

ECONOMIC REFORM AND REPEASANTIZATION IN POST-1990 CUBA

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Abstract: In the early 1990s Cuba initiated a new phase of social transformation, driven forward by an economic reform. Some aspects of that reform resembled orthodox structural adjustment, while others differed from it. In agriculture the reform reshaped state farms into multiple cooperatives, subdivided cooperative production, liberalized produce markets, and ceded land to individual parceleros. Through interviews with policy makers and cooperative leaders, and a survey of small farmers in western and eastern Cuba, I examined the reform's impact on small farmers' production. I found that two important patterns characterized the 1990s: first, "repeasantization" occurred; and second, income disparities between these two regions were maintained, if not expanded. Yet, even in poorer regions, small farmers are modestly better off than the average salary earner, while in other regions they are substantially better off. In sum, Cuba's economic crisis forced the reshaping of agricultural policy in ways that fortified the position of small farmers.

In the first half of the 1990s, Cuba embarked upon a new phase of social transformation as a consequence of the depression its economy experienced following the dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The implementation of an economic reform was central to this transformation. Cuba's economic reform entailed a partial opening up to the international economy, cuts in some subsidies, a reduction of employment within the state sector, and expansion of the tax base—features resembling aspects of economic reforms imposed elsewhere.

Yet, the reform also differed from the orthodox model of structural adjustment (SA). Evidence of this can be seen in the process of change characterizing Cuban agriculture since 1990. That process included the dismemberment of most state farms and their reshaping into multiple cooperatives, and the subdivision of cooperative production into small work units. It also entailed partial liberalization of agricultural markets. At the same time, state farms ceded land to tens of thousands of people, who then engaged in individual production. In addition, the state developed organic inputs for domestically oriented agriculture. Thus,

Cuba's agricultural policies were distinct from those that usually accompany economic reform.¹

Given the similarities and the differences between Cuba's economic reform and those carried out elsewhere, the question of the former's impact on small farmers and their production seems most relevant. In order to explore this question, I interviewed policy makers in institutions that have a notable impact on Cuba's small farmers (especially the National Small Farmers' Association—ANAP—and the Ministry of Agriculture—MINAGRI), and Cuban researchers working on related topics. I also carried out interviews with 21 cooperative leaders (from Credit and Service Cooperatives—CCSs, Agricultural Production Cooperatives—CPAs, and Basic Units of Cooperative Production—UBPCs) and a survey of 59 small farmers drawn from CCSs, CPAs, UBPCs, and the *parcelero* sector located in western and eastern Cuba.²

My study found that there was movement from non-agricultural to agricultural labor during the 1990s in Cuba, especially within the population from the Oriente (the eastern part of Cuba). Although I also found the country's small farmers to have experienced the same inter-regional differentiation in earnings and living standards that others have identified for the general population since 1990,³ even those in the poorer areas were more economically advantaged than the average income earner there.

CUBA'S ECONOMIC REFORM AND ITS SMALL FARMERS

Cuba's economic reform has brought about more thorough changes than any since the initial stages of the revolution. The reform was set in motion in response to the economic crisis that gripped the country in the early 1990s. Between 1990 and 1993 the gross domestic product (GDP) fell by roughly 35 percent, exports by 80 percent, and imports by roughly 75 percent (Estay 1997, 18 and 21; CEPAL 2000, A.1; Monreal 1999, 23).

At first, Cuban policy makers reacted by modifying the country's foreign economic relations. They sought new trade relations and products

1. For a few studies on the impact of SA elsewhere see, Rello 1999; Conroy, Murray, and Rosset 1996; Weeks 1995; Carter and Barham 1996.

2. "Small farmer" herein refers to individual farmers and cooperative members. I am using this term because the area of individual farmers is limited enough in size to qualify them as such; and, if the area of a cooperative were to be divided among its membership, they too would qualify as small farmers. Thus, "small farmers" have: (1) In areas that are fertile, strong in terms of infrastructure and level of technology employed, and relatively close to markets (e.g., the Province of Havana): < 14 Hectares; (2) In areas that are less fertile, more limited in infrastructure and level of technology, and further from markets (e.g., the Province of Santiago de Cuba): < 35 Hectares.

