

FAMILY FARMING IN WESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND:  
PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE STRATEGIES IN A  
REMOTE AGRICULTURAL REGION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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JOHN DAVID FLINT









**FAMILY FARMING IN WESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND: PRODUCTION AND  
EXCHANGE STRATEGIES IN A REMOTE AGRICULTURAL REGION**

by

John David Flint

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## ABSTRACT

In Canada, government policies and programs and the market structure itself encourage the rationalization of agriculture: large, cost efficient regionally specific monocrop operations. In Newfoundland farms continue to survive and in some cases flourish in ways that seem to flout state policy and the dictums of the agrifood market. Based on field research conducted in a small farming region in western Newfoundland, this thesis examines the multiple production and exchange strategies of farmers in that region and attempts to find social explanations for this diversity. Changes in the provincial market structure and transportation system have been influential. The fairly recent vertical integration of Newfoundland's food delivery system has had a profound effect. The thesis also considers the influence of kinship and community ties and obligations on the modes of production and exchange and reveals ways that farmers have adapted to the constraints of unfavourable land tenancy arrangements and a generally unsympathetic local non-farming community.

In order to describe and explain the various production and exchange strategies taken by the 17 farm units surveyed, this thesis develops a farm typology with its roots in the political economy of Kautsky and Chayanov and their successors. While farm typologies - particularly those developed in North America - have tended to rely on quantitative data, the typology presented here is based on qualitative data and particularly the social relations of production and exchange within and outside each farm unit. In the

analysis, three distinct types of "family farm" emerge within the survey area, each relying on a particular set of social, economic and political resources for success. In conclusion, this thesis suggests that the varying needs of each of these types must be taken into consideration when agricultural policy is formulated.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

The structure of the world's agricultural sector, the way food and fibre are produced, processed and delivered to market has been radically transformed in the last hundred years. Newfoundland's small farming sector has not escaped this transformation, particularly following Confederation with Canada in 1949. There are fewer farms in Newfoundland today and while they are more mechanized and larger they cultivate less land overall. The lion's share of gross farm revenues is captured by a relatively few newer operations specializing in capital intensive broiler, egg and milk production. Producers of such traditional Newfoundland dietary staples as root crops, cabbage, lamb and beef have in the last 45 years gone from being the island's primary source to a marginal secondary source of these items.

This study focuses on what was once central to the development of agriculture in Newfoundland, the "family farm". The family farm is an unusual formation in a mature capitalist economy because it is both a production unit and a domestic unit. It is a work site and a home site and it is often difficult to separate economic activities and relationships from domestic ones. It is a "household commodity production unit" and as such it is tempting to regard it as a transitional form, a hangover from pre-capitalist times which is on the way out, a household which happens to farm. This study examines an alternative possibility, that these formations are "farms of the household type", a form

well suited to the mature capitalist economy and not a residual. Therefore this study will seek to explain variation in family farm types as successful exploitations of conditions occurring in that economy rather than as stages of decay in a transitional form. Since these farms are taken seriously, variation will be described in farming terms. A farming enterprise is organized for the production and exchange of farm products. Diversity of family farm types may be explained in terms of decisions taken, for whatever reason, to pursue certain strategies of production and exchange.

Major studies of the Newfoundland agricultural sector (House 1986, Hulan 1991) have focused on the types, quantities and values of the commodities produced and the processing and distribution system without delving deeply into the internal structures of the production units themselves - the farms. Their emphasis on the Newfoundland "agrifoods industry" and its potential as a modern, job-creating vertically integrated economic sector fails to capture the plight of many generational farm proprietors who feel they are being misunderstood, marginalized or simply ignored. Changes in technology, the market structure, the transportation system and government policy have forced farmers to adapt or perish. The farms that survive have had to change the way they do business, developing new strategies for the production and exchange of agricultural commodities and for the preservation or "reproduction" of the production unit, the farm.

How does one get a handle on what is going on "down on the farm"? Farm census data are not all that useful, for as this paper will show, much of what goes on down on the

farm is not reported. There are three reasons for this. First, the categories in which farm data are collected and organized reflect and reify preconceived notions of farm organizational types (Strange 1988 p.67). Second, farmers are notoriously "informal" in their business dealings and much of the farm economy goes unrecorded. Third, very few farm households, even "successful" ones, obtain all their income from farming, if only because farming tends to be seasonal and there is time in the year for other work.

Even when data are collected very carefully from the farmers on the farm site in open-ended discussion allowing for plenty of qualitative information it is difficult to "make sense" of them. This is because most farmers are not operating simply to maximize profit. They are also ideologically committed to the craft of farming, to a way of life. They are interested in preserving the farm site as a congenial home site, in optimizing living conditions for family members, in doing physical labour close to the earth, in agricultural experimentation, in collegial relations and status among other farmers.

To interpret the farm unit sociologically is to locate and analyze the farm-specific human relationships of the people involved. The farm is a meaningful sociological category if and only if there are human relationships peculiar to the "farm" form of production unit. If this is the case, variations in farm form should be explainable in terms of variations in these relationships. If, as was the case in this research project, distinct "ways" of farming seem to emerge, then these ways are best analyzed in terms of a typology based on those farm-specific variables as well. Since the farm stands as a unit

for the production and exchange of agricultural products, the farm-specific human relationships might be expected to be manifested as relations of production and relations of exchange.

The immediate goal of this research is to describe and explain the different production and exchange strategies taken by the 17 farm units surveyed in the Heatherton to Highlands area of Newfoundland's west coast. To facilitate this discussion I will develop a farm typology informed by previous research. I will discuss the effects of markets, distribution systems, governmental programs and policies, and kin, community and collegial relationships on farm unit structure. Finally, I will discuss the implications of my findings for farm policy in particular and rural development policy in general.

## Chapter Two

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on farming is vast and wide ranging and so it will be necessary to restrict discussion of it to a few relevant areas. The problem for this thesis is two-fold. First, it aims to show that the family farm, a household commodity production unit, is worthy of discussion as a reasonable response to a mature capitalist system rather than an anachronism which may be expected to wither under that system. Second, it aims to show that the diversity in family farms can be explained positively by variable production and exchange strategies rather than negatively as a straight-line continuum of the competence or rationality of a group of operators all trying to do the same thing. Therefore the goal of this chapter is to present a historical overview of the discussion of the viability of household commodity production forms and to synthesize a typology of these forms drawing on the literature and based on different combinations of production and exchange strategies.

While Marx paid only sporadic attention to agriculture as such (Friedland 1991 p.5) his argument that social formations should be analyzed in terms of relations and forces of production and exchange continues to inform the sociology of agriculture. As illustrated by the following quotation from Capital, Marx expected that relations of

production in an agricultural sector under the capitalist mode would be transformed as in any other sector:

"The foundation of the capitalist system is therefore the utmost separation of the producer from the means of production ... The basis of this whole development is the expropriation of the agricultural producer. This has been accomplished in a radical fashion only in England...But all the countries of Western Europe are going through the same movement" (Marx 1987 p.576).

The "utmost separation" was to occur as the petty bourgeoisie, those shopkeepers, artisans and farmers who both worked and owned their means of production were bifurcated into worker and owner classes by the inexorable capitalist forces of production. Marx never wavered in his belief that working farmers would eventually be separated from agricultural capital but he frequently expressed his frustration with the landowning peasantry which "...hinders every workers' revolution and causes it to fail, as it has done in France up till now ..." (Marx 1987 p.561). Marx's thinking was no doubt influenced by the fact that he lived in England, where both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors had been transformed in much the same way from feudalism through small proprietorships to domination by large-scale capital.

When the German, Karl Kautsky, published The Agrarian Question in 1899, Lenin wrote: "Kautsky's book is the most important event in present-day economic

literature since the third volume of Capital. Until now Marxism has lacked a systematic study of capitalism and agriculture. Kautsky has filled this gap" (Kautsky 1988 p.xi).

Kautsky observed that in Germany smaller family farms were increasing in number just as many larger capitalist operations were failing and he proposed several possible explanations for this. First, in manufacture it is possible to multiply the means of production with capital, but in agriculture the chief means of production is the land, which is available in fixed quantities and cannot be "multiplied" (ibid. p.145).

Manufacturers can increase production capacity either by investing capital in existing factories (multiplying) or by absorbing rival operations by purchase. Farming enterprises need more land to increase production capacity. In developed countries, scarce farm land is already being used by rival operations and so farming enterprises must absorb rivals to grow, preferably rivals next door because it is impractical to cultivate a patchwork of dispersed small holdings (ibid. p.147).

Second, Kautsky describes ways in which small family farms are functional to capitalism. While surplus farm labourers will drift into the city to find industrial jobs, the opposite does not occur. The urban proletariat is rarely interested in or physically or psychologically prepared for the rigours and monotony of farm life. If large commercial farming operations are to expand, they must turn to small family farms for the reproduction of their labour force. And since small farms are often marginal, even their proprietors may be available as a "reserve army" for part time employment (ibid. p.159 ff.). Kautsky's point is that small farms do not survive because they are competitive with large ones but because they are complementary. "...like capitalist and proletarian they

require each other..." (ibid. p.167). Third, it is to the advantage of the bourgeois democratic state to subsidize small family farms even when they are not likely to be competitive. As Marx had earlier noted, small farmers tend to be politically conservative. Disenfranchised and proletarianized they are more likely to make trouble (ibid. p.143).

Kautsky argued that the transition from capitalism to socialism could be accomplished without expropriating peasant landowners or other small artisanal entrepreneurs. There would always be a small demand for specialty items which required special artisanal skills to produce and which could best be produced by small household enterprises. Otherwise, smallholders who produced commodities which could be delivered more efficiently by larger operations "...will be glad to shed the semblance of their independence and their property if the large-scale socialist enterprise offers them palpable advantages" (ibid. p.143 f.). Here, contrary to Marx, Kautsky was suggesting that a small artisanal property owning class including certain specialty farmers could be more than a transitional form.

Arguing that the new Soviet state should support peasant smallholder cooperatives rather than establishing state collective farms, the Russian agronomist Alexander Chayanov contended that economies of scale favoured the family farm (Chayanov 1991 p.4ff). Writing in 1919, he noted the tendency of capital to shun the horizontal accumulation of farmland for the greater profits to be made by controlling the markets for farm inputs and outputs in a system of vertical integration. The general Soviet strategy



was to use the efficient production methods of capitalism while returning the surplus value to the workers instead of stockholders. In the case of agriculture Chayanov felt that it made sense to retain the emerging capitalist mode - numerous independent smallholding producers with a single integrated supply and distribution system - transformed into a cooperative, rather than to resurrect an archaic feudal mode, the latifundium, as a "collective farm".

Chayanov's early studies of the "peasant economy" were informed by visits to cooperatives in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and France as well as by examination of the narodniki in Russia. In 1925, a number of field studies undertaken by the Soviet Research Institute for Agricultural Economics enabled him to identify six basic social types of Russian peasant households. They were (Chayanov 1991 p. 26f.):

1. The "classical kulak household". While these households might engage in agriculture their chief income came from mercantile activities. They bought and sold agricultural commodities, extended credit, leased equipment, and were small in number but a major force in the countryside.
2. The "semi-capitalist household". These households did not engage in mercantile activities but depended on a large, permanent hired labour force (in addition to household labour) from which they extracted surplus value as "entrepreneurial income". These tended to be fairly large farms, specializing in commodities for export out of the region.

They were less influential than the kulaks and were vulnerable to exploitation by them.

3. The "family farm household". Patriarchially organized, sometimes as large and well-equipped as the semi-capitalists, these farms did not depend on entrepreneurial income from wage labour. They relied mainly on family labour, though they hired labour unexploitively to "help out" during busy periods. They were subjected to capitalist exploitation only in market relationships and when family members took off-farm jobs.

4. The "marginal family farm household". Similar to type 3 but lacking sufficient family labour, land and/or equipment to be economically robust. With insufficient resources, these farms are likely to be exploited by type 1.

5. The "full-time farm household dependent on off-farm income". A family commodity production unit whose reproduction requires some members to do wage work for types 2 or 3, or in non-farm sectors. Also likely to be exploited by type 1.

6. The "proletarian part-time farm household". A very small-scale farm whose household income is almost entirely derived from wage labour.

Chayanov rejected types 1 and 6 as prospective cooperative members and placed the remaining four into two categories: A) "capitalist market-oriented farms" (type 2) and B) "market-oriented family households" (types 3,4,5) (ibid. p.31). Group A operates to

maximize profit while group B operates to reproduce the conditions of production (the household). Under ideal market conditions the economic behaviour of both will be similar, but as markets deteriorate their strategies will diverge. Group A will cut losses by laying off paid labour, reducing operations and perhaps even going out of business. Group B with an inelastic labour force will tend to diversify and/or intensify operations to avoid un- or underemployment and decrease internal consumption if necessary to preserve the production unit. On Chayanov's account, this survival-based flexibility and adaptability, helped by the flexibility of a land-based enterprise, is the organizational virtue which allowed family farms to survive market fluctuations and outlast capitalist farms (*ibid.* p.37). The ideal family farm households react to market conditions on the basis of directly optimizing the life conditions of their members. Ideal capitalist and collective operations react to maximize income for later distribution as wages and/or profits.

By proposing the household commodity production unit as the emerging agricultural mode under capitalism rather than a pre-capitalist residual or transitional phase, Chayanov challenged conventional thinking of his contemporaries on the Left and the Right (Durrenberger 1984 p.2). His unit of analysis is the production unit, the peasant household, rather than the individual or an economic sector. He classifies these units based on relations of production rather than commodity, size or income, though each has its tendencies in those areas. Differing from many "farm" typologies, Chayanov's households are not restricted to agricultural pursuits but could be involved in a number of

artisanal practices. Individual members act corporately as a household and cannot easily be separated by relations of production into workers and owners.

While Chayanov was beginning his studies in pre-revolutionary Russia, interest in "the agrarian question" was growing in North America as well. The United States was becoming an urban, industrial country and farm mechanization and new urban employment opportunities were pushing and pulling rural people into the cities. President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission focused popular attention on the decline of the rural community and inspired the search for "a new type of civilization among farm and village people" (Galpin 1936 p.489). Rev. Charles Galpin left his pastoral post at the University of Wisconsin to conduct the first systematic sociological studies of rural communities and farming patterns in the United States. After years of empirical studies Galpin began to feel uneasy about the "highly provincial, quite fragmentary" descriptive work he and others were doing. He sought the help of Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin to link the empirical research with social theory (ibid. p.501). The result, published in 1930 and co-edited by Carle Zimmerman was the three volume Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology. This book developed the rural-urban dichotomy which dominated American rural sociology until recent times. It argues consistently against Marxist social theory and so it is interesting that its typology of farms somewhat resembles Chayanov's. This is probably not a coincidence since footnotes indicate the typology was synthesized from nine Russian texts, eight published after the Revolution, seven published after Chayanov's Theory of Peasant Co-operatives (Sorokin et al. 1965 p.365). This typology

does add the relative dimensions of size and return per unit on land, labour and capital. In reverse order to correspond with Chayanov's, it is as follows:

1. The "latifundia type of farm economy". This type consists of multiple semi-autonomous farm sites with hired workers and middle and upper level salaried managers. It is a large, capitalistic organization with extensive land holdings.

Return per unit on capital and labour is high, while return per unit on land is low.

2. The "capitalistic farm economy". This is a large agricultural enterprise whose proprietor performs only managerial functions. Workers and foremen are paid. The farm is organized to return maximum profit on investment. Return per unit on capital and labour is maximal, but return per unit on land is low.

3. The "farmer-capitalistic farm enterprise". This type utilizes family labour and some hired help. A larger than average farm, it is able to accumulate wealth beyond the simple reproduction of the production unit. The farm is organized partly to satisfy direct needs of the family, partly for profit. Return per unit on capital and labour is good, while return per unit on land is moderate.

4. The "farmer-productive farm enterprise". This type of farm utilizes family labour and minimal hired help. It is more self-provisioning and less reliant on the market economy than type 3 but is likely to produce enough surplus to make capital improvements and

perhaps accumulate some wealth. A medium sized farm, it is organized almost entirely to satisfy the direct needs of the farm family. Return per unit on capital and labour is moderate, but return per unit on land is good.

