started its activities in 1977-1978, the project is now in its third year. The objectives in terms of number of outgrowers and number of hectares of oil-palm plantations have not been fully realized. This is mainly due to a lack of encadrement. Lots of farmers willing to realize a plantation under the scheme, are ignored by the encadreurs. There are even many farmers who started the clearing and then never received young plants from SOCAPALM. The main reason for this is that in the project studies, the capacity of the encadrement was greatly overestimated. The feasibility study of the scheme proposed an encadrement of 50 hectares per encadreur per annum. The working load for the creation of one hectare of oil-palm plantation, as shown in Table 1, and the period suitable for planting is rather limited by climatic factors (months of April, May, June), the maximum capacity of creation of a new plantation for one encadreur can be more realistically estimated at 20 hectares per annum.¹²

Table 1. Working load in days for the creation of one hectare of oil palm in Dibombari

Activities related to:	Work load encadreur in days	Work load farmer in days
Meetings, subscription, etc.	0.2	2.9
Choice of land	0.3	1.1
Clearing	0.1	28.5
Felling	1.5	14.6
Burning	0.1	1.6
Planting Pueraria	0.3	3
Piquetage	1.0	2.2
Drilling holes	0.1	8.3
Planting	2.5	11.6
Cleaning circles	0.1	10.7
Fertilizing	3.1	3.2
Total	9.3	87.7

This discrepancy between expectancy and realistic possibilities gives rise to frustration and stress among encadreurs. As the encadreur must 'drop' certain farmers, and as the choice of who should be dropped and who not is left to him, his choice is more often than not influenced by

¹² This estimation is based on the fact that some of these activities take place outside the months of April, May and June, and that encadreurs will make days of more than eight working hours during this period. Otherwise their capacity would be too low.

nepotism, tribalism, 'dash', and of course the political and social influence, and the wealth of the farmer. So, the underestimation in the project proposal, indirectly favours the bigger, wealthier and more influential farmers, e.g. the category of 'absentee landlords', such as government officials and traders.

In general, from an agronomic point of view, the smallholders' plantations are in very good shape. In most cases the plantations are well cleaned. Very few cases of diseased or dying plants were observed. One of the major technical problems, as mentioned in the introduction is the very frequent destruction of young oil palm plantations by bush-fires. In certain cases these fires are certainly deliberate, especially in those villages where SOCAPALM has established industrial plantations on land 'owned' by the village. A second reason for these bush-fires is the frequent establishment of oil-palm plantation on lands formerly used for food-crop production. In the first place, the cover-crop *Pueraria* is not able to replace the very tough grasses in these fallows, so that in the dry season the dry grass burns very easily, especially compared with the plantations covered with *Pueraria*. In the second place, the food-crop lands are the 'property' of women, e.g. they have rights on the produce of this land. By planting perennials, the farmer is withdrawing land from the women's production system, and shifting it into the men's agricultural production system. At least some of the bush-fires are certainly due to the wrath of woman.¹³

From the surveys it follows that, especially if certain conditions are to be fulfilled, such as: more and more regular 'encadrement', a more efficient system of collecting and paying for the fruits, possibilities to interplant the young palms with food-crops, a better cash flow situation for the farmer during the second and third year of the creation of his plantation, etc., participation in the scheme could be rather general. The willingness of the farmer to participate in the programme is certainly not the major bottleneck for the scheme. The consulting team estimated the potential surface in the long run to be 2000 ha with 1000 farmers participating.

¹³ Consequently, the consultation team proposed to support farmers more for the felling of 'black bush' (assistance for the felling, motor-saw, etc.) and to allow farmers to interplant young oil-palm with groundnuts, so that women would become interested in the scheme and eventually could be integrated. Another advantage of the interplanting of food-crops would be a better cash flow situation for the farmer during the first years, so that the project could become more attractive for smaller and poorer farmers.