3. Monreal (1999) and Ferriol Muruaga (1998) describe increased differentiation overall; and Quintana Mendoza (1996), that between regions.

for trade, as well as foreign investments. Although progress was made on all these fronts, by mid-1993 it was clear that the reform had to be extended to the domestic economy and productive structure. Thus, in August 1993 it became legal for Cuban citizens to have foreign currency holdings. This measure was aimed at undercutting the black market for U.S. dollars and the purchase of items with them, as well as increasing foreign exchange earnings through the state-owned retail system for goods sold in U.S. dollars.

The creation of UBPCs through the sub-division of some state farms shortly followed. With the drastic drop in input imports in the early 1990s, the massive farms that had predominated in the past were no longer sustainable. The economic crisis also forced policy makers to acknowledge that production levels were higher on smaller farms. By the end of 1996, there were 2,654 UBPCs (CEPAL 2000, 313). They played their largest role in sugarcane, but were also important in citrus, rice, and livestock production. Consequently, the state farm sector's control over agricultural land dropped from 82 to 24.4 percent (Valdés Paz 1997, 147; and *ibid.*, A.73; respectively).

Industrial production was also affected by the economic crisis and reform. Due to shortages of inputs and an effort to reduce subsidies to non-profitable state enterprises, industries producing goods for the local market were partially closed down.

At the same time, the state administrative structure was reorganized. When combined with the slowdown in industry, overall public sector employment contracted in 1994 and 1995 by 110,000 workers (Estay 1997, 31). As a result, the unemployed population grew from 7.9 percent in 1989 to 34 percent in 1993 (CEPAL 2000, 253).

Given this situation, the government undertook several additional measures. In September 1993 it legalized some forms of self-employment. A year later farmers' markets, known as *Mercados Agropecuarios*, were established.⁴ Hence, it again became legal, as in the 1980–86 period, for farmers to sell their excess produce in markets in which prices were set by the laws of supply and demand. That is, they were free to market any produce they still had after meeting the quotas stipulated by the government for produce sales to Acopio (the state purchasing and distribution agency). The markets' opening in 1994 was intended to undercut the black market by making more agricultural produce accessible through legal channels and to stimulate production in order to increase food availability and lower prices.

Shortly thereafter, artisan and industrial goods markets were set up. The legalization of self-employment and the opening of these markets brought with them a new tax system. Also, prices on some goods and

4. C.F. Torres Vila and Pérez Rojas (1996); and Nova González (1995).

services were raised. These initiatives were designed to absorb excess liquidity and to improve the state's budget balance.

In order to assess the effects of these changes on Cuba's small farmers I carried out a survey of them in the provinces of Havana (in the municipalities of Güira de Melena and San Antonio de los Baños) and Santiago de Cuba (in the municipalities of Santiago de Cuba and Palma Soriano).⁵ The former province adjoins the capital, has very fertile soils and a high level of infrastructural development. In contrast, the province of Santiago de Cuba is in the Oriente and has a lower level of economic development and standard of living. More recently, the area was also struck by a multi-year drought. In selecting these municipalities for the interviews with cooperative directors and my survey, I hoped to approximate the range of circumstances in which Cuba's small farmers carry out their production.

5. Prior to interviewing the members selected for inclusion in my sample, I interviewed one or more members of the Junta Directiva in each UBPC, CPA, and CCS to obtain general information about it as well as entree to its members. These were the twenty-one interviews with cooperative officials referred to in the text.