5. The "peasant-consumptive farm enterprise". All available family labour is required to operate this type of farm. It does not hire help and family members do not work off-farm. Highly self-provisioned, it earns only a small cash income. Capital improvements and wealth accumulation are rarely possible. It is a smaller sized farm organized entirely to satisfy the direct needs of the farm family. While return per unit on capital and labour is low, return per unit on land is good.

6. The "proletarianizing or decaying farm enterprise". This type is too small an operation to employ all available family labour. Some members must work off-farm, not necessarily in agriculture, to sustain the unit. Farm products are almost entirely for family consumption. This very small farm achieves a low return per unit on capital and labour but return per unit on land is high.

While the two typologies have similarities, I find Chayanov's more useful. First, it is restricted to the household (e.g. "peasant") level of analysis. Second, it seems more adaptable to pluriactivity and non-agricultural commodity production. Third, the cutoff points are more qualitative and sharply defined in terms of relations of production.

Chayanov's book disappeared from view in the Soviet Union shortly after the second edition was published in 1927. While both Marx and Kautsky had argued for practical reasons against the kind of forced collectivization of peasant holdings now being pursued by the new Stalinist regime, Chayanov insisted that even voluntary collectivization did not make economic sense. For this he was labelled "...a traitor to the revolution, a bourgeois scholar, a last Mohican of populist ideology and a leader of a counterrevolutionary organization" (Durrenberger 1984 p.2).

Ironically, the vision, developed by the Farmer's Union in the early 1900s, of independent farmers banding together in cooperatives and controlling the processing and distribution of their commodities was as alarming to the vested interests of American capitalism as it was to the Soviet Stalinist regime (ibid. p.4). In both cases, state policy and state funding directed research away from the study of existing modes of production and towards the development of what were expected to be more efficient ones. In the United States, rural research was directed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the land-grant colleges and extension services. The study of agriculture per se became the province of scientists and agricultural economists concerned with production and market oriented research and development rather than critical examination of social relations in agriculture (Friedland 1991 p.10). Rural sociologists turned their minds from the "culture" of agriculture to broader studies of the declining rural communities of the Great Depression (Friedland et. al. 1981 p.2).

Following the Second World War, rural sociologists were mobilized to study peasant economies overseas as facilitators of the ambitious U.S. international development program. Friedland remarks that U.S. rural sociologists to this day are likely to know more about agricultural relations of production in the Third World than in their home country (Friedland 1991 p.10). Those few rural sociologists who continued to explore North American agriculture were likely to be doing empirical research to facilitate the adoption and diffusion of USDA-approved agricultural technology (Friedland 1982 p.597 ff.).

The organization of the North American agricultural sector and the internal structure of its production units were radically altered by the Great Depression, mechanization and government intervention in the 1930s and later by an expanding post-war export market. Yet in their introductory rural sociology text published in 1970 Smith and Zopf complain that no significant theoretical work had been published in the field since Sorokin's Systematic Sourcebook, "... the finest synthesis of the field of rural sociology ever achieved" and the most cited reference in their text (Smith and Zopf 1970 p.14ff). Smith and Zopf's own farm typology is based on land tenure and does not distinguish varieties of "family farms" which are simply defined as family-owned and large enough to fully employ family members without requiring "a great deal of supplementary labor" (ibid. p.186).



For three decades after the War it appeared that the North American agricultural sector was "catching up" to its industrial counterpart. The numbers of individual farms and farm workers were dwindling rapidly but agricultural acreage, output and gross sales were on the rise. Farms were becoming bigger and presumably more efficient, with sales buoyed by new markets opening up in eastern Europe and Asia. Large corporations and venture capitalists began investing in "agribusiness" and by the mid '70s land prices were inflated and many farms were highly leveraged. While the governments of the United States and Canada continued to cite the "family farm" as the agricultural mode, critics argued that the way census data were collected and analyzed disguised the growing dominance of corporate agribusiness (Vogeler 1981 p.12). Data were collected on form of ownership (individual, partnership, private or public corporation etc.), acreage, gross revenues and number of employees but these were discrete data sets: there was no way, for instance, to correlate form of ownership with number of employees on a farm by farm basis. There was no way to tell if the owners of a closely held family farm actually worked on or even lived on the farm. Because of this, farms came to be classified on the basis of a single variable, any one of the above, rather than on the basis of the relationships between these variables (Vogeler 1981 p.12ff, Buttel & LaRamee 1991 p.155ff). Farms were simply classified "large", "middle-sized" or "small" and this "three farm model" was adopted as a basis of discussion of farm trends by the USDA (Strange 1988 p.64). A "family farm" was one owned mostly by a family, whether members actually worked on it or not.

Analyzed over time, these single-variable classifications seemed to bear out conventional wisdom about economies of scale: farms were either getting big or getting out. The "disappearing middle" or "bimodal distribution of farms" hypothesis captured the interest of observers, perhaps partially because middle-sized farms were identified with family farms (Buttel & LaRamee 1991 p.152f). There are obvious problems with univariate classification of farms. A contract sales broiler operation showing a huge gross income will have high input and labour costs, may lease all of its productive equipment and might sustain a loss, whereas a wholly owned family vegetable farm may be highly capitalized, showing a modest gross income which is, however, mostly returned as net income. As Buttel and LaRamee point out, the "disappearing middle" hypothesis says little about the structure or social relationships involved in farming (*ibid.* p.153).

Sociological and popular attention returned to the internal structure of the family farm in the late 1970s. Encouraged by their governments and bankers to expand and modernize (for the sake of profit and efficiency) to exploit the seemingly insatiable world food market, farmers borrowed heavily against their overvalued land (Strange 1988 p.156). High energy costs and a declining export market created the "farm crisis", and many farms went under. Diversified transnationals like Tenneco began pulling their investments out of direct agricultural production. As bankrupt "family farmers" came out of the woodwork to discuss their plight, the "Old MacDonald" image held by the large part of the public which had never known a farmer was challenged. These were families with a million dollars and more in highly leveraged assets driving \$100,000 air

conditioned vehicles in tractorcade protests (ibid. p.15).

The farm crisis spurred new interest in understanding what was going on down on the farm. The three farm model and the "bigger is better" hypothesis didn't do much to explain this. Friedland distinguishes two strains of literature emerging at this time. The first, influenced by populism, came chiefly from the United States and sought to discover ways to save family farming by studying the successful and unsuccessful strategies of farmers trying to weather the crisis (see Rodefield 1978, Mooney 1988, Strange 1988). The second body of literature was more international and influenced by Marxist thought. This group of writers was concerned with explaining the apparent robustness of the farm as a household commodity production unit in complex capitalist societies (Friedland 1982 p.604).

Field studies from the first body of literature provide helpful illustrations of successful farm production and exchange strategies not driven by profit maximization. Examples are Stoltzfus' paper on Amish agriculture (Stoltzfus 1978 p.450ff), Rogers' work on mixed farming in Illinois (Rogers 1987 p.58ff), and Mooney on farmers in Wisconsin (Mooney 1988 p.69ff). Unfortunately, typologies from this group tend to rely on quantitative data (see Vogeler 1981 p.11ff, Strange 1988 p.32ff) rather than production and exchange relationships, although Mooney presents an interesting (though imprecise) four-cell model based on the relative influence of formal rationality (capitalist) and substantive rationality (craftship) on farm decisions (Mooney 1988 p. 68f).

The second body of literature, informed by Marxist political economy, more deeply penetrates the internal structures and external relationships of family farms, seeking explanations for their continued existence which seems to fly in the face of Marxist logic. Much of the discussion here consists of a debate between two rival explanations characterised as the "constraints thesis" and the "resilience thesis" (Whatmore 1991 p.13). Defended by Goodman and Redclift, the constraints thesis relies on Marx's discussion of the subsumption of pre-capitalist labour processes by capital (Goodman and Redclift 1985 p. 238ff). Marx distinguishes two types of subsumption. "Formal" subsumption occurs when capital subordinates an existing labour process without significantly altering the relations and means of production operating within that process. Surplus value is extracted indirectly through interest on loans, unequal exchange, and undervaluation of unwaged labour. In this case, the household commodity production unit "...retains control of the labour process and understands the technical basis of production..." but is constrained by a dependence on the external market structures of capitalism (ibid. p.240). "Real" subsumption occurs when the internal relations and means of production are transformed: labour becomes proletarianized and the means of production become too technically complicated for those within the production unit to fully understand. Capital assumes control of the means of production and extracts profits directly through the labour process.

As Kautsky pointed out, real subsumption is problematic in agriculture because of the peculiarities of land as a means of production. Furthermore, the farm site usually

doubles as home site and so farmers are less likely than other small business persons to sell out. Capital therefore operates to diminish the importance of land as the material basis of production. Through the introduction of new technologies, confinement rearing, hybrids, fertilizers and other chemicals, farm labour is deskilled, the land itself becomes less important and the means of production become too technically complicated for farm operators to understand. As traditional farm processes and local knowledge are made redundant by new technologies, the scope and importance of internal decisions are reduced. "In our view, the real subsumption of agriculture is not to be observed at the 'point of production' of the farm. Rather it is represented by the long-run tendency of capital to eliminate the labour process as a 'rural' or land-based activity" (ibid. p.241).

Harriet Friedmann follows the logic of Chayanov in her defense of the internal resilience thesis. She distinguishes the "simple commodity production unit" as a distinct non-capitalist form of production which can survive and indeed requires the environment of a mature capitalist economy (Friedmann 1980 p.160ff). Any unit geared toward commodity production will only be able to reproduce itself in a social formation which facilitates the circulation and exchange of commodities. While a commodity producing unit requires the markets of capitalism it does not have to produce its commodities in a capitalistic way. Family farms for instance tend to hire outside labour, likely neighbors, to "help out" rather than to exploit. Since family farms control the means of production with the intent of simple reproduction of the production unit rather than producing a return on investment they may have a competitive advantage over capitalist farms.

Friedmann notes that the conditions of production could be identical for both forms and that changes in social relations and the emergence of classes within the simple form could easily transform it into the capitalist form, yet "...considerable social and technical conditions resist this transformation" (ibid. p.175).

Answering criticisms from Goodman and Redclift, Friedmann argues that "...the distinctiveness of family enterprises lies in the intertwining of family and enterprise" and that the family is organized by roles and power relationships quite apart from the usual capitalist relations of production (Friedmann 1986 p.188). Paraphrasing Chayanov she asserts that "...the unity of household and enterprise creates a structural inability to distinguish between the various categories of income defined by the separations of capitalist enterprise" (ibid. p.187). Moreover, decisions about hiring outside help, purchasing new equipment or abandoning "inefficient" farm practices will have effects on family relationships and lifestyle which must be weighed against the increased income they might bring. She answers the contention that the form of production is contingent on the inputs of external capital by noting that the form of these inputs has often been negotiated by the farmers themselves. Finally she argues that Goodman and Redclift are inappropriately using the language of capitalism to describe non-capitalist enterprise (ibid. p.190), an error discussed by Marx himself in *Theories of Surplus Value* (Marx 1987 p.398). According to Friedmann, people working together manufacture consent about what it is they are doing, and if they are in control of the labour process these ideas will tend to shape that process. In conclusion, she observes that the simple commodity

production form is evolving, but that much of this may be attributed to the evolution of family relations in a time when women's and children's rights are an issue and patriarchy is under attack (Friedmann 1986 p.192).

In constructing her own farm typology, Sarah Whatmore considers the virtues and shortcomings of both views (Whatmore 1991). She finds the constraints thesis of Goodman and Redclift too mechanistic, paying scant attention to the internal structure and considerable agency of the family farm unit (ibid. p.19). On the other hand she finds Friedmann's rigid distinction of family and capitalist farms too simplistic and her definition of the family farm unit too restrictive to reflect the evolution and diversity of this form (ibid. p.21). Furthermore she feels Friedmann confuses the family farm's ability to survive capitalism (by increasing unpaid family labour, decreasing consumption) with its ability to compete with capitalist farms (ibid. p.22).

Taking a realist perspective, Whatmore argues that previous attempts at farm typologies have ... "reduce[d] the farm enterprise to a series of morphological characteristics including size of holding, tenure, level of technological advance and type of labour (hired or family). The problem is not that such differences do not exist but that they have limited explanatory value" (Whatmore et al. 1987a p.25). Whatmore would like to get beyond the superficial appearance of a farm as evidenced by its size and output to the relations of production which explain this appearance. Her typology is based on a 16 cell matrix which relates the degree of internal (real) subsumption to the degree of

external (formal) subsumption on the farm. She creates ordinal scales of relative real and formal subsumption using the following key dimensions (Whatmore et al. 1987b p.105):

Internal relations of production:

1. Ownership of business capital
2. Ownership of land use rights
3. Business and operational management control
4. Labour relations

External relations of production:

1. Technological dependence on manufactured inputs and the specialist advice/assistance of the manufacturers
2. Credit relations connected with farm indebtedness and involvement of financial capital
3. Marketing dependence involving ties with the monopoly produce purchasers, e.g. food processing and retailing

By combining scores from the ordinal scales created for each of the four internal and three external variables respectively, Whatmore comes up with four levels of subsumption for each axis, each labeled A through D. Taking the ascending diagonal of cells, she presents her typology of farms. Cell AA are "marginal closed units", BB are "transitional dependent units", CC are "integrated units" and DD are "subsumed units".



**FIG. 2.1 WHATMORE'S TYPOLOGICAL MATRIX** (Whatmore et al. 1987b. p.108)

External Relationships	D				DD
	C			CC	
	B		BB		
	A	AA			
		A	B	C	D
		Internal Relationships			

As Whatmore herself points out, a typology is simply a baseline for analysis. The interesting question is why certain farms fall in certain categories, and this may be explained by local conditions, kinship ties and so on as well as the external pressures of capital. But Whatmore's typology is theoretically informed rather than simply a convenient recombination of empirical data to approximate the appearance of observed phenomena. It allows for a gradual transformation of family farms into capitalist enterprises (as the organizing principle goes from family labour to family capital - see Whatmore 1991 p.54), and for that transformation to occur stepwise over the two dimensions, rather than on a strict diagonal from ideal type to ideal type. It allows for the agency stressed by Friedmann as well as the gradual subsumption proposed by Goodman

and Redclift. It provides a convenient point of departure for the comparison of a set of farms over time, or multiple sets of farms in different settings. For instance, it can accommodate Chayanov's typology of 1919. Since she uses the family productive unit rather than the agricultural enterprise as her unit of analysis, Whatmore is able to incorporate on-farm non-agricultural labour and off-farm employment into her analysis, based on whether it is used for simple reproduction of the family unit, for subsidizing devalorisation of family agricultural labour by external capital, or for servicing capital requirements (Whatmore 1991 p.105ff).

Whatmore's ideal typology is built on the two dependent variables of subsumption which vary according to independent "local conditions". Local conditions could include commodity markets, land availability and quality, labour markets, kinship patterns and so on. These local conditions affect the various household production and exchange strategies, which in turn determine the degree of formal and real subsumption of household labour processes. In Newfoundland, state policy and programs are important local conditions. Farm production and exchange strategies are invariably influenced, sometimes rather grotesquely, by some combination of "innovative technology" grants, low-interest relatively unsecured government loans, land improvement grants, inexpensive lease of Crown land and community pastures, provincially owned processing and storage facilities and various economic development programs. Unemployment is high and the local survival strategy of taking short term jobs to obtain long-term unemployment insurance payments (UI) influences farm hiring strategies. Relatively high

taxes encourage an extensive underground agricultural economy.

Whatmore and her colleagues conducted extensive questionnaire survey research of 265 farms in three agricultural regions of southern England to provide a descriptive account of the various household forms and to locate them within the typological matrix (Whatmore et al.1987b). Whatmore herself then followed up with intensive case studies of a half dozen households representing the range of ideal types to provide an explanatory analysis which looked particularly at women's roles in the household enterprise. (Whatmore 1991). Although my research project is considerably more modest, focusing on structured open-ended interviews with the members of 17 farm households, Whatmore's typology matrix would seem to be a good tool for descriptively typifying those farms, after which they could be discussed in terms of the production and exchange strategies which caused them to manifest themselves as various types. Finally, conclusions could be drawn as to the freedom enjoyed by households as they make strategic decisions. Are they relatively free to chart their own strategic courses, or are they narrowly confined by capital and state structures?

### Chapter Three

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research tasks were 1) to locate a region in Newfoundland where agriculture was historically and currently an important economic factor, 2) to obtain information about farm household practices and about surrounding social, economic and political conditions which would have influenced these practices, 3) to develop a convenient typology which would describe observed diversity of household forms, and 4) to explain the diversity in terms of varying production and exchange strategies with an analysis of the forces behind these strategies.