5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTGROWERS IN THE DIBOMBARI SCHEME

After this, of necessity, rather brief description of what the objectives of the Dibombari outgrowers scheme are, and how, so far, they have worked out, we can now turn to the subject of the present article; the characteristics of the farmers 'selected' by the outgrowers scheme, that is by a development programme. Is it, as seems to be the case in many projects aiming at a 'green revolution' an activity that favours the rural elite and the proletarianization of the rural poor, or is it, on the contrary an activity ameliorating the standards of living of the rural poor target group?¹⁴

The most important and clear 'selection' of farmers is, of course: sex, status within the nuclear family, and tribal origin. These selection criteria are closely related to the rights of land. In Dibombari, only the male head of the household has the superior right of control over land, and this right, in nearly all cases is obtained by inheritance. The buying or pledging of land is still a rather rare phenomenon, and in the 'traditional' law it is not clear whether the land itself can be transferred to somebody outside the family, or merely the use of the land. So, all the outgrowers interviewed were male heads of households. Younger and dependent people were only engaged in the outgrowers scheme as labourers for their 'brothers' or 'fathers', but not as 'owners' of the smallholders plantation. In our sample, one of the owners of a plantation was a woman. She took over the plantation from her late husband, who died after the creation of the plantation. But she was rather unhappy with this part of the inheritance, and the actual management of the plantation was taken over by one of the encadreurs.

Very few outgrowers are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Approximately 70 per cent of the inhabitants of the Dibombari arrondissement are of a different tribal origin than the 'Semi-Douala' groups. But only 29 per cent of the outgrowers are immigrants (Bamiléké, Bassa, Beti or

¹⁴ Apart from a great number of informal interviews and case studies, the consultancy team organized a questionnaire with formal interviews. The questionnaires were given to a total of 42 outgrowers, chosen by random sample from a total of 152 outgrowers engaged in the scheme. At the same time, a test questionnaire was given to 42 inhabitants of the Dibombari arrondissement, who were not engaged in the project. They were selected on a territorial basis, taking the 'chef de ménage' of the household three houses away from the outgrower in the first sample as an informant. See, for a methodological discussion of the method, SOCAPALM, op.cit., 1980.

Yambassa). These immigrants or 'strangers' have no easy access to fallow land or to unoccupied lands,¹⁵ so that an engagement in the project, other than as an agricultural labourer for the native land owners, is not possible for them.

Land shortage and conflict over land also play very important roles in the selection of outgrowers. To understand this point we must distinguish between 'land around the compound', and 'land separated from the compound'. The land around the house is mainly used for the subsistence of the family, e.g. for food-crops, fruit trees, sometimes for some coffee and 'spontaneous' oil-palms. These plots are normally under continuous cultivation, with household litter as manure. This land cannot be used for the creation of oil-palm plantations, as the plots around the compound are completely managed by women. Men have merely the nominal 'property'.

Table 2. Comparison of access to agricultural land in ha between outgrowers and other farmers in the Dibombari arrondissement

	Outgrowers	Other farmers
Average number of ha of land around the compound	1.6 ha	2.0 ha
Modal number ¹⁶ of ha of land separated from compound	8.0 ha	5.0 ha

¹⁵ Descendants of a lineage group have the right to claim fallow or unoccupied land from the former owner. If the latter cannot occupy the land, he loses the right to use it, with the exception of the perennials planted by him. Strangers can request land, but normally have no right to plant perennials, unless they "bought" the land from the former owner.

¹⁶ We used the modal, because one of the farmers claimed to 'own' 1000 ha; in fact he had rights of access to those 1000 ha, but so did other people.

Table 3. Comparison of the use of all owned land and the former use of land on which the farmer created a SOCAPALM plantation.

	Land use as a percentage of arable land	Former land use on oil-palm plantations
Spontaneous palms	35 %	54 %
'Black bush' (Forest)	16 %	18 %
Coffee	5 %	0 %*
Cocoa	2 %	0 %*
Food-crops	34 %	14 %
Fallow	8 %	6 %
Old outgrowers scheme**	0 %	8 %
Total	100 %	100 %

* SOCAPALM refused to create oil-palm plantations for outgrowers on land, occupied by coffee or cocoa, these crops being "of national interest". SOCAPALM management seems to become more and more reluctant to the creation of outgrowers' plantations on land formerly used for food-crops.