The cooperatives included in the survey were selected from the pool of cooperatives in each municipality that met the criteria prescribed for this study; their emphasis was on domestically oriented production. In some cases selection was based upon my prior experience with them, and in others, distinct factors such as proximity (given the problem of transportation between locations) and willingness to have me visit them came into play. Once at each cooperative, the individual informants were chosen on a similar basis. The *parceleros* interviewed were selected from a list of *parceleros* in the municipality on the basis of proximity and willingness to be interviewed. The breakdown of informants included in my survey was the following:

Provincia de la Habana:

Güira de Melena

5—CPA members

6—CCS members

2—UBPC members

2—*Parceleros*

San Antonio de los Baños*

5—CPA members

8—CCS members

3—UBPC members

Provincia de Santiago de Cuba:

Palma Soriano**

5—CPA members

6—CCS members

2—UBPC members

2—*Parceleros*

Santiago de Cuba***

5—CPA members

8—CCS members

* San Antonio de los Baños' *parceleros* were not accessible for interview, given that they were not under the auspices of the organizations that I had access to there (ANAP and the municipality). I opted to include two additional CCS members in their stead. **Two of the CCS members interviewed in Palma Soriano were *parceleros*. ***All of Santiago's *parceleros* were affiliated with CCSs. Thus, two CCS members I included were *parceleros*. I was unable to interview any UBPC members in Santiago.

ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Among the most important issues for farmers worldwide is access to agricultural resources. Productive resources were a concern in post-1990 Cuba. However, the resources that were limited for Cuban farmers were distinct from those in short supply for small farmers elsewhere. Where land reform has yet to take place, land is usually the resource most lacking within this sector (Thiesenhusen 1995; de Janvry 1981). But, given the variety of forms through which land is available in Cuba, access to it is largely taken for granted (see table 1).

Agricultural credit has also traditionally been hard to attain for small farmers worldwide. The implementation of SA programs has made access to it only more constrained.⁶ Yet, in Cuba access to credit was taken for granted by the majority of the farmers I interviewed (see table 1). Most of them did not use credit for investments or on-going production costs (only 42.4 percent used one or both types). The vast majority who did not use it stated that they simply did not need it.⁷

An additional resource that can play a notable role in agricultural production is technical assistance. Given that in most countries farmers are required to pay for it, employment of technical assistants is commonly concentrated among better-off farmers (Thiesenhusen 1995; Kay 1994). Technical assistance has also been cut back by SA programs. In contrast, in Cuba it is readily available to small farmers. Ninety-five percent of those surveyed regularly received technical assistance from either state extension workers or their cooperative (see table 1). Thus, as these farmers have begun to grow new crops and raise farm animals, they appear to have received the technical support that is crucial for making such changes successful.

However, a set of resources exists whose availability is somewhat constrained for Cuba's small farmers: production inputs. Whereas lack of purchasing power may limit the access of small farmers elsewhere to inputs, until 1990 most small farmers in Cuba benefited from their relative abundance there. The range of inputs they had access to was comparatively large, reflecting the different levels of development of Cuba's productive forces. Nonetheless, input availability dropped off dramatically as imports of pesticides, fertilizers, diesel fuel (used in irrigation systems and by farm vehicles), farm equipment, and others, plummeted after 1990.⁸ Yet, by 1998, with the country's economy beginning to rebound, limited access to inputs was no longer an all-pervasive problem.

6. See Carter and Barham (1996); Serra and Castro (1994).

7. Some cooperative officials indirectly expressed disapproval of farmers who relied on credit. Yet, I believed those who said they did not use it because they had no need to.

8. See Deere (1991); Enríquez (1994).

TABLE 1 *A Comparison of Four Municipalities: Changing Access to Agricultural Resources and Its Effects on Small Farmers*