A review of soil sample surveys and meteorological records showed the most promising agricultural regions on the island to be on the southwest coast, in the Codroy Valley and Bay St. George South areas. Historical research confirmed that productive commercial agriculture had been carried out in these areas for about 200 years. Obtaining current information about farm households in these areas proved difficult. While agricultural statistics are regularly collected by Agriculture Canada, no field study appears to have been done on Newfoundland farm household forms in at least 40 years. Officials at the provincial Department of Forestry and Agriculture in St. John's were unable to provide even a list of farm households on the west coast, and very few west coast farms were affiliated with the Newfoundland Federation of Agriculture. Provincial officials suggested I talk to the local Agricultural Representative for the region and I was put in

contact with one farm household by a professor in my department. Armed with this scant knowledge I embarked on a three-week preliminary field trip to the two western farming areas in May, 1993. When it became obvious that very little commercial farming had been carried out in the Codroy Valley for at least ten years, I decided to restrict my research to the Bay St. George South region.

The local Agricultural Representative was able to provide me with a list of farm households that he visited on a regular basis and this became the point of departure for my survey. I spent this first trip exploring the landscape and locating and interviewing key community figures: prominent farmers, government and development association members, the co-op president and persons in businesses related to farming. Interviews were open-ended discussions and tended to be long. I was trying to form a picture of the community structure and of local social, political and economic forces, and to develop a complete list of "serious" local farming households using the "snowball sampling" technique. During the course of each interview I asked participants to correct the list provided by the Ag. Rep., adding or subtracting names as necessary. This gave me a consensual list of 20 farm households which was later validated during interviews by the households themselves.

I left the survey area in June as farmers became busy with planting. Returning to St. John's I constructed an extensive open ended survey questionnaire (Appendix A) which I tested on colleagues and a nearby farmer. The questionnaire, which took a

minimum of 45 minutes to administer, covered a broad range of topics. With no previous research in Newfoundland to follow I was still uncertain as to where I would find the answers to my research questions and so the questionnaire asked for historical accounts of the farm site, information about current farming practices, about types and sources of financial, equipment, chemical and advisory inputs and about markets and market practices. It asked about the farm labour/management structure and for personal data on household members, kinship networks and employees as well as opinions about government policy, the community, the future of farming in general and this farm in particular.

I returned to the survey area following the harvest and was able to schedule interviews with the members of 17 of the 20 households over three weeks. In each case but one all household members were present for at least part of the interview. The interviews usually occurred in the evening in the farmhouse kitchen. While the structure of the questionnaire gave some form to the discussion there was often plenty of time for unhurried chatting. The sessions often lasted for four hours or more and I was frequently invited to join the family for supper. Sessions usually included a tour of the farm facilities. These were friendly, open interviews I think partly because I was a curious visitor from another country and not affiliated with a government agency.

When I left for St. John's to sort out the data I had the sense, reinforced by observations of the farmers themselves, that these farms could be separated into five

types. Some seemed models of the "progressive" farm management promoted by government agricultural agents. Others were more conservative, enjoying modest success by sticking to time proven methods. A third group was innovative, trying new techniques and commodities and looking for unexploited market niches. Others were being developed as part of an early retirement strategy without immediate expectation or need for profit. Finally there were those "living close to the land", adapting the traditional Newfoundland strategy of seasonal rounds to modern conditions.

In analyzing farm households I wanted to get beyond this sort of "intuitive" typology while at the same time avoiding the census data-based descriptive typologies of the past which ignored household structures. Sarah Whatmore's (1987b) approach showed promise but unfortunately her ordinal scales of internal and external subsumption required extensive household data - particularly in the area of household finances - which I had not obtained in the course of the modest field study. Then too, conditions in the British agricultural sector were different. In Newfoundland land was available for lease at a nominal cost from the province and private parties. In Britain land was highly valued and profitably leased by large investment corporations. British farmers often entered into contract sales agreements. There were more opportunities for off-farm employment and on-farm non-agricultural businesses. British farmers were far more likely to adopt complex administrative and financial arrangements. Newfoundland farmers were more likely to rely on government development programs, provincial farm loans and the unemployment insurance system.

To resolve these problems while maintaining the focus on relative external (formal) and internal (real) subsumption I developed a pair of ordinal scales which was adapted to the peculiarities of the Newfoundland sector and utilized the collected data I had in hand (Fig.2). Table A orders the relative importance of family labour and family-owned land in the productive process. Here, Whatmore included variables for capital ownership and business management structure but since these were virtually identical across all surveyed households I have excluded them. I have included a category, "non-commodity family enterprises" which covers mercantile establishments (corner stores, franchises etc.) owned by farm households which indicate a transition from family labour to family capital as the household organizing principle (Whatmore 1991 p.54). These on-farm enterprises do not include labour oriented non-agricultural commodity production such as fishing or logging since these may be considered with farming as part of the household's simple commodity-producing activities.



FIG 3.1 VALUE-ORDERED SCALES OF DEGREE OF SUBSUMPTION

Internal Relations (Table A)

	Source of Labour	Form of Tenureship	Non-commodity family enterprises
1	Family only	Wholly owned	None
2	Family and casual	Borrow or lease some (minor)	One (minor)
3	Family + seasonal Hired < family	Lease some (important)	One (major)
4	Family + seasonal Hired > family	Lease majority	More than one
5	Most labour done by hired hands	Lease all	More important than farm

External Relations (Table B)

	Market Entry Level	External Paid Labour/Trans. Payments	Dependence on Technology Inputs	Indebtedness
1	Door-to-door	None	Minimal	None
2	From Stands	Minimal	Moderate	Minor
3	Supermarkets	Important	"Up to date"	Average (govt. loans, dealsrs)
4	Wholesalers	Majority of Income	High	Overextended
5	Contract (Mktg. Board)	Virtually all of income	Total	Heavily leveraged

Table B measures variables connected with formal subsumption, ways in which external capital may extract value without directly altering the internal labour process of the household. I have added a fourth category to Whatmore's three, "External paid labour/transfer payments". Some households subsidize the labour cost of commodities when members obtain outside wage labour and/or unemployment insurance. Thus external capital can both exploit the wage labour and unwaged farm labour of the household without a significant change in the internal relations of production. "Market entry level" measures the number of steps the household is removed from the end consumer. "Indebtedness" was not as troublesome for the survey farms as was the unavailability of credit. Most respondents had access only to modest government loans and credit from farm supply dealers. Only one seemed to be "overextended".

## Chapter Four

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE BAY ST. GEORGE SOUTH REGION**

The area of study includes 11 small contiguous unincorporated villages which stretch across approximately 20 km. of the southwestern coast of Newfoundland midway between Channel-Port aux Basques and Corner Brook and reach up about 5 km to the Trans-Canada Highway. It has distinctive geographical characteristics atypical of Newfoundland coastal settlement areas. There are no natural harbours and the ocean remains shallow for quite a distance out to sea. Three rivers and two large brooks descending from the Long Range Mountains have provided alluvial soil as well as spawning grounds for salmon. The best agricultural land begins at the edge of a shallow bluff on the shoreline and extends inland for perhaps a mile where it meets bogs and rocky forest land, though fingers of good soil follow further up the river banks. The area, particularly in the river bottoms, enjoys a relatively mild and sunny microclimate even when compared with Stephenville, the modest commercial centre about 50 km. distant.

The Bay St. George's region was a seasonal stop for the island's aboriginal people but it is difficult to say when European settlements were first established here. There were certainly French and English "liveryers" by 1713 when the Treaty of Utrecht reserved the west coast of Newfoundland for the French migratory fishery and prohibited permanent settlement. Though both the British and French navies attempted to enforce this prohibition the settlements remained and grew, practicing subsistence farming and trading

fish with French and American merchants. The original settlers of the survey area migrated from Sandy Point, an early trading centre on nearby Flat Island in St. George's Bay. One of my informants traced his maternal lineage back to a woman who was arrested at Sandy Point and imprisoned for a time by the French for violating the treaty. These first settlers were English-speaking Anglicans with roots in the British West Country and the Channel Islands. They were first "officially" noticed by William E. Cormack, who, in 1820, guided by the Miqmac he called "Sylvester", was the first non-native to trek across Newfoundland. He spent a November night in what is now the village of MacKay's at the home of a "Mrs. Hulan who operated an extensive farm" (Smallwood 1967 p.412). This commercial farm, founded in the previous century, manufactured and sold dairy products and had developed two new varieties of potato (Hulan 1991 p.99). The British geological surveyor J. A. Jukes visited the Morris/Shears farm on Crabb's River in 1839 and remarked that it had "...all the appearance of a pastoral scene at home" (Jukes 1842 p.159). Descendants of these early settlers continue to farm in the area today.

In 1841, Catholic Scottish Highlanders fleeing persecution and land taxes began arriving from Cape Breton, which had been annexed by Nova Scotia 20 years earlier (MacPherson, interview 1993). They settled on the southern end of the research area. At about this time local entrepreneurs set up several small lobster canneries on the beaches to the consternation of British and French authorities. By local account the early settlers were an independent lot and the British navy was unable to dislodge them. Shallow

waters forced warships to anchor well out of cannon range and landing parties attempting invasion by longboat were routinely fired upon by the settlers. The local people were even granted a cod quota by the French fishery with which they seemed to have cordial relations, and they sold cod, herring and canned lobster to dealers from Nova Scotia and New England as well.

In 1881, when west coast residents were finally allowed legal title to their land and buildings, and representation in the Newfoundland legislature, their commodity base was almost entirely in fish, though there was some coastal trading of farm products (Shaw 1955 p.22). The only occupational listings in a contemporary directory were for "fishermen" (Newfoundland Almanac 1878). The commercial potential for agriculture was nevertheless recognized by the Newfoundland government as early as 1869 when Prime Minister William Whiteaway, proposing a trans-island railway, envisioned "... trains loaded with minerals, timber and agricultural produce, passing from the smiling fields and gardens of the West, on their way to market in the metropolis" (quoted in Hiller 1971 p.5). The completion of the Newfoundland railway in 1897 made serious commercial farming possible in the survey area and brought in the last wave of settlers, Irish Catholics from the St. John's vicinity. Separated by unbridged rivers, three clusters of communities developed, each with its own railway station, agricultural society and religion. Catholics lived in the south, Anglicans in the centre and Non-conformists in the north. Fishing and farming, the residents of the survey area appear to have prospered at least relative to other rural Newfoundlanders in the first half of the 20th century. Their fishery was more

diversified, featuring lobster, herring and salmon as well as cod, their farm products were protected by a 40% import tariff levied during the harvest season (Shaw 1955 p.42) and rail transport was subsidized. It appears to have been a seller's market as farmers loaded up rail cars with root crops, cabbage, lamb, mutton and dairy products bound for wholesale grocery merchants and logging camps across the island.

Before World War II, farming techniques were primitive and labour intensive. Without gasoline or electrical power farmers relied on the muscles of ponies, dogs and large families. Livestock roamed freely along the roads, meadows and woodlands and were attacked by parasites and predators, animal and human. Sheep browsed on kelp and dead capelin washed up along the beaches, a habit which produced mutton of distinctive flavour (MacPherson interview 1993). Crops were not rotated and so the root maggot, golden nematode and potato wart began to seriously reduce yields in the 1930s. Because of these infestations certain particularly fertile areas including the islands in Crabb's River are still unsuitable for cultivation.

A British appointed Commission assumed governance of Newfoundland following the young Dominion's financial collapse in 1933. While the Commission of Government has been criticised for its draconian economic policy, the Agricultural Division did import qualified agronomists from Britain to assess and improve the local agricultural sector (Espie 1986 p.100). The Division carried on research, education, extension and land improvement programs and, following World War II put a 10 year

*agricultural reconstruction and modernization program into place (Shaw p.47).*

The effect of all this on the research area was mitigated by concurrent intervening factors. The War offered alternative career opportunities for young men (and some women) not only to serve as soldiers, but to construct and maintain the nearby American air base in Stephenville. Wage work became available in logging camps and paper plants. The effects of Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949 were more extensive. In anticipation of this transfer of power, many Commission agriculture programs were suspended. With Confederation came the sudden loss of the protective tariff and a flood of cheap farm produce from the mainland. The unmechanized local producers could not compete. At the same time, local residents were now finally free to seek jobs on the mainland and many did. Others found work in the industrial and infrastructure projects which were launched as part of the new provincial government's modernization program. Those who remained at home were often eligible for some of many new social welfare benefits available and freed from the necessity of continuing marginal or subsistence farming. The great changes of the '40s seem to have been cathartic to agriculture in the region. Those who didn't want to farm didn't have to anymore, and they left available land and markets to those who did. Indeed, older farmers interviewed said their operations continued to prosper until the early 1960s.

Changes taking place in the local agricultural sector beginning in the 1960s reflected changes in provincial policy. Wishing to provide better nutritional alternatives

and lower food prices for Newfoundlanders by modernising the food distribution system, the government cleared the way for two mainland supermarket chains to establish themselves on the island. Vertically integrated with in-house wholesale divisions, these two came to dominate the retail food market. Farmers with long-standing contracts with island wholesalers found that these local merchants had a much smaller market share, and that the new mainland wholesalers had prior commitments to off-island suppliers. At the same time two other important commodity outlets were lost when paper companies closed their woods camps and the American air base shut down. Coincidentally the provincial government was offering generous grants to encourage agricultural development, and some local residents with fallow land and non-farm jobs returned to their land to take advantage of these programs. Other landowners, often absentee and committed to non-farm occupations, began subdividing their holdings and selling building lots for residences and summer homes, reducing the available farm land. The government countered this by offering Crown land for lease and subsidizing its improvement. On the other hand, it also shut down the railway system, and farmers were obliged to deliver produce to market in their own vehicles.

Newfoundland government policy had in effect increased local growers' production capacity while reducing the market for their commodities and dismantling their delivery system. In order to mate Newfoundland farms with the transformed market, the government in the 1970s began implementing the sort of supply management and quota systems which prevailed in other Canadian provinces. In the dairy, broiler, egg and



hog sectors producers were issued quotas based on their production capacity. Since conventional wisdom held that large operations had an economy of scale advantage and since quotas could be freely traded, this had the effect of concentrating production in a few large scale operations. In the survey area, broiler, egg and hog production ceased, and milk production was restricted to one large dairy farm. The quota system addressed the needs of the transformed market for a predictable, consistent and uniform supply available from a central source. Newfoundland Farm Products, a Crown Corporation, handles processing and sale of all broilers, eggs and (until recently) hogs, and two large dairies affiliated with Nova Scotian firms process and distribute all fluid milk. On the other hand the quota system restricted the range of commodity options available to mixed farms in the survey area.

In the mid-1970s the government attempted to address the distribution difficulties experienced by vegetable producers with Vegetable Marketing Associates Ltd.(VMAL). Financed partly by a 30% share of commodity sales, it was to collect, wash, grade, package, market and deliver vegetables from central locations across the island including one located in the research area. Poorly planned, overcapitalized and ineptly managed (Hulan 1991 p. 206) it failed after several years, but not before setting farmer against farmer (some refused to participate and instead undercut VMAL prices) and convincing most of my informants that cooperation among vegetable growers could never be achieved.

#### 4.1 THE COMMUNITY TODAY

The survey area in 1991 contained 1,843 people living in 11 villages linked physically by the new bridges which span its rivers, culturally by a common school system and politically as an unincorporated municipal services district with a single development association. According to 1991 census data this is a poor region even by Newfoundland standards. The median household income is \$22,930 per year and 17% of households are considered to be "low income". Only 40 men out of a labour force of 450, and 60 women out of 245 had full-time year round employment. The unemployment rate for men was 53.1%, for women 48.1% and 88.5% for youths of 15 to 24 years. About half the adult population has completed high school. Only 2% hold university degrees. (Statistics Canada 1994 Cat. No. 95-302).