** During the late fifties there was a SOFINOL outgrowers programme in the Dibombari area which turned into a financial disaster when, after independence, it was taken over by a regional development agent.

From these tables, it becomes clear that only larger landowners were engaged in the creation of an outgrowers plantation; men cannot very easily create oil-palm plantations on food-crop fields or fallows, as this would directly interfere with the interests of women. As the clearing of the 'black bush' is a very heavy task, especially without a motor-saw, the majority of the outgrowers create their plantations on land formerly covered by 'spontaneous' palms.

From Table 4 it becomes very clear that many outgrowers use the outgrowers scheme to settle and reinforce their rights to the land. In fact, buying of land is not yet fully accepted as a means of obtaining land. Such a doubtful 'title', as is the case with land obtained by 'occupation', can be reinforced by the planting of perennials. Very often the establishment of a SOCAPALM outgrowers plantation is a provocation by the farmer who has certain rights to the land, of others who also have some rights to the same plot. The outgrower feels himself reinforced in his rights by the protection given to him by SOCAPALM, a government organization.

Table 4. Comparison of the ways of obtaining land.

	Land around compound	Land separated from compound	SOCAPALM plantation
Inheritance	61 %	82 %	55 %
Buying	11 %	9 %	34 %
Gift	22 %	3 %	2 %
Occupation	6 %	3 %	7 %
Shareholding	0 %	3 %	2 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

A very important element in this struggle for exclusive land rights is the drawing up of a map of the plantation that is signed and stamped by SOCAPALM and local authorities, and is considered as a 'SOCAPALM title' by the farmer, although it is not an official land registry. Many government officials and traders (we qualified them as the 'absentee landlords') who create oil-palm plantations, do so in order to strengthen their claims on land. For them an element of land speculation (Dibombari is situated 25 km from Douala, and land prices are rising sharply in its industrial suburbs) is probably more appealing than eventual profits from agricultural production. This explains the conflicting interests between them and the SOCAPALM 'encadreurs'; they are not interested in a very well kept, highly productive plantation, they are more interested in obtaining 'titles' on land, supported by local authorities, the 'government' (SOCAPALM) and credit institutions (FONADER). Apart from land, the second input provided for by the farmer is labour. In Table 1 we have seen that the creation of one hectare of oil-palm-plantation takes about 90 days. As the average outgrower creates about 2 ha in the first year, and as the work has to be finished in a short time, the farmer is, in all cases, assisted by hired labour. The farmer¹⁷ generally hires working-groups, ('coupe-tout') on a task-payment basis. One of the interesting aspects is that these working groups are very often composed of workers of the industrial plantation; the SOCAPALM out-growers scheme aggravates thus one of the most dramatic problems of in-

¹⁷ We define as farmers those people who have more than 50% of their cash income of agriculture. Fonctionnaires and traders earn less than 50 % of their cash income in agriculture.

dustrial plantations in Cameroon, e.g. the lack of a stable working-force. The government officials and traders (the 'absentee landlords') hire workers on a wage basis. These workers are usually immigrants or 'strangers'. The motivation to hire wage-earners, very often on a monthly payment, has to do with prestige considerations, as the cost of a wage earner is many times more for the same job as the cost of a 'coupe-tout', and the absentee landowners are usually very well aware of this price difference.

'Having' a wage earner strengthens the social prestige of the family, especially in the light of the paternalistic relationships between the labourer and his 'patron'. In all cases, whether farmers or absentee landowners, the creation of an outgrowers plantation means a cash investment for the farmer, even when FONADER gives loans for the physical inputs, and SOCAPALM gives a bonus upon completion of certain phases in the creation of a plantation.

In Table 5 we see very clearly that the occupational profile of the SOCAPALM outgrowers is grosso modo the same as that of the other inhabitants of the zone. The only significant difference is the over-representation of traders among the outgrowers. Of course we have to take into account the fact that the occupational categories are rather broad. 'Fonctionnaire' in the rural area means a primary school teacher or a clerk, but 'fonctionnaire' among the outgrowers means for instance a delegate, a director, etc.

This quantitative difference between outgrowers and non-outgrowers becomes very clear when we compare, in Table 6, incomes and sources of income between SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone.