	<i>Province of Havana</i>		<i>Province of Santiago</i>	
	<i>Güira</i> (N=15)	<i>San Antonio</i> (N=16)	<i>Palma Sor.</i> (N=15)	<i>Stgo.</i> (N=13)
Land				
Owned (Inherit.)	26.7%	37.5%	20.0%	30.8%
Agrarian Refor.	73.3%	62.5%	80.0%	69.3%
Before 1990	27.3%	60.0%	16.7%	22.2%
After 1990	72.7%	40.0%	83.3%	77.7%
Credit				
Used It	73.3%	31.3%	40.0%	23.1%
Did not Use It	26.7%	68.8%	60.0%	76.9%
No need	75.0%	100.0%	88.9%	90.0%
Technical Assistance				
Received Regul.	100.0%	100.0%	93.3%	84.6%
Didn't Receive Regularly	—	—	6.7%	15.4%
Increased Self-suff. Prod.	46.7%	18.8%	53.3%	30.8%
Of those who received land Post-1990	(N=8)	(N=4)	(N=10)	(N=7)
Came from Agric. Sector	50.0%	—	30.0%	—
Came from Urban Sector	50.0%	100.0%	20.0%	71.4%
No Answer	—	—	50.0%	28.6%
Improvements on the Farm:				
Were Possible	66.7%	81.3%	60.0%	76.9%
Purch. Animals	53.3%	37.5%	26.7%	38.5%
Forced Sales				
Ani./Equip.	13.3%	—	—	—

Source: Author's survey data, 1998.

Although many of those interviewed mentioned the restricted availability of inputs, only 40.7 percent said that it was affecting their production levels. The remainder had resolved this problem through other means, such as the use of animal traction and organic inputs.

TABLE 2 *Food Crop Acreage by Sector, 1990–1999 (Hectares)*

	1990	1991	1992	1993
<u>State</u>				
Root Crops	121,008	125,517	126,819	94,908
Plantain Bananas	34,973	33,308	41,642	42,428
Vegetables	106,139	90,424	87,149	49,792
Corn	53,210	44,528	47,735	31,454
Beans	33,738	33,792	44,675	32,872
Citrus	—	—	—	101,558
Other Fruits	—	—	—	29,582
<u>Non-State</u>				
Root Crops	70,656	68,549	72,629	55,957
Plantain Bananas	19,338	16,909	19,298	19,701
Vegetables	85,472	77,031	68,469	41,922
Corn	43,025	44,850	47,628	36,734
Beans	19,365	17,365	19,969	16,414
Citrus	—	—	—	11,319
Other Fruits	—	—	—	15,100

Source: For 1990–92, Unpublished CEE data; For 1993–99, CEE, *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, 1999*, tables 9.11 and 9.12, Habana, CEE

CHANGING PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Several important changes in agricultural production patterns have taken place during the “Special Period in Peacetime” (the post-1990 period of austerity). Given a history of extreme crop specialization, the most notable change was that now Cuba’s small farmers—regardless of their commercial production emphasis—set aside part of their land for crops and livestock that will insure that their individual, their family’s, and their employees’ consumption needs are met. Even those farmers who had specialized in a food crop or two are producing a greater variety of crops. Those who used to produce non-food crops now plant part of their land with food crops. More than a third of my informants had adopted this strategy since 1990. (See table 1 with data based on my survey; and table 2 for national food crop acreage figures.) Also, 89.8 percent of those interviewed had livestock on the land they worked.

These changes reflect the government’s new emphasis on insuring food self-sufficiency in the countryside and the farmers’ individual concern to not be dependent on the official food distribution system or the Mercados Agropecuarios. Given post-1990 food shortages, having a self-sufficiency plot became essential to CCS members’ ability to attract and retain workers. Likewise, when asked why they had gone from being urban workers before 1990 to being farmers in the 1990s (25 percent of

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
52,354	41,513	43,665	41,152	35,242	31,699
24,894	25,348	27,106	25,991	26,986	24,902
27,738	22,154	29,214	23,992	24,408	30,014
19,871	18,819	22,603	23,961	19,666	21,684
19,969	12,881	12,820	12,713	11,360	9,414
54,241	53,763	33,943	30,819	29,689	26,352
15,200	12,606	12,662	13,211	12,764	12,513
94,607	96,305	99,289	99,986	99,570	95,377
46,296	48,587	47,229	48,143	44,380	52,326
57,938	54,335	56,877	58,009	81,343	70,848
57,773	58,072	66,624	75,007	65,307	70,525
35,346	31,203	34,041	37,316	33,875	3,650
48,401	47,684	45,432	45,391	43,121	40,102
30,455	25,422	28,577	28,559	26,824	25,789

my sample), a number of my informants mentioned having guaranteed access to food.