Excepting the two older Anglican churches and an Orange Lodge now used as a hay barn there is little evidence that people have been living here for over 200 years. Ninety percent of the homes were built after 1946, 65% after 1960 (ibid.). Nearly all of them are small, closely spaced bungalows of functional design. A few old two-story clapboard houses with shallow pitched roofs set further back from the road remind the visitor that these villages were not simply planted here sometime in the 1960s. It is hardly the image of a "farming community": few of the small yards boast even vegetable gardens. Occasional ploughed fields appear incongruously wedged between clusters of bungalows but most farming now takes place on the Crown lands near the Trans-Canada

Highway, miles from the residences of farmers and townsfolk alike. There is a kind of sameness and linearity to the villages. Few side roads branch off of the main thoroughfare which is regularly punctuated with convenience stores and gas bars. There is no commercial or retail centre, no restaurant or coffee shop, no bank, no supermarket, no park or town square, no funeral home. Residents do their shopping in Stephenville, an hour's drive in good weather.

While it is an agricultural region, the area of study is no longer a "farming community". Only a fraction of the population is engaged in agriculture and many openly resent the presence of farms with their smells, clutters of machinery and so on. The local development association is occupied promoting employment through tourism, household crafts, small businesses and the small local fishery. Full-time commercial farmers are not represented on the development or municipal boards and rarely involve themselves overtly in local politics. A hobby farmer himself, the president of the development association told me there were only two or three "real" farms in the area.

## 4.2 THE FARMS OF BAY ST. GEORGE'S SOUTH

According to the 1991 census, the area under study contained 49 farms for a total of 7184 acres, 1412 of them in crops with 1990 gross farm receipts of \$1,324,646 (Statistics Canada 1994 Cat. No. 95-307 pg. 16, 20). This comprises about 7% of the farms, 6% of total acreage, 9% of acreage in crops and 2% of gross receipts recorded for farms in Newfoundland that year. Total farm expenses are listed at \$1,149,094, leaving a business profit of only \$175,552 or an average of \$3583 per farm. With statistics like these it is easy to see why scant attention is paid to this area by the provincial Agriculture Branch. These figures are misleading for two reasons. First, Statistics Canada counts farms on the basis of self-identification with no minimum gross receipts cutoff and many of these operations are "farms" for tax purposes only. My survey considered only self-identified "commercial" or "serious" farm households whose identity as such was corroborated by other farm households. While not all households interviewed supported themselves entirely or even substantially by farming, each at least had this as an eventual goal. Secondly, "gross receipts" includes only the value obtained for commodities in monetary form and duly reported as income for tax purposes. It does not include unreported cash income from the "underground economy", value received as labour or bartered goods, nor value realized in self-provisioning. Every household surveyed realized value for its products in all three of these unreported ways.

The 1993 interview data presented a different picture of farming in Bay St. George's South. Seventeen farms totalling 3226 acres had 1526 acres in crops, an average of 90 acres in crop per farm with a range of 18 to 425 acres. 195 of these acres were in vegetables, a figure exceeding 16% of the total acreage in vegetables reported in Newfoundland in 1991. These 17 farms produced a fairly wide range of commodities in a number of different combinations. Three farms restricted themselves to the traditional Newfoundland "Jigg's dinner": root crops and cabbage. Three others grew root crops and cabbage and "specialty" vegetables, mainly broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce. Six farms were mixed: all grew root crops and cabbage, but two also raised beef, one raised lamb, a fourth raised beef and lamb, a fifth specialty crops, beef and lamb, the last all of these plus goats. Four farms raised livestock only: one raised lamb, two raised lamb and beef and the fourth produced lamb and beef and sold small amounts of butter, cream and eggs at the farmsite. Finally, the single large dairy farm also raised thoroughbred racehorses and goats. All but one of the 17 farms produced one or more forage crops: 11 baled dry hay and 8 baled and wrapped silage.

In total, farm operators interviewed estimated that for 1993 they washed and packaged 76,030 fifty pound bags of root crops and cabbage, 2560 cases of specialty vegetables and 5000 quarts of strawberries. They slaughtered 432 lambs and 37 cattle for market and the single dairy farmer milked 155 dairy cattle to produce about 1,100,000 litres of milk. Based on typical farm gate prices at the time the survey was conducted, a very rough estimate of the gross value of commodities produced on these 17 farms for

1993 would be \$1,700,000, about half of this going to the dairy farm. This figure exceeds the \$1,324,646 gross income listed for 49 farms in the area in the 1991 census even though it excludes many other sources of farm income such as the sale of hay and silage, culled dairy cattle, breeding and finishing animals, horses, goats, wool, eggs, government grants and so forth.

When the government of Newfoundland allowed legal residence and began granting farm plots in the last century these were, in the words of one farmer, laid out "Quebec-style". Typically they were about 500 feet wide along the road and extended back about a mile. Homes tended to be set back a considerable distance from the road. If

**TABLE 4.1 AGRICULTURAL PROFILE OF BAY ST. GEORGE SOUTH  
(CENSUS DIVISION 4, SUBDIVISION B) BY 1991 CENSUS AND 1993  
SURVEY DATA**

	1991 CENSUS	1993 SURVEY
Total farms	49	17
Total acreage	7184	3226
Acreage owned	4314	1759
Acreage in crops	1412	1526
Average acres in crop per farm	29	90
Gross value realized (as)	\$1,324,646 (gross receipts)	\$1,700,000 (est. value realized)
Average gross val. realized per farm	\$27,034	\$100,000

**TABLE 4.2 NUMBER OF SURVEYED FARMS REPORTING COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION OF SELECTED COMMODITIES IN 1993**

Commodity	Farms reporting production
Root crops & cabbage	12
Specialty vegetables	5
Fresh milk	1
Beef	7
Lamb	7
Goats	2
Dry hay	11
Wrapped silage	8

farms had ocean frontage, houses were built close to the shore. When farmers sold building lots or gave them to their children, these were in front of the original house, closer to the road. Even though most farming is now done on granted or leased Crown land or community pastures distant from these original plots, the farmers still live on them and one can often pick out their dimensions from the arrangement of housing clusters. In Canada, where 90% of farm operators live on their farms, Newfoundland is an anomaly with only 74% residing on the farmsite (Stats. Can. Cat. 96303E p.35). While strictly speaking all but one of the operators lived on land which had once been a "family farm" (in 12 cases their own family's farm), only seven of the 17 conducted a substantial part of their farming on land contiguous to the homesite. Only 3 held title to all of the land that they farmed. The concrete manifestation of all this is an almost complete absence in the area of anything resembling what we might imagine a "family farm" to be:

a cluster of buildings set back from the road including a farmhouse, barns, sheds and pens surrounded by a broad expanse of fields. Bluntly put, the human intrusion into the landscape here is not picturesque. If distinguishable at all, farmers' homesteads are likely to look like those of loggers or rural contractors: a house and one or two steel outbuildings for storage or maintenance, a yard containing machinery in various stages of repair.



### 4.3 THE PEOPLE ON THE FARM

Who are the farm families? Most do not live "on the farm" in the conventional sense that they reside in the midst of a farm operation where household members are presumably "available" for chores. A simple tabulation of members of the households of farm operators could be misleading since, excepting reproduction of the household unit itself, some members are entirely divorced from farm operations, while relatives who are not living in the household may be involved. Twelve of the operators have brothers who also operate farms in the area, and in each case there is at least some mutual cooperation. With this caveat I will consider the people who are farm operators or live with farm operators, the degree to which they contribute to the farm operation, and other forms of employment they may have found off the farm.

In all cases but one, household members identified a male as the "farm operator". The two eldest operators were both 68 year old men living alone. The rest of the households contained married couples, with two husbands and one wife in their second marriage. With one exception (a farm whose operator lived an hour's drive from the research area) both spouses were present for at least part of the interview session. Most men (8) were in their 40s. Two men were in their 20s, two in their 30s and two in their 50s. Three were in their 60s. The mean age was 46. Age was obtained from only 9 of the women, who ranged from 0 to 16 years younger than their husbands. All but one of the men had grown up in the immediate survey area. The single outlier had been raised in a

suburban area about two hours distant but his family had owned the land which was his farmsite and had spent summers there. Only 13 of the men had grown up in farming families, but the other four had worked on local farms in the summer as boys. Only 6 had farmed continuously since high school, the rest had held other jobs. Eight of the men had finished high school and four had some post-secondary education. They averaged 11 years of schooling. Only four of the women (all among the 5 youngest) had grown up in the survey area and only five had grown up on farms. All had at some time held non-farm jobs. Four had come into the area as schoolteachers. They averaged 12 years of schooling and five had post-secondary education.

While a single "operator" was identified by each household, in six cases (including the female headed farm) spouses considered themselves "partners", putting in more or less equal hours and each performing a wide range of farm tasks. In five other cases women saw themselves more as "helpers", pitching in as necessary on a more occasional and less responsible basis. Four women did not consider themselves involved in farming. Of the five women who had grown up on farms, one was an operator, three were partners and the last considered herself a "helper" though she had no off-farm employment. All but two households had off-farm income. Both members of two couples had full-time off-farm jobs, as did two additional wives. Two women had part-time year round jobs. The two older single men received pensions. Seven men and three women had or planned to find seasonal off-farm work (four men and one woman fished lobster). Seven households derived more than half their income from non-farm sources.

Nearly all operators said they came from large families of up to 16 children, but they themselves tended to have very small families. This may in part explain why they have abandoned the large old homes for small modern ones. Older farmers had more children (up to 5), but nearly all of these had left home. Only 18 children lived in the 17 households, and two of these were foster children. Only five of these children appear to have made any contribution to the farm labour force, and at least three of those (including a 20 year old son) were paid wages for their efforts. Six of these children were too young to contribute and the remaining seven simply did not. Though many of the operators' parents lived in the area, only four (one couple, one father, one mother) could be said to be living "within the household", and each of these occupied a separate house. In every case they "helped out" on the farm.

**TABLE 4.3 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF REPORTING FARM OPERATORS AND SPOUSES**

	ALL	MALE	FEMALE
Number of respondents	31	17	14
Number reporting age	26	17	9
Mean age	45	46	43
Median age	42	42	39
Age range	26 - 68	26 - 68	28 - 58
Number reporting education	26	16	10
Mean years schooling	11.3	10.9	11.8
Median years schooling	11	10.5	12
Range years schooling	5 - 17	5 - 17	8 - 16
From farming family	18	13	5
Grew up in survey area	20	16	4
Farmed continuously since leaving school	6	6	0
Status on farm: Operator	17	16	1
Partner	6	1	5
Helper	5	0	5
Not involved	4	0	4
Held full-time off-farm job	6	2	4
Held part-time off-farm job	2	0	2
Found seasonal off-farm work	10	7	3
Received pension	2	2	0

With such limited labour resources within the household, every farm was obliged to obtain at least seasonal help from outside. Thirteen farms paid wages of \$5 to \$8 an hour to a total of about 50 seasonal and 8 permanent employees. The remaining four farms had close family ties with each other and cooperated to help each other out.

#### 4.4 WHY AND HOW THEY BECAME FARMERS

Though all but one of the farm operators had experience working on farms since childhood, only six (including the two youngest - men in their 20s) had farmed continuously as adults. They had all taken over the operations of their fathers, but only three of them at present could be considered "full-time" farmers. Two of them were men in their 40s with full-time career jobs (a teacher and a telephone lineman) and one was a 68 year old semi-retired single man. Surprisingly, the four women who considered themselves completely uninvolved in farming were married to this group. The fifth wife owned her own non-farm business and participated only as a bookkeeper in the farming operation.

Of the remaining 11 farm operators, one had taught agricultural economics at the junior college level and the rest had worked in various skilled and semi-skilled trades. Five had had very brief careers, a year or two at most before they settled down to farming. One had waited until retirement age before he began farming. Of the remaining five, some had worked off the farm to raise capital to purchase or modernize a farm. In some cases parents or siblings had required their help on the family farm or were ready to retire. Some had begun to have children and felt the farm was a better place to raise them. With the exception of the single retired farmer, all had now been farming continuously for at least 12 years. Nearly all had returned at a time when the province was offering considerable incentives to farming including land grants and leases, clearing and land

improvement subsidies and cash grants for the purchase of farming equipment. It was also a time when the province built processing and storage facilities for poultry, beef and vegetables in the area. It appears that returning to the "farming way of life" was a family rather than an individual decision. Both spouses stated that they had "began farming" at that time, and though each couple had at least one member who worked seasonally off the farm, none had held a full-time job since they began farming. In exact opposition to the continuous farmers, the returning farm spouses both worked on the farm in every case.

## Chapter Five

**DEVELOPING A TYPOLOGY BASED ON SOCIAL RELATIONS**

To this point I have presented a historical sketch of an agricultural region and then used statistical data to profile the people living there now, the people there who live in commercial farm households and the farm enterprises themselves. While these data give a picture of what kinds of people are farming and what kinds of farming they are doing, they do not explain why those people farm in those ways. I had plenty of opportunities to ask "why" in the course of the lengthy interviews but the responses were more meaningful in the context of the household structure within which they were uttered. In these households farming decisions were family as well as business decisions. Farming was part of an overall strategy to reproduce and enhance a particular family relationship which varied from household to household. Of course all of these households had something in common that is not so common anymore: they were homeplaces that doubled as workplaces and workers within them also controlled the means of production. Farming was more than a job or a business or some combination of these. Even household members who claimed they were "not involved" in farming considered themselves members of a farm family. Operators cited the desirability of raising a family in a farm setting. Farming was woven into the interpersonal relationships, daily schedules and self-image of all household members. Domestic assets (available land, labour and capital) were farm assets as well.

Though all the households surveyed were "farm families" and domestic commodity producers, they went about farming in different ways. I wanted to discuss this diversity in terms of differing strategies rather than as a reflection of the relative competence of the individuals involved, but first I had to present the diversity in some sort of intelligible form. As discussed in Chapter III, I decided to try to connect the varying production and exchange strategies with varying levels of internal and external subsumption of the labour process. Using information collected from each household on the importance of family labour and family owned land in the productive process I scored each household on each ordinal scale displayed in Fig. 3.1, Table A ("Internal Relations"). By reviewing the ways value was extracted from each household without altering the internal labour process I was able to score each household on the ordinal scales in Table B ("External Relations"). Following Whatmore (1987b p.108) I aggregated scores to produce categories which could be conveniently crosstabulated in a matrix, categories she calls "levels of commoditisation". The categories and results of categorization are shown in Fig. 5.1. I then located each household on the matrix shown in Fig. 5.2.



**FIG. 5.1 AGGREGATE SCORING SYSTEM AND RESULTS**

Internal Relations		
Category	Scoring Range	Number of Households
A	3 - 5	7
B	6 - 7	4
C	8 - 10	4
D	11 - 13	2

  

External Relations		
Category	Scoring Range	Number of Households
A	6 - 8	6
B	9 - 11	9
C	12 - 14	1
D	15 - 16	1

**FIG. 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY FARM HOUSEHOLDS ON MATRIX**

External Relationships	D				1
	C			1	
	B	3	3	2	1
	A	4	1	1	
		A	B	C	D
Internal Relationships					

The distribution shows clustering around the ascending diagonal where Whatmore located her ideal types (Whatmore et al. 1987 p.108) with 9 of the 17 farms falling on the diagonal. The majority of households score fairly low in both dimensions of subsumption with 11 entirely in categories A and B. The matrix also shows households tending more

toward real subsumption, the "commoditisation" of internal relationships, with 5 households to the right of the diagonal and only 3 to the left.

The distribution suggested a typology much simpler than my intuition had offered, a way of organizing the households into three types which corresponded well to their various production and exchange strategies. The first type consisted of all households "less than BB", those in the AA, AB and BA cells. In the second were households "BB or greater but less than CC" (in this case, BB, CA and CB). The final type included "CC and greater". By way of description I have called these types, in ascending order, the "Peddlers" (8 households), the "Co-op Crowd" (6 households) and the "Business Farms" (3 households). Using this typology, I found only one survey household problematic: its production strategy was that of the Co-op Crowd, its exchange strategy closer to the Peddlers. It lay on the borderline (BB) in the matrix.

The following sections will consider the characteristics and resources of the three household types and in particular the ways each type uses its resources in developing production and exchange strategies. Production strategies are the ways households find and combine land, labour and capital to produce commodities. Exchange strategies are the way they dispose of commodities for value.

## **5.1 THE "PEDDLER" HOUSEHOLDS**

This is the largest group numerically among the three commercial farming types in the survey area but its members have the lowest commodity output. These are the marginal farm households. Other farmers call them "the peddlers" because they seem to survive by undercutting prices to penetrate markets. "Legitimate" farmers complain that these households' production costs are subsidized by non-farm income such as unemployment insurance (UI), pensions, welfare, grants and wage labour. Some peddlers counter that they are marginalized and forced to subsidize production costs because the more successful farmers conspire to drive them out of business.