The SOCAPALM outgrowers have, on average, three times the cash income of the other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone, although their cash agricultural income (and that of their wives) is less than that of the rest of the Dibombari rural population.

The creation of a SOCAPALM outgrowers plantation will diminish the agricultural income of the farmer during the first three years, before the plantation is productive. It diminishes more particularly the income from palm-oil production for the market. This diminishing of cash income, plus the expenditures for labour is mainly financed out of non-agricultural sources of income, such as salaries, trading benefits, bride-wealths, pension funds, etc.

Table 5. Comparison of occupational status between outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone.

	SOCAPALM occup. in %	OTHER INHABITANTS occup. in %
Farmer	59	48
Trader	12	5
Labourer	12	14
Fonctionnaire	15	12
Fisher, hunter	0	0
Wine tapper	0	19
Pensioned	0	0
Traditional function	2	2
Total	100	100

Table 6. Comparison of mean cash income of the family in 1979 between SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone. Incomes are given in CFA Francs. (1\$ = 200 FCFA) and in % of total income.

	SOCAPALM OUTGROWERS		OTHER INHABITANTS	
	FCFA	%	FCFA	%
Coffee	38.400	4.6	57.600	20.5
Cocoa	20.640	2.5	1.200	0.4
Palm-oil	19.380	2.3	45.220	16.1
Cassava	40.000	4.8	51.000	18.2
Plantain	35.250	4.3	14.820	5.3
Fruits	7.750	0.9	9.860	3.5
Palm-wine	8.100	1.0	15.900	5.7
Food-crops	3.000	0.8	7.000	3.2
Ndole (leaf vegetable)	7.000	0.8	7.000	2.5

Total agriculture	179.520	22.0	209.600	75.4
Trading	357.500	43.0	4.500	1.6
Salaries	290.600	35.0	64.500	23.0

Total	827.620	100	278.600	100

Now, having dealt with a description of the inputs that the farmer has to furnish for the creation of an outgrowers plantation, namely land and labour, we have seen that this has a direct influence upon the profile of the outgrower. We can now complete this picture by comparing some other socio-economic variables.

After analysing Tables 7, 8 and 9, our image of the SOCAPALM-outgrowers becomes more and more complete. As is the case in many places in Africa, the number of dependants is a very clear and significant indicator of someone's prestige. SOCAPALM outgrowers have more dependants, both in

Table 7. Comparison of some parameters of family and household composition between SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone.

	SOCAPALM OUT-GROWERS	OTHER INHABITANTS
Age of chief of the compound	47 years	44 years
Number of wives of chief in the household	1.2 wives	0.9 wives
Number of children (0-15 years) in the household	3.5 children	2.8 children
Number of persons attending school in the household	3.0 students	2.2 students
Number of other dependent persons in the household	0.8 persons	1.0 persons
Number of dependants in town	5.8 persons	1.4 persons
Number of wives in town	0.1 wife	0.0 wives
Number of own children in town (0-15 years)	1.9 children	0.3 children
Number of dependent persons attending school and living in town	2.6 students	0.5 students
Number of people assisting the head of the household living in town	0.4 persons	0.9 persons

Table 8. Comparison of educational status of the head of the household between SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari region.

	SOCAPALM OUT-GROWERS (in %)	OTHER INHABITANTS (in %)
None, village school, kindergarden	15	20
'cours elementaire'	17	15
'cours moyen'	27	35
CEPE (certificate prim.school)	12	0
College	24	30
University	5	0
	100	100

Table 9. Comparison of educational status of wives of SOCAPALM outgrowers and wives of other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone, in % of wives.

	SOCAPALM OUT-GROWERS (in %)	OTHER INHABITANTS (in %)
None, village school, kindergarden	47	33
cours elementaire	19	25
cours moyen	19	33
CEPE	6	8
college	8	0
	99	99

the village, but especially in Douala, more wives, more children and more dependants from outside the nuclear family. Their high prestige is evidently not the result of a higher educational level. I cannot fully explain why SOCAPALM outgrowers have more illiterate wives than other inhabitants of the Dibombari region; probably this has something to do with polygyny, which is not very often accepted by educated women. No significant differences were found regarding the frequency of visits to Douala (50 times a year both for SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants), nor in the frequency of rural-urban migration (both for

SOCAPALM outgrowers and for other inhabitants about 50 per cent had lived for a longer period¹⁸ outside the region).