In the past few years, the government began to offer incentives for the production of certain crops, especially those geared toward the export market. Some of these farmers' key crops were among the incentivized products, such as coffee, honey, tobacco, citrus crops, and sugarcane. In other cases, crops were adopted for production because of the incentives. Thus, two cooperatives I visited in Santiago de Cuba had begun to cultivate tobacco on part of their land in the previous few years, even though this province was not traditionally known for its cultivation.

Another major change is in terms of the marketing of these farmers' crops. As decreed by law, the vast majority (93.2 percent) of the farmers in my survey sold the bulk of their produce to Acopio. Once having met sales quotas set by Acopio, however, most (83.1 percent) sold the remainder of their produce in the Mercados. In addition, some informants sold their excess production at the farm gate. Yet there were also farmers who sold their produce to another state agency, such as Cítricos Ceiba and the Empresa Comercializadora, both of which purchase better quality goods at higher prices than Acopio and export the produce or sell it in Cuba's tourist sector.

Despite the fact that none of these farmers sold all of their produce to Acopio, some of them were reluctant to acknowledge sales in the Mercado

Agropecuario. And the issue of how much of their produce they sold there was even more delicate. Concern about the state reversing its decision to permit such sales, as occurred in 1986, clearly remains among some farmers. It may also be that they are encouraged to sell all of their produce to the state and are loath to admit that they are not doing so.

NEW STRUCTURES AND FORMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The downsizing of agricultural production begun in 1993 was one of the more far reaching modifications made to Cuba's previous model of agriculture. The formation of the UBPCs was the most dramatic shape this took. My survey results indicated that their membership is largely composed of those who had worked on the state farms from which the UBPCs were formed. However, they were evenly divided between those who had been regular workers on the *granjas* and Contingente members (the brigades that brought urban workers to live and work in rural areas after 1990).

Interestingly, more than half of the UBPC members interviewed were migrants from another part of Cuba. The area of "pull" for them was the Province of Havana, while the area of "push" was the Oriente. The UBPC members embodied Cuba's most notable internal migratory pattern of the post-1990 period. Within the overall survey, the incidence of domestic migration was highest among UBPC members.

I also asked those who I interviewed from this sector what they saw as the differences between their UBPCs and cooperatives. Most responded that there were none.⁹ Yet, several responded by describing (more or less positively) the close relationship that still existed between UBPCs and the remnants of the state farms that they had previously been part of. That is, although the UBPCs are supposed to be relatively autonomous from the state,¹⁰ their ties to it remain very strong.

But the new emphasis on downsizing was also promoted in the CPA sector of agriculture. Similar to the UBPCs, a strategy of organizing work was being tried out on the CPAs, known as "linking the person with the area."¹¹ Started on a modest scale from 1993 to 1994, it had extended its reach by 1998. In fact, more than 80 percent of the CPAs and UBPCs I visited were organized in this way, though for most (90.9 percent) only part of their land had been "linked." The better part of those working

9. The three UBPCs that I drew members from for my survey were profitable enterprises. However, this was not the norm for UBPCs in 1998: approximately 70 percent of them were not profitable (*Juventud Rebelde* 1997; and *Granma Internacional* 1997). Thus, my informants were members of less than typical UBPCs.

10. C.F. Colectivo de Autores (1996) and Bu Wong et al. (1996).

11. This involved an informal subdivision of land into small units worked by a fixed group of members who received part of the value of any "excess production."

on farms where such subdivision had occurred had received real economic benefits.¹²

Another noteworthy change in the 1990s was the turning over of state farm land to those who wanted to farm it. These *parceleros* received a usufruct title so that they had the security that they would be able to work the same plot into the future. Plot size depended on the number of family members who would be working it.