The peddlers group consists of two single retired and pensioned men who farm, four households with close kin ties which specialize in sheep, a financially distressed household, and a younger innovative farming couple. While this group of households is the poorest, it is not from lack of experience or ideas. All but one proprietor grew up on larger, more successful farms and within their limited means they are as likely as any to experiment with new commodities and farming techniques.

### **5.1.1 PEDDLER HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION STRATEGIES: LAND USE**

The peddler farms cover 1009 acres, almost equal to the other two groups which coincidentally each cover 1115 acres. They utilize only 50% of this land for farming

purposes, the lowest percentage among the groups. Three quarters of this land is owned outright and over half was inherited from parents, giving these households the highest percentage of owned and inherited land. Just two households lease a total of 270 acres of Crown land (the distressed household has just forfeited a lease), but four are members of a local sheep breeders' association which maintains a community pasture. None of the households leases private land, though three "borrow" land from relatives and neighbors. Since there is no property tax, the cost of owning land is very low for these households and this, coupled with their lack of funds for land improvement, may partly explain the low intensity of land use within this group. Five households cultivate a total of only 45 acres of vegetable, producing only about 20% of the overall survey total, but they grow a wider variety of vegetables than farms in the other groups. All but the two retired farmers keep flocks of sheep. There is only one sheep rearing household in the survey outside of this group. Five peddler households, including the two retired farmers, keep a few head of beef cattle. Since all the households in this group raise livestock and most raise vegetables they are predominantly "mixed" farms. This is a practical strategy for marginal farms since manure can replace expensive fertilizer in the field and substandard produce can be fed to the animals. Animals, especially sheep, can be pastured on land unsuitable for cultivation. Furthermore farmers practice crop rotation to counter plant pests and include forage crops in this rotation. All but one of the 17 survey farms produced hay or silage. The mixed production strategy also protects against catastrophic loss from a single commodity in a poor growing year or in cases of pest infestation or animal disease. Planting a mixture of crops in a single field has proven an effective way to reduce pest

problems (Flint 1990 p.24). Finally, mixed farming provides a wide variety of foods for the household, and all but one of the peddler households (a retired farmer) rely heavily on self-provisioning.

### 5.1.2 LABOUR USE

The peddler farms had the highest family member labour participation rate and the lowest level of hired help among the survey groups. One of the "retired" farmers hired a hand for most of the year, the largest vegetable farm in this group hired two women for cash to help with the harvest and three other households hired occasional casual labour. Since the nuclear peddler households are very small and only one reported a child "lending a hand", they trade help for help or for farm produce through extended family networks. All but one of this group has farming relatives in the survey area with whom they exchange labour. Excluding the two retired men, each household also relies to some extent on income from non-farm labour. This usually takes the form of rural household-based work done in the off season. Several men do logging, sometimes on their own property. Another hires out to operate heavy land-clearing equipment. Two brothers and one of their wives make a considerable percentage of their yearly household income during the short lobster season. One family takes in foster children. Several households earn small incomes from adding value to farm products, selling woolen knitted goods, eggs, or butter from the family milk cow. Only one person, the wife in the financially distressed household, holds a "conventional" job. She is a part-time special education

teacher.

I found, as did Whatmore in her study (Whatmore 1991 p.92ff), that women's work contributions were more highly valued and their status in division of labour more egalitarian in these less commoditized farm households. Indeed, this group contained the only female farm proprietor. Only one woman in this group considered herself "not involved in farming" yet she was highly involved in the household enterprise taking care of foster children with special needs as well as processing farm products for home consumption and managing the household for her husband and their own two children. The value of women as "working comrades" rather than "housewives" was accentuated by the absence of any significant contribution to the labour force by children and by the fact that only one farm couple employed any paid labour, and this for a very short term.

The labour force of the peddler households comes almost entirely from nuclear family and kin and the organization of production is labour driven. Land costs are negligible, and - ironically - capital costs are low because these households are too poor to be considered by most lenders for the privilege of going into debt. The labour cost - the cost of maintaining family members - is relatively high and it is a fixed cost whether members are productive or not. Therefore, peddler production strategies are based on optimizing use of family members rather than of land or equipment. These households will opt for a mixed strategy that fully utilizes the family labour force throughout the year rather than a "profit-maximizing" strategy which relies on large seasonal inputs of hired

labour. They will opt for commodities such as specialty perishable vegetables and sheep production because the craftship required to produce them cannot easily be replaced by expensive capital investment, allowing their farms to be competitive with larger ones. Given the limited employment opportunities in the area these households will also take maximum advantage of the social welfare system to support family members. Aside from the two older farmers drawing pensions, nearly every peddler household has at least one member drawing UI for part of the year. Some find short-term off-season off-farm jobs for this purpose, some take seasonal jobs in the fishery, several husbands "employ" their wives during peak farming seasons and "lay them off" for the winter.

### **5.1.3 CAPITAL USE**

The peddler households get by with a minimum of capital equipment and facilities. Each has a small hay barn and a few have an additional building for animals. These were sometimes financed by low interest loans from the province, though one household used fishing income and at least two borrow barns from relatives. A few have their own root cellars, though two rent space in the co-op storage facility. Four farms have a single, older tractor each. Two farms have two and another two use tractors borrowed from relatives. All farms have access to the minimal ploughing and haying equipment and perhaps an old potato digger but it may be access through borrowing. Much of this equipment was purchased 15 or 20 years ago through the generous

provincial matching fund program then in effect. Some new equipment has been obtained recently through provincial "new technology" grants. The four related sheep-rearing households for instance have gotten together to purchase silage baling and wrapping equipment using these funds. Otherwise, peddler households tend to buy used equipment from neighboring farmers or in rare cases will finance new equipment through dealer loans.

The chief sources of capital for these households in order of importance appear to be government grants, government loans, borrowed equipment of relatives, off-farm earnings of family members and farm equipment dealer loans. Since these households report very low incomes they do not usually qualify for extensive capital inputs from most of these sources. The exception is the "distressed" farm in this group which is presently having its equipment repossessed.

#### **5.1.4 PEDDLER HOUSEHOLD EXCHANGE STRATEGIES**

As their name implies, the peddler households display considerable ingenuity in disposing of their commodities and make use of the so-called "informal economy". Since households of this type live close to the bone they are eager to convert commodities to cash as quickly as possible. They tend to produce small quantities of a wide variety of commodities not only for previously mentioned reasons but as a hedge against poor



markets for a single commodity in a given year. Since they produce small quantities overall they are also eager to get the best possible price. With the exception of the retired farmers who have minimal household expenses and a guaranteed pension income, they base their exchange strategies on solving the problem of quick disposal of small quantities of a wide variety at the highest possible price.

The simplest way to solve these exchange problems is to sell direct to end consumers who place standing orders, and five of the households do this. They supplement these sales by taking telephone orders from occasional customers who are referred by regular customers, by selling door-to-door, and occasionally by selling from a truck. Two other households sell chiefly to supermarket produce managers, and three of the "direct" sellers supplement their income in this way. This is where the peddlers come into conflict with the more prosperous farmers who see them undercutting "fair" prices with cheaper commodities unfairly subsidized by the UI or pension payments the peddlers are likely to be receiving. The smaller households counter that the more prosperous farmers unfairly conspire to maintain a monopoly on this market.

The largest vegetable producing household in the peddler group has a unique solution to the marketing problem. This household produces lamb and a wide variety of vegetables and operates a farm market in the parking lot of the Corner Brook hockey stadium Friday through Sunday during harvest season. Sunday evenings husband and wife drive the farm truck to Nova Scotia where they purchase produce which does not grow

well in Newfoundland to supplement their own crop at the stand. They return home on Tuesday evening and join two hired helpers in harvesting. On Friday afternoon they are back at the stand with fresh produce.

Livestock breeders in Newfoundland face a marketing problem unique within Canada: the absence of any slaughtering facilities which provide meat inspection and the lack of provincial lamb and beef inspection standards. While three of the sheep breeders (all related) have managed to find a market for some of their lamb in certain local supermarkets based on their reputation for quality, most lamb and all beef produced in the area must be sold directly to consumers. Most livestock breeders in the peddler group are satisfied with this arrangement since it allows them to add value by doing their own slaughtering and quartering. Consumers take their quarters to local butchers who cut, wrap and freeze the meat.

## **5.2 THE "CO-OP CROWD" HOUSEHOLDS**

The Co-op Crowd is the second largest farm household group and the second most productive. The peddlers call them the "Co-op Crowd" because all but one household relies on the use of facilities managed by the local Western Farm Producers' Co-operative.

The Co-op crowd consists of six households whose male proprietors grew up fairly close to each other in the central village of the survey region, the oldest settlement area, and attended the same Anglican church. Three of them (including two brothers) are descended from the earliest farm families in the region. Two, also brothers, moved to the region as young children. The last, a marginal member of this group, is descended from an important old local merchant family. The Co-op Crowd most closely approaches the idealized "family farm" - conservative risk minimizers enjoying modest success with modest capital. This group is the least likely to experiment with new commodities or production techniques.

### **5.2.1 CO-OP CROWD HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION STRATEGIES: LAND USE**

The Co-op Crowd farms cover 1115 acres and utilize about 65% of this land for farming purposes, more than the Peddlers, less than the Business Farms. At 42% they are

last in terms of percentage of owned land though this is all owned without mortgage. Less than a third was inherited from parents. Almost half of the total acreage (477 acres) and more than two thirds of the land actually utilized is leased Crown lands. Two households lease a total of 115 acres from private parties at nominal cost. The two households raising beef cattle lease space in the local community cattle pasture.

The use of leased Crown land is crucial to the Co-op Crowd's production strategy and the leasing system bears explaining. Historically Crown land had been granted free or at minimal cost to prospective and established farmers in this area. In fact this was the origin of all land ownership and some older farmers in the area obtained land in this way. As farming declined following Confederation, many farmers subdivided prime land which had been granted them for agricultural purposes to sell as home or summer cottage sites. Others simply abandoned land. Without property taxes there was no financial need to sell or lease it. To correct this problem the provincial government began offering only long-term, low cost renewable leases to farmers who in the government's opinion seemed sincere and trustworthy and who promised to cultivate and improve the land. The government offers modest land improvement grants which cover part of the costs. Farmers are sometimes able to pay all their improvement costs by harvesting and selling timber on the land. Once a lease is secured it is transferable, and leases typically sell at prices equivalent to the value of comparable land for sale in the area. This is partly because arable Crown land and indeed any arable land is in limited supply, and abandoned owned farmland is rarely available for sale.

The Co-op Crowd prefers to use Crown land for several reasons. It is distant from the residential area and farming practices will not draw complaints from neighbors. Though initially less fertile and rockier than farm land in town, Crown lands can be improved over the years into larger, flatter fields more suitable for modern farm machinery. In addition, primitive farming practices of the past have depleted much of the farm land in town and left some fields permanently infested with pesticide resistant strains of potato wart and insect pests. Finally, the Crown land is adjacent to the Co-op processing and storage facilities which also serve as an informal business and social meeting place for the Co-op Crowd. The bulk of their farming operations (including the Crown-owned community pastures for cattle) are already established in this area and so expansion-minded members of this group wishing to increase their land holdings want to do so nearby. The Co-op crowd maintains a near monopoly on Crown leases because the Business Farms are not interested in further land acquisition and most of the Peddlers appear too unreliable to qualify for new Crown leases and are too poor to purchase established ones.

The Co-op Crowd cultivates a total of 84 acres of vegetables, the most of any group, but yield per acre is the lowest. It produces about a third of the survey area crop. All but one household in this group relies almost entirely on vegetable crops for farm income. Unlike the Peddlers group, these typically are not mixed farms. The three largest in the Co-op group grow only root crops and cabbage as a risk minimizing strategy. These

are the most reliable (though least profitable) crops. They are the traditional Newfoundland crops because they are well adapted to the climate and soils, require little attention between planting and harvest (thus freeing up fishermen in the summer), and keep well over the winter. Unlike specialty vegetables such as lettuce and peas they do not have to be harvested at a critical point of maturity but can be left in the ground until harvesting is convenient without fear of frost damage.

While five of the six Co-op households are vegetable specialists, the last raises only livestock. Slaughtering 150 lambs and 30 cattle in the survey year, this operation is small by national standards but far larger than any other surveyed and the proprietor is very young and still "building his herd". He uses land he inherited (rather than the community sheep pastures controlled by the Peddlers) to graze his sheep, but his real interest is in the cattle herd which he grazes on the local community cattle pastures (organized and presided over by his father). He is planning to use his 200 acres of Crown land to raise feed grains for his cattle, remarkable because Newfoundland cattle farmers have relied on feed grains from the mainland since Confederation with Canada.

All of the vegetable farmers have crops in rotation and they all raise some hay or silage as part of this rotation. In the past, hay was a scarce and valuable commodity in Newfoundland and was often imported from the Maritimes. Wet weather, particularly in the fall, often frustrated haymaking. In recent times the introduction of wrapped silage (which can be stored wet) has created a surplus of forage crops on the West Coast and

vegetable producers with no livestock are having difficulty disposing of them.

Overall, the land strategy of the Co-op households is to produce fairly large crops of a few reliable commodities using large fields suitable for modern machinery and close to storage facilities.

### 5.2.2 LABOUR USE

As with the Peddlers, family labour is an important consideration in the production strategies of Co-op households, but the strategies themselves are quite different. The overall strategy is not simply aimed as it was for the Peddlers at survival or reproduction of the household unit by any means possible. It is aimed at reproducing the unit as a "respectable farm". Household labour is organized so that members remain productive throughout the year without resorting to UI or to "make work" jobs provided by the province which lead to UI payments. There are several solutions to this problem and I will begin with the most popular one.

The three largest Co-op Crowd farms restrict their production to root crops and cabbage. These crops mature in succession over a long period beginning in August and ending in October. When mature, they may be harvested when it is convenient until November. This allows full and steady employment for available family members for

several months. After they are harvested root crops must be washed, graded and packaged for market, but since they store easily this process can also be stretched out over several months. These commodities keep and may be marketed through the winter and occasionally until as late as July, so there are deliveries to make until planting season begins again. Keeping the farm family busy throughout the winter however requires production of more vegetables than the family unit can harvest, so seasonal labour must be hired at this time. This need fits nicely with an important non-farm survival strategy in the region because the harvest season just provides the minimum number of weeks of work required to obtain UI. In effect, the Co-op households are providing the 25 seasonal workers they employ with a year-round income.

Like most farms in the area, the Co-op farms do not rely on the unpaid labour of children in the household if for no other reason than there are very few children available. Two households pay wages to adult sons who maintain their own households but will presumably inherit the farms at some point. For the present these sons also benefit from UI payments during slack periods. The position of wives in the three largest farms is more that of "helper" than "working comrade". The primary self-described role of the wife is as farm homemaker, pitching in as needed with the more genteel jobs of vegetable packing, sales and bookkeeping. Though farm women in this role have less input in farm management than the Peddler women and this could be viewed as a shift away from gender equality, interviews with farm and non-farm women in the community suggest that "homemaker" is seen as a more privileged status for women because "they don't have



to do that dirty work anymore".

There are other labour strategies used by Co-op Crowd households to survive with respectability. The livestock farmer is young, building his herd and recently married. His wife has no farm experience but is trained and works as a beautician. He sees this as a satisfactory arrangement for the time being and hires a rotation of men to help with heavy work ("once they're eligible for UI they don't want to work anymore") but as the operation grows he will expect her to quit her job ("she doesn't make much anyway") and begin taking on some of the gentler tasks such as bookkeeping and sales.

The most marginal Co-op Crowd household contains the president of the Co-op himself and has a production strategy that resembles the Peddlers in some ways. A wide range of both root crops and specialty vegetables are grown and there is considerable self-provisioning, but the use of hired labour and marketing strategies put it into the Co-op Crowd. In this household, husband and wife are definitely "working comrades". Because their operation is marginal and more than half of their output is in perishable vegetables they dispose of their produce soon after harvest. This frees them for off-farm work in the winter. He has degrees in education and agriculture and college teaching experience and looks for temporary teaching posts. This was the only household in the Co-op group that admitted to occasionally subsidizing its operation with UI.