A last aspect of the profile of SOCAPALM outgrowers as compared to other inhabitants of the Dibombari region, is the extent to which they have more political alliances and influence.

Table 10. Membership of other significant groups and organizations and political alliances of SOCAPALM outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone.

	SOCAPALM OUTGROWERS (in %)	OTHER INHABITANTS (in %)
Member of the family of the paramount chief	12.2	12.5
Member of the family of the village chief	43.9	55.0
Member of the family of the quarter chief	52.2	57.1
Member of the political party UNC, JUNC, OFUNC	100.0	100.0
Function in UNC, JUNC or OFUNC	39.0	27.5
Member of credit union	9.8	15
Member of a 'tontine' (rotative credit association)	41.5	42.5
Member of a dancing group	14.6	10.0
Member of chorus	34.1	45.0
Catholics	21.4	37.5
Protestants	64.3	55.0
Other functions in Community e.g. in "G.A.M." (groups of modern farmers), 'chief of the farmers' age associations, professional associations, working groups, etc. (SOCAPALM membership not included)	24.4	7.5

¹⁸ SOCAPALM outgrowers stayed longer in town (17.2 years on the average) than other inhabitants (10.3 years).

Apart from the relationships with the paramount, village and quarter chiefs, we see that the outgrowers are significantly more often engaged in political and recreational groups and associations. This means that the outgrowers are in general the economic and political leaders in the community. Their leading role in the political party should be noted with special interest. The lack of significant differences in family relationships with traditional chiefs between outgrowers and other inhabitants of the Dibombari zone is more significant as regards the position of those chiefs than as regards the profile of outgrowers. In fact, in those societies without a head¹⁹, the role of the village or paramount chief is mainly reduced to assisting the local authorities in the collection of taxes, especially so after the anti-colonial rebellion of 1958.

¹⁹ Pre-colonial political systems in Southern Cameroon did not have chiefs or paramount chiefs. They were "appointed" as a result of contacts with German colonial authorities.

6 CONCLUSIONS

During this mid-term evaluation of the SOCAPALM Dibombari outgrowers scheme it became clear that participants in the scheme have rather precise socio-economic features; they are richer, less rural, have more political influence and a higher social prestige than their neighbours. In this respect, our analysis points in the same direction as so many studies of rural development programmes.

In fact, as a result of the project, rich and influential people in the village community will become richer and more influential.

Such a selection is partly unavoidable and inherent to the project. As outgrowers have to participate by providing land and labour, participation is mainly interesting for those people (e.g. male heads of the household) with a cash income outside agriculture, who have access to these inputs. But apart from this 'unavoidable' selection, the study reveals a further selection of rich and politically influential people by factors that are within the reach of the intervening organization. The overcharging of the encadreurs in terms of hectares per encadreur, the refusal of the management to allow farmers to cultivate food-crops between the young palms, the high insecurity of future income from oil-palms, are the factors that make participation in the project more interesting for 'absentee landowners' than for 'farmers'. By providing means (clearing facilities, more "encadrement", groundnut seeds, a well organized and transparent marketing system), some of the selection of participants now taking place could be avoided. This is essential for the future survival of the project, because, as the process of reinforcement of the economic and social status of the rural elite and the urban members of the tribe is a generator of envy, the project seems to block itself by sabotage of the plantations. More attention should be paid to suggestions and problems that small farmers have in the creation and exploitation of their plantations. A co-operative of outgrowers, as has been suggested does not seem to be an appropriate means, because it will very probably become dominated and monopolized by the richer and more influential outgrowers.

In our opinion, SOCAPALM could do a great deal to diminish the clearcut character of the selection. But if the project continues as it does, it is certain that any ex-post evaluation will provide us with another case-study of how a rural development programme made the rich richer, and the poor poorer.

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