The last household in this category is the only one which falls out of the social and economic circle of the Co-op Crowd. In fact it is not a household at all but a man

who works full-time as a schoolteacher and is trying to establish a farm on the side as part of an early retirement strategy. Though he is from the survey area and farms on Crown land he lives with his family an hour away in Stephenville. Because his farm is heavily subsidized by his teaching job he is classed with the Peddlers by the Co-op Crowd, which uses his out-of-town residence to deny him membership in the co-op and use of its facilities. He relies almost completely on hired labour and in this way resembles the business farms, but his small but diverse commodity selection (including strawberries) and his marketing strategy (a combination of farm stands, door-to-door and supermarkets) resemble those of the Peddlers. This is the only "household" whose scores placed it in a group to which it obviously did not belong. Perhaps because it is not really a household commodity production unit it should be excluded from this enumeration.

### 5.2.3 CAPITAL USE

The Co-op Crowd households have access to more capital equipment and facilities than the Peddlers and this is as much due to government programs as their financial success as farmers. To start with, most have low cost leases of Crown land which has been cleared and improved with provincial subsidies. Most have inexpensive access to the government-owned co-op managed facilities which include a storage warehouse, a climate-controlled storage facility, and washing, grading and packing equipment conveniently located near the Crown land. Though their inventory of

equipment may be modest by mainland standards it is adequate for their scale of operations and far more extensive than that of the Peddlers. Most farms have two, and some three tractors including at least one four-wheel drive model. Most have specialized planting and harvesting equipment for their narrow range of crops. Two own new silage baling and wrapping equipment. The livestock breeder has just purchased (used) the only combine currently in use in the province. A few of these items were purchased used for cash, but most were obtained with the help of federal or provincial new technology grants or low-interest loans. The livestock breeder has built grain and hay storage facilities with the help of a federal cost-sharing program.

The Co-op households appear to be adequately capitalized for their scope of operations and they rarely share equipment. In general they are conservative and risk minimizing and do not seem overly eager to acquire all the latest technology. By taking advantage of available grants and loans for technology improvement they have avoided the crushing debt loads carried by many farm families in other parts of Canada (see, for instance, Bolaria et al. 1991 p. 393ff., Murphy 1991 p. 203ff., Winson 1994 p. 89 ff.).

#### **5.2.4 CO-OP CROWD HOUSEHOLD EXCHANGE STRATEGIES**

All of the vegetable producing farms in this group sell the great bulk of their produce to supermarkets in the two nearest commercial centres, Stephenville and Corner

Brook. In most cases the household will have negotiated an informal agreement with the produce manager of one or more individual supermarkets to sell certain quantities of certain commodities at the prevailing price. The "prevailing price" is set by wholesalers owned by the supermarket chains themselves and farmers complain that these prices are sometimes below the cost of production. They are particularly bitter about the import of substandard potatoes rejected by french fry manufacturers in Prince Edward Island and sold in Newfoundland at far below the cost of production. Furthermore the transportation of regional products including food between the Atlantic Provinces is subsidized in an effort to promote regional development. Farmers complain that because of this it is cheaper to ship produce to St. John's from P.E.I. than from Newfoundland farming regions.

The Co-op itself might be expected to serve as a marketing agent for farm products, but farmers "cooperate" formally only in purchasing a few minor farm inputs and in sharing the government owned facilities. The co-op warehouse does serve as an informal meeting place for farmers, particularly on Saturdays when they tend to congregate as each processes and packs his own vegetables. At these times discussions of potential market outlets and promising production strategies take place. Farmers will draw on each other's produce to fill out short orders but they are jealous of losing hard won relationships with produce managers both to fellow co-op members and Peddler households. I was particularly struck by the fact that they never cooperate in the delivery process, even in winter when roads are treacherous and deliveries consume a good part of

the day and considerable motor fuel. Farmers rarely fill their vans with their orders and they store produce in the same building but each makes a separate trip, rationalizing that "I had to run some errands in town anyway".

Not all produce is sold through supermarkets. One of the largest Co-op households runs a farm stand out of the farmhouse basement for a few weeks during harvest season and does brisk business selling bulk quantities of root crops to local residents. Farmers will sometimes exchange produce for casual labour, and may supply non-farming relatives with a winter supply of root crops. In the process of self provisioning farmers producing different commodities will sometimes negotiate cashless exchanges.

In marketing, the lone livestock breeder is the exception. He is obliged to sell direct to the end consumer because of the lack of government grading facilities and because he is unable to meet the spot demand volumes of supermarket purchasers. He slaughters in the fall to fill orders from regular and telephone customers.

### 5.3 THE "BUSINESS FARM" HOUSEHOLDS

There are only three of these but the larger two account for well over half the gross receipts of all the farms in this survey. They include a dairy farm and two root crop and cabbage farms. The larger vegetable farm produces over 40% of the surveyed root crop and cabbage total, more than all the Co-op farms combined. The dairy farm produces 3000 litres of milk a day. The third farm's vegetable crop is equal to that of an average Co-op household. Its proprietor, the dairy farmer's uncle, also works full time year round as an electrical power company foreman.

These households are more likely to take financial risks than the Co-op Crowd, and, like the Peddlers, are inclined to experiment with new commodities and techniques.

#### 5.3.1 BUSINESS FARM PRODUCTION STRATEGIES: LAND USE

The 1115 acres held by this group about equals that held within each of the others. The two larger Business Farms cover all but 30 acres of this. Land in agricultural use varies widely by farm. The dairy farm utilizes 100%, the large vegetable farm 40%, the smaller farm 60%. The dairy farm household holds title to four fifths of its land, the large vegetable farm two fifths, and the smaller farm leases all of its land. All owned land was obtained from parents. These farms rent no Crown land but lease a number of smaller

adjacent land parcels. Unlike other survey farms the Business Farm households organize production around profit maximization from capital investment, and land use is intensive. Rather than pasture cows the dairy farm confines them to obtain maximal silage production (which amounts to self-sufficiency) from available land. Using innovative planting techniques and herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and specialized machinery the vegetable farms increase yields per acre.

### **5.3.2 LABOUR USE**

In the three Business Farm households the source and use of labour is directed by the need to make the most effective use of high capital investments. Division of labour within households differs but the basic formula is to steadily employ household members and hire as much outside labour when and as necessary to fully exploit capital investments.

The large vegetable farm comes closest to an egalitarian husband-wife partnership of any of the more successful farms in the area. The couple, both university dropouts, made the decision to farm together when they were married. They share farm chores, heavy physical tasks as well as managerial work, on a fairly equal basis and they put in more hours of work per day and per year than any other farm couple interviewed. There is some division of labour: he, for instance is more likely to be involved in the operation

and repair of the heavier machinery (he once worked as a truck driver) and she has developed a system for raising crop seedlings in greenhouses to produce an earlier harvest. There is no concession to the "delicacy of the female constitution" here and some of the male members of the Co-op Crowd disapprove of this ("He works that poor little woman to death!"). Actually, her dedication to the enterprise and physical stamina seem to challenge her husband to work harder (during the winter she also coaches a school gymnastics club). This household produces a very high volume of cabbage and turnips and smaller quantities of carrots, potatoes and beets. Wrapped silage is also produced as part of the crop rotation cycle. The couple is fully employed processing and marketing these commodities throughout the winter. Their young children do not participate in any significant way in the farm labour force. A crew of about 8 wage labourers is employed at planting and harvest times. Additional casual help is sometimes employed in exchange for farm commodities.

The young dairy farm owner recently purchased his farm from his parents who had gone into dairy farming 24 years earlier. Previously a large vegetable operation, the farm has been in the family for at least four generations. Though he now has other business interests, the father continues to advise and assist his son, and the mother continues to keep the books. The young owner himself works 14 hour days. His wife is not involved in farming but works part time in the family-owned convenience store. By ownership and management this farm is a family enterprise but most labour is performed by hired hands. Four year-round employees put in 60 hour weeks and a fifth works a 35



hour week. In the summer an additional six or seven hourly workers are employed in the production of silage to feed the herd. While other farms in the area employ outside labour during peak periods, only this one obtains the greater part of its labour year round from outside the family.

The smaller vegetable farm operator also depends heavily on hired labour. He himself works full-time as a power company foreman and can only farm in the evenings, weekends and during vacation. His wife, a former schoolteacher, now owns and operates a video store and assists only in bookkeeping. His teenaged daughters are not involved. He hires 8 full-time employees for the entire growing and harvest season and employs a student for 7 weeks during the summer under a provincially subsidized program. Some of his employees travel 180 km. from the remote fishing community of Burgeo and spend the summer in a cabin which he provides.

### **5.3.3 CAPITAL USE**

Of all farms surveyed, the business farms are the most highly capitalized and their operators are the most likely to risk ploughing a substantial part of their personal income back into the business. Though their incomes and assets are greater, the homes and lifestyles of the business farm families are as unostentatious as those of the Co-op Crowd. Perhaps because of their own confidence in their operations they also have been more

successful at obtaining larger government grants and loans. Besides taking advantage of new technology grants to purchase equipment, the two vegetable farmers have each built their own modern storage facilities with the help of government grants. The dairy farmer obtained a government loan to purchase the farm from his father who then was able to reinvest this equity in a contracting and forest products enterprise.

Though the father of the dairy farmer, his younger brother the electrical foreman/vegetable farmer and the dairy farmer himself maintain separate households and legally distinct business enterprises, it is easier to make sense of their various uses of capital if these households are considered together as a family. In fact, taken thus they begin to resemble Chayanov's "classical kulak household" mentioned earlier in this paper. Considered as a family, they have divided responsibility for management of an inherited generational mixed family farm by commodity and then used surplus capital to diversify the family enterprise far beyond household commodity production. The elder brother took over the more valuable (and more labour intensive) dairy and livestock operations and by buying up milk quota, investing in modern equipment, becoming self-sufficient in silage and rejecting traditional dairying methods for innovative ones aimed at cost effectively maximizing milk yield per cow, built one of the province's larger and more profitable dairy farms. The younger brother inherited the less lucrative (though less labour intensive) vegetable operations and did not feel confident that these alone would provide sufficient income. He therefore took up a career with the power company, but continued to farm on a small scale using hired help and borrowing equipment from his brother. In

return he provided his brother's family (and now his nephew's) with vegetables.

These households have carefully diversified their operations to protect themselves from the ups and downs of the agricultural economy and to employ non-farming family members. The elder brother established a country store which employs his wife and daughter-in-law and sells, among other things, family farm products. He was later able to recapture the investment in his dairy operation by selling it to his son (who obtained a government loan) and further diversify into timber and contracting. The son has obtained a mill feed franchise from a firm in Nova Scotia, purchased a tractor trailer and is supplying his own and other dairy farms with cattle feed. Father and son also raise race horses. The younger brother hedged his bet on farming by obtaining secure non-farm career employment and minimizing his investment in farming by leasing land and borrowing his brother's equipment. His wife, a former schoolteacher, operates a video store and a small bookkeeping business. With substantial non-farm income and help from his family the younger brother has been able to carefully expand his vegetable operation and markets and recently to construct storage and washing facilities without the need to show a profit. Now, with the farming operation showing a slight profit, with his wife self-employed and his teenaged daughters soon to leave home, he hopes that by taking advantage of an early retirement package at the power company he will be able to "retire" to full-time farming in the near future.

The capital use strategy of the larger vegetable operation in the "Business Farm" group contrasts with the diversification strategy of the dairy farm and lies somewhere between that of Chayanov's "semi-capitalist" and "family farm" households. Husband and wife are both firmly committed to the agricultural vocation and are not "hedging their bet" by diversifying. Their strategy is to use all available capital to obtain the most sophisticated machinery and facilities specifically designed for the root crops, cabbage and silage they produce. They have been successful in obtaining government grants and loans, but they have also been willing to live very frugally to accomplish this end. They watch for farm auctions on the "mainland" (Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island) and have purchased much of their equipment slightly used at considerable savings. Their feeling is that extensive mechanization is essential to grow the quality and quantity of produce necessary for them to survive as serious participants in the Newfoundland vegetable market.

While the business farm households differ in the ways they use capital, their common interest in systematic expansion of capital holdings sets them apart from the other farm households interviewed. The latter were typically "risk minimizers", likely to avoid capital investment where possible, managing their operations based on the quality and quantity of family and kin labour available. Business farmers were more likely to farm "by the book", adopting the latest techniques and particularly purchasing the latest equipment. Management was driven by these capital investments rather than available household labour. These farms hired labour as necessary to fully utilize their capital

investments.

#### **5.3.4 BUSINESS FARM HOUSEHOLD EXCHANGE STRATEGIES**

Since Newfoundland has a dairy marketing board system which assigns quotas for "fluid" but not "industrial" milk, the dairy farmer has only one outlet for his product at a fixed price for a fixed quantity. Within such a system the challenge to the farmer is to produce milk of consistent quality and in consistent quantity through the four seasons of the year at a price at or below the current "cost of production" (COP) estimated by the board. In this case the farmer confines his cows in a barn year-round, feeding them a constant diet of silage supplemented by mill feed which is computer allocated to produce the maximum consistent milk output. Cows are swiftly culled when their output falls and this farmer was proud to report that his COP was 10 cents a litre below the board's estimate.

Marketing for the two vegetable producers is more challenging. Both see the advantage of extending the marketing season into the spring to take advantage of rising prices and to even cash flow. In order to be able to do this, both have restricted themselves to storable root crops and cabbage, and unlike other farmers in the area have built their own modern storage facilities. They are both keenly aware of the importance of grading. Wholesalers and mainstream consumers demand more than flavour. They are

looking for vegetables of a certain consistent size, shape and colour. These two growers are especially careful in grading, washing and packaging to offer a product which matches retail standards and meets mainstream consumer expectations.

The larger vegetable farm is uniquely successful in the area in having penetrated the wholesale market. Over 50% of this household's sales are to Clover Group, a subsidiary of the Sobey's supermarket chain and Newfoundland's largest produce wholesaler. Produce packaged in bags bearing this farm's name can be purchased at supermarkets across the province. The balance of sales goes mostly to west coast supermarket produce managers though some sales to retail customers are made at the farm. A small amount of produce is bartered for labour. A nearby sheep farmer obtains culled vegetables in this way to feed his animals. Because of the wholesale connection and the high volume and quality this household can offer, customers are generally willing to send their own trucks to pick up orders and this farm is obliged to deliver only about a quarter of what it sells.

The smaller vegetable farmer supplies small amounts to west coast produce managers, but most of his crop goes to supply produce stands operated by other farmers in the more populous areas of the west coast. In addition, he has developed a unique way of penetrating the local market. He packages an attractive assortment of vegetables in 25 lb. bags which are sold by local youth and charity groups in fund-raising drives.

## Chapter Six

**POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DIVERSITY OF HOUSEHOLD  
PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE STRATEGIES**

A typology is only a baseline for analysis. The surveyed farm households can be sorted into three types based on the variable levels of formal and real subsumption of their labour processes, but why do these levels of subsumption vary from farm to farm? In a simpler world in which every household had accepted the apparent (though not well articulated) provincial government position that size, output, adoption of mainland technologies and practices, integration into the mainstream market and independence from non-agricultural income were the measures of farm success, the typology might be used as a ranking tool. As we have seen however, the agendas of the surveyed households did not always square with government priorities. Though none would shun a profit, most were more concerned with fulfilling the needs of household members, of practising a chosen craft, of reproducing the "farming way of life" than with adapting to the needs of an integrated "agrifoods industry".

All of the households surveyed were subject to "local conditions" which include the structural constraints and opportunities imposed by the state, the market and the natural and social environment. These structural realities can be experienced, interpreted and, as we have seen, exploited in different ways by different households. The various ways that people making up the surveyed households experienced, interpreted and

exploited the structural conditions imposed upon them as members of production units are manifest in the diversity of production and exchange strategies. In many cases the local conditions imposed by the state, the market and the environment, over which local people have little control, present formidable obstacles which must be got around. In other cases these imposed local conditions offer surprising and even bizarre opportunities for the fulfillment of household agendas. One is reminded of the "cargo cultures" observed on remote Pacific islands. Strange bits of unintelligible government policy wash up on the shores of the survey area, some of which can be put to unintended but practical use.

The ways that a household interprets local conditions inform its production and exchange strategies. the way land, labour and capital are combined to produce commodities and the way these commodities are exchanged for value. The ways local conditions are exploited appear to be strongly associated with sociological factors: the types of social relations households have within and outside of the local community, and the life stage of the household. To sum up, the households surveyed can be sorted into three types based on the degree to which capital has formally and really subsumed the labour process. The degree of subsumption is a function of the production and exchange strategies pursued by the household. Production and exchange strategies develop as household members experience, interpret and exploit local conditions in the context of their social relationships and obligations. Households may pursue similar strategies for very different reasons and one might willingly pursue a strategy which another follows as



a last resort. "Success" is defined differently from household to household.

This analysis has set about to test the thesis that family farms as examples of the household commodity production unit can survive, adapt to and even prosper in a mature capitalist economy. This task is made difficult by the fact that "survival", "adaptation" and "prosperity" are ultimately relative terms, open to interpretation by the observed as well as the observer. Is a farm surviving if it is completely dependent on non-farm income? Has it adapted to capitalism if it relies on the underground economy? Is it prospering if it can manage in some way to reproduce itself as a productive household unit from year to year? What follows is an examination of the reasons members of each farm type have adopted production and exchange strategies characteristic of that type and an attempt to account for these variations in sociological terms.

## 6.1 THE PEDDLERS

The eight peddler households are characterised by small size, low income, low capital outlay, absence of hired help, a mixed/subsistence production strategy, an informal and ad hoc exchange strategy and reliance on non-farm sources of income to make ends meet. Though their production and exchange strategies are similar these households have adopted them for different reasons. In fact, within this group there are four sub-categories of households.

The first sub-category contains four households informally bound by kinship to cooperate in mixed farming enterprises which emphasize sheep rearing. They are a modern equivalent of the pioneer pluriactive lifestyle of rural Newfoundland. They relish the feeling of independence which comes from self-provisioning and participating in the informal economy. They like the occupational variety that the seasonal rounds provide - hunting, fishing, logging and even temporary employment as the opportunities arise. They enjoy the traditional crafts of rural Newfoundland such as butter and cheese-making, weaving and knitting with wool from their own sheep, tanning hides and so on. Modern conditions constrain this lifestyle. Government regulations restrict the taking of now depleted stocks of fish, game and timber. Small-scale production of dairy and poultry products has been virtually eliminated by the quota system. Commercial fishing, still the most important source of income in two households, is now limited to a short and often disappointing lobster season.

In the past rural Newfoundlanders depended on mechanical solidarity and informal relationships and exchanges with relatives and neighbours in the immediate community. In recent years the tastes and aspirations of area residents have grown closer to those of mainland Canadians. They can shop frequently for a wide variety of groceries in modern supermarkets rather than purchasing and storing a winter's supply of root crops, cabbage, mutton and beef. They are not obliged to develop complex reciprocal commodity and labour exchange relationships when their survival is already ensured by make-work projects, unemployment insurance and welfare payments. Discussions with non-farming community members, some of whom had grown up in "traditional" households, even those who were un- or underemployed, frequently revealed disdain for the perceived "backwardness" and even "laziness" of these households. Changes in local tastes and attitudes have eroded the status and self-respect as well as the economic viability of the traditional households. A poignant illustration of this was related by a farm woman who prided herself on the quality of her lamb. She had just delivered an order to a supermarket and noticed a woman at the meat counter inquiring as to whether the lamb offered was "local". When told that it was, she said she would "just wait until the New Zealand lamb comes in".

These four households carry on as they do because of their interpretation of local conditions. Government policy is designed to modify their lifestyle and they are determined to resist and when possible to subvert it to meet their own agendas. These households were the most socially active in the survey, and their social circle included

local families with very precarious livelihoods. Members of these four households were very concerned with local community development, and had been or were serving on the regional development association. They felt the provincial government was unresponsive to rural needs in general and west coast needs in particular. Unlike other farmers they spent a lot of time discussing and trying to deal with local problems outside the agricultural sector. This was possible because their lifestyle allowed them more time to do this. By operating in the informal economy they also fulfilled a more direct need in a community where half of the work force is unemployed and the nearest supermarket is an hour away. They provided a convenient, local inexpensive source of food, and were willing to barter.

Two older unmarried male proprietors make up the second sub-category. They fall into the peddler group because of life stage rather than lifestyle decisions. They are lifelong farmers gradually winding down their operations. Though they appear to have enough income from savings and pensions they continue to farm for the exercise, satisfaction, social opportunities and status farming provides. Socially and ideologically they identify with the "respectable" co-op crowd rather than the career peddlers and they are concluding their careers in a "respectable" way.

The third sub-category contains one household, a younger couple, first generation farmers still in the "building" stage. Neither were born in the community and they have no local kin and few close social ties here. Their production and exchange strategies are

innovative and unique in the area and based on their perception of a changing market. They are aiming to fulfill what they see as a growing demand for very high quality specialty vegetables and lamb fresh from the farm and sold at a farmers' market.

The fourth sub-category contains the only household which appears to have been forced into a peddler strategy by extenuating circumstances. The operator is in the fifth generation of a local farming family. Socially and economically this household would like to be identified with the co-op crowd, but recently it forfeited its Crown land lease and saw most of its equipment repossessed. The operator appears to rely on the loan of land and equipment from his father to continue farming. Some cash income comes from his wife's work as a part-time teacher. This couple obviously aspired to the "respectability" of the co-op crowd and I only learned of their difficulties from other farmers (who did not seem particularly sympathetic). They expressed an interest in expanding and diversifying their operation, though this would seem difficult given their financial problems unless they could obtain more land and equipment from the operator's father. Though both husband and wife have had some university education and held non-farm jobs in the past they appear to have no intention of abandoning farming. What is interesting is that the problems that this household faces and the way it deals with them make it quite "respectable" as a peddler household, but because the proprietor comes from the social circle of the co-op crowd he is regarded as a failure by both groups.

The peddler farms do not have access to the mainstream market for agricultural

products because they do not produce the volume or consistent quality demanded by wholesalers and because they do not have the storage facilities which would allow them to supply commodities when they are in greatest demand. Changing tastes and lifestyles have also reduced the informal local market on which they have traditionally relied. These households do not belong to the farm organizations which might be expected to lobby for the help they need either at the regional level (the Co-op) or the provincial level (Federation of Agriculture, Sheep Producer's Association, Vegetable Producer's Association). Most had belonged to one or more of these in the past but had quit because they did not feel these organizations addressed the needs of small mixed farms in general and west coast small farms in particular.

## 6.2 THE CO-OP CROWD

The co-op crowd households enjoy a greater respectability in the larger community because they do not appear to rely on UI and off-farm employment. They are "real" farmers in the eyes of their neighbours and the supermarket produce managers they supply, yet their actual production and exchange strategies are more dependent on government farm programs than those of the peddlers. Without the use of inexpensively leased Crown land and community pastures (improved with the help of government subsidies) and the government owned co-op storage and processing facilities few of these operations could survive.

In terms of values, aspirations and strategies the co-op households are a more homogeneous group than the peddlers. They have evolved from another "traditional" farming form in the region, the larger, less diversified farm trading with merchants rather than end consumers. This form became viable and indeed prospered by Newfoundland standards with the construction of the trans-island railway and the imposition of protective tariffs at the turn of the last century. The co-op households have had to adapt to changes in political, environmental and market conditions over the years but they have typically done so with reluctance and only when entirely necessary. They have had to adjust to the diminishing availability of prime agricultural land caused by persistent pest infestations, by the local convention of subdividing farms amongst male heirs, by the lack of clear titles to land, by the abandonment of land by absentee owners who refuse to lease

it, and by the unchecked subdivision of farmland for residential and vacation home use. They were rescued from this situation by the provincial government's decision to grant and later lease Crown land and community pastures at nominal cost with subsidies for land improvement. It is interesting and perhaps indicative of the co-op households' reluctance to change that despite the fact that every farm conducted most of its business on leased or granted Crown land distant from the original homestead, none had moved its homestead. This led to the unusual situation of farmers commuting to work. Farm equipment as well had to be transported back and forth. Respondents reported incidences of vandalism and theft when tools and machinery were left at the remote farm site. Besides the inconvenience and risk of this system, family members and particularly wives were not "handy" to help with incidental chores or emergencies which might arise. Furthermore, the casual observer, seeing the parked equipment and worn out and overgrown fields and pastures which surround these farmers' homesteads, but not the remote productive fields accessible only by private dirt tracks posted with "no trespassing" signs, might easily conclude that the local farm economy is on its last legs.

The co-op crowd, whose historical trade was with fairly distant wholesale merchants rather than local consumers, was seriously affected when the provincial government allowed the federal government to abandon the trans-island rail system in exchange for the funding and maintenance of a trans-island highway. For 70 years local farmers had been accustomed to shipping their commodities by rail to destinations all across Newfoundland at subsidized rates. There were three convenient depots, each with



vegetable storage facilities maintained by the local agricultural societies. One former farmer interviewed declared that he had stopped farming because of the difficulty and danger of making his own deliveries over roads which become icy and treacherous by late fall. This problem was exacerbated by the radical restructuring of the Newfoundland food distribution system itself. Historically, these larger farms had supplied regional and provincial wholesalers, logging camps and the American air base in Stephenville. None of these market options remain. Encouraged by the provincial government, mainland-based supermarket chains replaced locally owned grocery stores and brought with them mainland-based wholesalers whose fleets of trucks now had access via ferries and the new highway. Since they could not offer the volume or standardized varieties and grades of commodities demanded by the new wholesalers, local farmers were forced to deal directly with individual supermarket managers. Instead of being the primary and most convenient source of commodities they were now a secondary, supplementary source.

The Newfoundland government hoped to bring island farmers into the new food distribution system by establishing the Newfoundland Farm Products Corporation (NFPC) and Vegetable Marketing Associates Ltd. (VMAL) in the mid 1970s. With federal assistance, processing and storage facilities were constructed in the survey area near the trans-island highway. Provincial officials and many local farmers felt that such a local facility could address the volume and quality control requirements of modern wholesalers and supermarkets and save the producers the bother of grading, processing, storage and delivery. Unfortunately, by the account of nearly every survey household, the

VMAL marketing facility was established and operated with very little consultation with the local commodity producers, managed by unqualified personnel with no local ties and staffed by inexperienced workers taken from the unemployment and welfare rolls as a "make work" project. User fees to the farmers were high, grading was excessively severe, marketing practices were sloppy and much of the crop was lost through spoilage. Several of the larger farms refused to participate since they already had made reliable marketing arrangements with supermarket managers. Farmers who did participate partly blame those who did not for the failure of this marketing experiment, but even those who did participate were not required to commit their whole output to VMAL, and most if not all were selling "on the side". It appears that in principle the co-op households were and still are interested in joining forces to offer the necessary volume and demand a reasonable price from wholesalers, but that they were justifiably dubious of the chances of success for VMAL, which folded after two years. Having observed each others' tendency to become "free riders" rather than show solidarity during the VMAL experiment, none of the co-op households now expressed a belief that cooperative marketing could succeed in the area. Since (with the exception of the young cattle and sheep breeder) their outputs are too large for door-to-door or farm stand disposal and too small to interest wholesalers, they find themselves competing with each other for the small residual market offered them by west coast supermarkets.

Members of the co-op household group of course belong to the Western Farmers' Co-op which now controls the old VMAL facilities to which they have access. Other than

supervising the use of these facilities (though not maintaining them - they are still the property of Newfoundland Farm Products which is apparently unwilling to undertake a number of needed repairs) and acting as a purchasing agent for a few farm inputs such as seed potatoes, the Co-op seems to have no formal functions. The VMAL facilities do serve as an informal meeting place for members, particularly on Saturdays when many are to be found there sorting and packaging their root crops and cabbage. Because they use a common storage facility, members are aware of the size and quality of each others' crops, and to some extent their success at marketing them. Discussions about production and exchange strategies do occur and occasionally farmers may cooperate to fill an order. Yet the Western Farmers' Co-op accomplishes none of the tasks one might expect of a farmers' co-op. It provides no significant marketing or purchasing services to its members, nor does it act as an effective lobbying agent. Its name does not even appear on the list of 30 "Farmer Organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador" released by the Department of Forestry and Agriculture in 1992. Like the peddlers, the co-op crowd households do not belong to province wide farm organizations. Their main channel to policy makers, whether for information on current programs or to express concerns, is through the single Agricultural Representative assigned to Agricultural Units 9 and 10 stretching from Port aux Basques to Corner Brook.

All but the largest co-op household cited growing difficulties finding a market for their commodities. This was frustrating because there is a large consumer demand in Newfoundland for all of their commodities and they are usually able to deliver them (with

the exception of potatoes) at or below the delivered price of mainland competitors. It seems that supermarket buyers aren't interested in dealing with five or ten local producers when they can obtain everything they need at comparable prices from one mainland wholesaler.

### 6.3 THE BUSINESS FARMS

Both the peddlers and the co-op crowd live modern adaptations of traditional rural ways of life, and those households tend to resist the changes that government policy and the new market conditions seem to prescribe. The business farmers have problems with government policy and market conditions as well, but because they are more concerned with protecting their investments than protecting a traditional way of life they approach these as business problems rather than cultural threats. Interestingly, the two larger business farms were the only farms surveyed using the recognized institutional channels to confront objectionable policy and market conditions. Both were active members of the provincial Federation of Agriculture and their respective commodity organizations. Business farm proprietors were also concerned with the popular perception of Newfoundland farms as small, primitive, subsistence operations and felt that farmers were partly to blame for this because they did little to promote public awareness of what they were doing and because they were reluctant to address the demands of a changing marketplace. Perhaps because their facilities were the most technologically impressive, the business farmers were the most likely to invite groups of school children to visit them as a way of improving the agricultural image.

While the business farm proprietors were locally born and from backgrounds similar to the co-op crowd, they had many more business and social contacts outside the survey area and travelled more than other farmers. Their modern ways and commercial

success gave them the highest status with local non-farmers as well as with government agencies and lending institutions. Despite their apparent success, there were valid reasons why other farmers did not emulate them. The business farms were the most deeply in debt. They depended on relatively large labour forces more likely mobilized by an interest in obtaining UI than by kinship or social ties. The two larger business farms relied heavily on single market outlets over which they had little control (the milk marketing board, Clover Produce) rather than multiple outlets (for instance with supermarket managers or retail customers) based on personal relationships. Perhaps most importantly, the business farm families worked the longest hours, had the least free time and appeared to have disposable incomes no greater than the co-op crowd. The dairy farm family lived in a trailer. The larger vegetable farm family lived in a tiny sparsely furnished two bedroom house.

The business farmers chose the mainstream market as their target, rather than something to be worked around. To penetrate this market they had to produce large quantities of commodities which met the standards of that market. By replacing labour with modern commodity specific machinery and technologies they have met this challenge while still retaining much of the "family farming way of life" they so desire. Their high output (the two larger farms produce well over half the area's gross farm receipts) wins them high status within the local community, amongst other "serious" farmers across the province, and from provincial authorities. Still, their apparent success has left them with less freedom and less free time.

## Chapter Seven

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study has shown that even in a marginal agricultural region a number of different types of "family farm" may coexist. While these types in a sense correspond to the "three farm model" discussed earlier, they are not predicated on size or gross receipts, but on production and exchange strategies. These are not just a collection of more or less successful household commodity production units, but a group of households with different ideas about what "success" means, and consequently with very different strategies to attain it. In their own ways nearly all of these households were successful. Each had been pursuing the same production and exchange strategies for at least a decade and many were generational farms. None expressed an interest in getting out of farming, and only one one seemed in imminent danger of failure.

Though all of these farms were surviving the "mature capitalist economy", this research seriously challenges Harriet Friedmann's contention that they may be benefitting from the commodity market it provides. Households had gone from an island based food distribution system where they were "price-makers" to a mainland based system where they were "price-takers". Because they could not provide high volume at the right time to satisfy the mainstream market system, many farmers were restricted to sales in the "informal economy". Most other farmers could only enter the mainstream market when they could beat mainland prices or fill a temporary gap in the mainland supply.

These farm households were "resilient" not because mature capitalism provided them with expanded markets but for three other reasons. First, with the exception of the two larger business farms they bore virtually no debt. Second, family members put in long hours of undervalued labour when necessary to ensure the survival of the farm. Third, every farm was subsidized by sources outside of commodity sales which varied by farm type. The peddlers tended to hold off-farm jobs, to pursue non-farm household enterprises, to obtain UI or other transfer payments not related to farming. The co-op crowd benefitted from the use of government owned land and facilities at a nominal cost. All farms benefitted to some extent from government grants and loans for equipment and technology, but the business farms received the lion's share of these.

Though none of these operations would likely survive without some form of "help", the same could be said for nearly any Canadian farm, and operators contended they were less subsidized than the mainland competition. Unlike other Atlantic provinces, Newfoundland has not been particularly successful in obtaining federal funds to support its farmers, and most of these funds have gone toward supporting "agribusinesses" such as Newfoundland Farm Products rather than family farms. The Agricultural Branch does not provide the extensive field research and marketing support offered by parallel agencies in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Transportation of farm products from neighbouring provinces is subsidized by an inter-provincial trade agreement, virtually eliminating the locational advantage. On the other hand exclusive regional franchise contracts held by Newfoundland suppliers force farmers to buy



equipment and other inputs from local dealers at higher than mainland prices.

## 7.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Challenged on the one hand by declines in the traditional industries - fishing, forest products and mining - and on the other by a current federal government committed to reducing the national debt in part by reducing the costs of unemployment insurance, social welfare programs, farm subsidies and programs aimed at balancing regional inequalities, rural Newfoundlanders must find new ways of supporting themselves. They can do this by establishing entirely new industries, a strategy which was pursued by the provincial government with minimal success for many years, or by identifying and developing industries already in place which had previously been discounted as marginal. This study has presented seventeen farm households located in a region with historically proven agricultural potential. Members of these households have the interest and expertise to produce farm commodities at competitive prices, but their commodities are for the most part excluded from the mainstream food distribution system. Since these are households of different types, with different strategies and aspirations, a more sophisticated farm policy is called for to meet their various needs. The peddlers need help organizing direct sales points, such as farmers' markets, where their commodities and value-added "home made" products could be more easily marketed. The co-op crowd needs some vehicle and incentive to consolidate duplicated processing and delivery systems to save costs, and to combine commodity output to meet the volume needs of the mainstream market and to avoid individual undercutting of prices. The business farmers would profit from the improved conditions of their less productive competitors (and they

have told me as much) because local prices would be stabilized and the image of Newfoundland agriculture would be enhanced. All the households would benefit from the kind of promotional support lavished on the newly established broiler chicken industry. Reasons for the high cost of farm machinery and other inputs should be found and rectified. Why does a new tractor cost so much more in Newfoundland than in P.E.I.? "Dumping" of substandard produce, particularly potatoes, from other provinces at below production costs should be prohibited.

## 7.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The most glaring shortfall in this study may be its very limited discussion of gender relations on the farm. I have treated "households" as corporate entities, as if "they" made decisions. In fact nearly all the households I surveyed were organized along patriarchal lines, and "they" really means "he" in most cases. I originally considered addressing gender relations thoroughly since they have been shown to be important organizing factors in household commodity production units (Buttel and Gillespie 1984, Coughenour and Swanson 1983, Friedmann 1986, Gasson 1988, Reimer 1986, Whatmore 1988, 1991). I would have needed to interview each participating family member separately and in isolation. Even then I would have had to establish a level of trust and intimacy with each family member that would transcend that person's tendency to "cover" for other members. In a patriarchal household it would be most important to obtain "unedited" accounts from women, a feat I felt particularly as a male would be difficult to accomplish in the short time I had to spend with each household. To feel confident in describing gender relations I would have wanted to spend several days in each household as a participant observer of daily work patterns. What I obtained instead, from my survey was the way the people making up the household presented themselves corporately as a "farm family". This included at least the person identified as the "operator" and the roles of other family members as they were publicly expressed. I felt that letting the farm family as a group say who they were, what they were doing and what their problems were was at least an improvement over trying to describe these households in terms of

quantitative census data.

While most of the households scrutinized in this study operated multigenerational farms, the impacts of intergenerational relations on production and exchange strategies were not systematically analyzed. Other studies have shown the effects on farm practices and intergenerational farm survival produced by the varying relationships and tensions between farming parents and the children who will presumably succeed them (Carlson and Dillman 1983, Hutson 1987).

A third limitation to this research is that it was restricted to a single isolated farming region in Newfoundland. Studies of isolated fishing communities in Newfoundland have turned up a remarkable variation in relations of production and exchange from village to village and this might be expected of farming communities as well (Anderson and Wadel 1972, Sinclair 1985). I had originally hoped to compare production and exchange strategies of farm households in several regions of Newfoundland but had neither the time nor financial resources to do this. Fortunately, the strategies within the selected region were sufficiently diverse to allow for discussion. Unfortunately, farms with very low levels of both real and formal subsumption were overrepresented and the three "business farms" were so different that it is difficult to say how much their strategies were related to subsumption as opposed to commodity produced or size of operation.

Although this research project is limited in scope I believe it at least suggests the possibility of analyzing family farms in terms of the strategies they take either to enter or circumvent the mainstream agricultural economy, rather than purely in terms of the level at which and the degree to which they have entered that economy.

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## APPENDIX

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FARM OPERATORS D. Flint - 3 Nov, 1993

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE

**I. First, I'd like to ask you a few background questions about this farm.**

1. If someone asked you what type of farm this is, what would you say?
2. Can you tell me something about the history of this farmsite:
  - a. First of all, when and how did you come to acquire it?
  - b. Who did you acquire it from?
  - c. How long have people been farming here? Were they always full-time farmers?
  - d. Was it a smaller or larger operation in the past?
  - e. What sorts of commodities have been produced here over the years?
  - f. How were these commodities marketed in the past?
3. What would you say was the most striking change on this farmsite over the last 50 years?

**II. Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about the farm as it is today.**

4. What is the overall acreage of the farm?
5. How much of this land do you own? Do you have a mortgage?
6. Do you lease some of this land? Who do you lease it from?  
Y N
7. Do you farm land which you neither own nor lease? For instance, do you use community pastures, or "borrow" land from friends or relatives?  
Y N
8. Is any of this land somewhat distant from the central farm site? Y N

9. How much of this land is actually utilized in your farming operation?

10. In general, would you call it "good" farmland?

11. Do you use the remaining land for other purposes (such as harvesting forest products)?

Y N

12. Have you received any help from the government to improve your land?

Y N

**III. Now I'd like to ask some questions about your farming activities over the last year.**

13. Can you tell me what commodities you have produced on this farm over the last twelve months?

14. (if crops) For each crop, how many acres were in each crop, and what sort of yield did you get per acre?

15. (if hay, silage etc.) What kind of hay, silage etc.? How many cuttings were you able to make last year? What was the yield per acre?

KIND	CUTTINGS	YIELD
------	----------	-------

16. (if livestock) How many head do you have on the farm right now? How many went to market this year? How much of your land do you use as pasture? Have you ever used the common pastures?

HEAD	MARKETED	PASTURE	COMMON
------	----------	---------	--------

17. (if dairy) How many cows are you milking right now? What other cattle do you keep? How much of your land do you use as pasture? How much of your own hay and silage do you produce?

MILKING	OTHER	PASTURE	FORAGE
---------	-------	---------	--------

18. Did you keep a kitchen garden or otherwise raise food for family consumption? How much of your family's food requirement can you meet with your own farm products?

Y N

§

IV. I know that these days farming has gotten to be an expensive proposition requiring considerable investment in facilities and equipment. I'd like to know what sort of buildings, vehicles and machinery you use in your operation and whether you own them, rent or lease them or share them with other farmers. I'd also be interested in where you found your farm machinery, since there don't seem to be many dealerships in this area. (prompt for barns, washing, processing, storage facilities, greenhouses, delivery vehicles)

19. Let's start with buildings and other facilities.

20. Farm vehicles and implements and where you found them.

21. Were you able to get help financing any of these investments from banks, credit unions, government agencies, dealers, relatives or friends or did you have to pay for them up front?

V. Besides the major investments we have talked about there are many seasonal and day to day expenses on the farm. Can you tell me which of the following goods and services you use on your farm, what kinds you use, where you obtain them and roughly how much of them you used in the last twelve months?

22. Seed (for all items, ask what kinds)

23. Fertilizer

24. Pesticides

25. Herbicides

26. Replacement livestock

27. Feed

28. Veterinary services

29. Other animal services (shearing, slaughtering etc.)

30. Testing services (crop, soil etc.)

31. Motor fuel

32. Other important goods and services

VI. While all the things we have discussed so far are important ingredients, the key to a successful farming operation is in the people who actually do the work. I'd like to find out something about the background, education, skills and areas of responsibility for each of the people who contribute to the operation of this farm.

(ask for each person - note sex and relationship)

33 (a,b,c etc.) Where were you (where was this person) born?  
Year of birth?

34. Did you (he/she) come from a farming family?

35. What is your educational background?

36. Have you ever worked outside of the farming sector?  
a.What did you do and for how long?

37. When and why did you get into farming?

38. What are your areas of responsibility around the farm?

39. Do you work full-time on the farm or is your work  
a.Seasonal (what times of the year do you work?)  
b.Part-time (how many hours a week do you work?)

40 Do you receive a salary, wage or some other compensation for work?

41. Other than actual farm work, do you make important contributions to the farm household?

**PERSON A** \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIP \_\_\_\_\_

SEX M F

BIRTHPLACE \_\_\_\_\_ YOB \_\_\_\_\_

FARMING FAMILY? Y N

EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_

WORKED OUTSIDE? Y N

TYPE OF WORK \_\_\_\_\_

WHEN STARTED FARMING \_\_\_\_\_

WHY \_\_\_\_\_

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY \_\_\_\_\_

FARM FULLTIME? Y N

SEASONAL? Y N WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_

PART-TIME? Y N HOURS PER WEEK? \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSON B** \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELATIONSHIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEX M F \_\_\_\_\_  
 BIRTHPLACE \_\_\_\_\_ YOB \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARMING FAMILY? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_  
 WORKED OUTSIDE? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 TYPE OF WORK \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHEN STARTED FARMING \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHY \_\_\_\_\_  
 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARM FULLTIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEASONAL? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_  
 PART-TIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ HOURS PER WEEK? \_\_\_\_\_  
 OTHER IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSON C** \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELATIONSHIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEX M F \_\_\_\_\_  
 BIRTHPLACE \_\_\_\_\_ YOB \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARMING FAMILY? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_  
 WORKED OUTSIDE? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 TYPE OF WORK \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHEN STARTED FARMING \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHY \_\_\_\_\_  
 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARM FULLTIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEASONAL? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_  
 PART-TIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ HOURS PER WEEK? \_\_\_\_\_  
 OTHER IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSON D** \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELATIONSHIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEX M F \_\_\_\_\_  
 BIRTHPLACE \_\_\_\_\_ YOB \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARMING FAMILY? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_  
 WORKED OUTSIDE? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 TYPE OF WORK \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHEN STARTED FARMING \_\_\_\_\_  
 WHY \_\_\_\_\_  
 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY \_\_\_\_\_  
 FARM FULLTIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEASONAL? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_  
 PART-TIME? Y N \_\_\_\_\_ HOURS PER WEEK? \_\_\_\_\_  
 OTHER IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

**VII. Now I'd like to ask some general questions about the people who work on this farm.**

42. First of all, would you say that one person is ultimately responsible for this farm, or is it more of a partnership?

(probe a little here: an equal partnership?)

43. As a group, are there special ways that the people on this farm work together that set it apart from other farms? Have you developed innovative ways of doing things that make life easier or make you more competitive?

44. Statistics show that these days a large percentage of farming families in North America derive at least half of their total family income from off-farm employment. How important is off-farm employment in your total family income picture (probe- roughly what %)? Who works off the farm, what sort of work do they do, is it full-time, part-time or seasonal?

45. A family farm is a household as well. How do you divide up such non-farm chores as home repair and maintenance, cooking for family and farm hands, cleaning etc.? How do you decide who does what?

**VIII. Next I'd like to ask some marketing questions.**

46. Where is the market for your commodity(s)?

47. Is this market growing?

48. How do you market your products?

49. When do you market your products?

50. Who sets the prices and volumes to be purchased?

51. Does marketing involve processing and delivery? Who does it?

52. Are you interested in marketing or would you rather just farm?

53. Overall, how could the marketing process be improved?

**IX. Now I'd like to turn away from the day to day farm work and ask some questions about your off-farm activities.**

54. Are you involved in the local services commission or the development association?



55. Are you active in any local farmers' organizations?
56. Do you belong to any local voluntary organizations or do volunteer work in the community?
57. Are you a church member (which)?
58. Do you have relatives in the local community? (Who?)
59. How often do you see your relatives in the area?  
(LIST RELATIVES VISITED)

	HUSB.	WIFE			
At least weekly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In three months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What do you do when you get together? (could be just drop by, dinner, parties, sports, or even work together)

60. Do you socialize with other farmers in the area?  
(LIST OTHER FARMERS)

	HUSB.	WIFE			
At least weekly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In three months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What do you do when you get together?

61. Do you socialize with friends who are not farmers?  
(LIST NONFARM FRIENDS)

	HUSB.	WIFE			
At least weekly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In three months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

62. In general, how do you think local non-farmers view the farmers in this area (probe)

63. Do you have relatives or close friends outside of the Bay St. George region? Are you able to visit them often? Do they visit you?

64. Are you active in professional or voluntary organizations outside of the local community?

X. The following are some things I thought might make life easier for farmers in this region. I'd like to ask you to rate them on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all helpful, 3 being neutral, 5 being extremely helpful. Depending on the commodities you produce, not all of these items may apply.

65. Establishing an agricultural zone here

1 2 3 4 5

66. Differentially taxing farmed and "speculative" land

1 2 3 4 5

67. Levying a small property tax so that land ownership is clear

1 2 3 4 5

68. Province allowing sale of crown land to farmers

1 2 3 4 5

69. Province allowing lease of crown land to farmers

1 2 3 4 5

70. Passing a "right to farm" law

1 2 3 4 5

71. Separating agriculture from forestry at the provincial cabinet ministry level

1 2 3 4 5

72. Improved agricultural extension services

1 2 3 4 5

73. Establishing a provincial experimental farm

1 2 3 4 5

74. Provincial sponsorship of "test plots"

1 2 3 4 5

75. More regionally appropriate federal agricultural programs

1 2 3 4 5

76. Establishing a vegetable marketing board

1 2 3 4 5

77. Establishing a producer's coop

1 2 3 4 5

78. Eliminating quotas on milk or poultry

1 2 3 4 5

79. Expanding the 4-H program to interest more young people in farming 1 2 3 4 5

80. More locally available ag. courses  
1 2 3 4 5

81. A degree-granting ag. program at Westviking College  
1 2 3 4 5

82. More agricultural exhibits and fairs to promote and celebrate the farming way of life  
1 2 3 4 5

**XI. Finally, here are some questions about where your farm operation is going and what might help it get there.**

83. Is obtaining more land for your operation very important?

Y N

What are the major obstacles to doing so?

84. Is it important for you to obtain more facilities or equipment to streamline your operations?

Y N

What would be the best way for you to obtain them?

85. Could you use more hands on the farm?

Y N

If yes, why don't you have more hands?

86. Are you unable to expand because the market isn't there?

Y N

Explain:

87. In the future would you like to see your farming operation:

a. Expanding?      Staying the same size?      Getting smaller?

88. Have you ever seriously considered getting out of farming and beginning a new career?

Y N

What would you thinking of doing?

89. In the future would you like to:

- a. Modify your commodity base? Y N
- b. Rely more on off-farm income? Y N

90. When you retire, do you plan to:
- a. Retire on your farm? Y N
  - b. (if YES) Would you continue to farm part-time? Y N
  - c. Sell your farm and retire elsewhere? Y N
  - d. Sell your farm and enter a new occupation? Y N
  - e. Turn over the operation of your farm to a child or relative (is this a possibility?) Y N
- Possibility? Y N

88. This last question is a hard one for me to ask. It would be very helpful for my research but I can understand that you might rather not answer it. It involves giving me a rough approximation of your gross and net farm income for this year. Is your gross (after establishing gross follow through with net)

	GROSS	NET
a. under \$5,000	_____	_____
b. under 10,000	_____	_____
c. under 20,000	_____	_____
d. under 40,000	_____	_____
e. under 50,000	_____	_____
f. under 75,000	_____	_____
g. under 100,000	_____	_____
h. over 100,000	_____	_____

(Finish by soliciting comments, important areas not covered, suggestions for other farmers to interview.)