Although all of the *parceleros* included in the survey (a total of nine) grew crops for their own consumption, they also marketed some of their produce. Their marketing patterns varied by crop and municipality; from selling part of their produce to Acopio, to selling their surplus at the farm gate or on the streets of their town. Whether or not they had been incorporated into a CCS—where marketing is sometimes done collectively—undoubtedly influenced the *parceleros'* decision about where to market their produce. The state's goal is for neighboring CCSs to gradually fold *parceleros* into their membership, thereby easing the state's responsibilities toward them while ensuring that part of their production is distributed through official channels.

When asked how they felt about becoming *parceleros*, almost all spoke exclusively of the advantages it had given them. These included economic benefits (from no longer having to purchase the food items they now grew and from produce sales), being able to make this contribution to the revolution, and feeling more useful as a person. Only one of them spoke of a disadvantage: having insecure land tenure.

The promotion of organic production following the drop in agro-chemical imports after 1990 was yet another change in agricultural policy (Rosset 1997). In fact, the vast majority of cooperative leaders I met with said that their cooperatives used biological pest control, organic fertilizers, or both on at least some of their crops. Despite the widespread use of organic inputs, attitudes about them varied: some said they ought to use them, although they were not doing so at the time (Interview #47a, CPA, 27 June 1998); while others felt that their usage was either impractical or backward (Interview #1a, CPA, 28 May 1998; #14a, CPA, 8 June 1998). For most, agro-chemicals were still key in their cooperative's production.

Finally, the post-1990 economic opening brought international NGOs and foreign governments into Cuban agriculture. Among the cooperatives included in my sample, collaborative relationships with foreign NGOs and governments had begun to spring up. By mid-1998, 16.9 percent of them belonged to a cooperative or UBPC that had such relations. Cooperative relations offered farmers credit, inputs, technical assistance, and agricultural equipment. Moreover, the foreign partner took virtually complete responsibility for international marketing of the resulting

12. It is important to consider the caution in interpretation called for by fn. 9.

crop or product. In some cases the cooperatives also received a foreign exchange bonus for products sold on the international market. For cooperatives that attained such an agreement, the limitations commonly plaguing agricultural producers in Cuba were greatly ameliorated.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PROVINCES

The differences between the provinces of Havana and Santiago de Cuba are striking and have a long history. Since colonization, the Province of Havana's economy was more diversified and its industry more developed than Santiago's. In addition, the level of the productive forces was much higher in the Province of Havana than in Santiago. Their differing levels of economic development coincided with distinctions in terms of average incomes. Quintana Mendoza (1996, 3–6) notes income differentials between all of the provinces that place Santiago into the category of "backward" provinces and Havana into the category of "forward" provinces. But, there was a clear trend between 1975 and 1990 for these income differentials to shrink.

Present-day differences between the two province's small farmer sectors begin with what each produces. In the Province of Havana the most important products are tubers, plantains and bananas, vegetables, and corn. In Santiago small farmers are especially strong in dairy farming; but corn, coffee, and fruits are also grown there.

The continuing difference in the level of the productive forces between the provinces was reflected in these farmers' production techniques. In the Province of Havana tractors reigned supreme, although in the 1990s oxen were reintroduced and were used widely. Most, if not all, of these farmers' cultivated area was irrigated. In contrast, tractors were much less prevalent in Santiago, while oxen and manual labor were heavily relied upon. Access to irrigation was also notably less than in Havana.

The use of organic inputs also differed between these provinces. I found that their use was more common in Havana (90 percent) than in Santiago (69.2 percent). The reasons for this were probably several: a greater emphasis was placed on the development of organic inputs for food crops produced in the Province of Havana, which were destined for the capital, because of the need to ensure food production there; the lower level of infrastructure in Santiago would complicate distribution of the relatively "perishable" biological pest controls; and given the higher level of productive forces in Havana pre-1990, it is likely that the province had a greater dependence on agro-chemicals, resulting in more need for their replacement during the Special Period.

Differences were also evident in the patterns of access these two provinces' small farmers had to key agricultural resources. Since 1990 many more of them had joined the reformed sector of agriculture (i.e., a CPA,

UBPC, or had become a *parcelero* in Santiago (60.7 percent) than in Havana (38.7 percent) (See table 1). This is a reflection of how hard hit the Oriente's urban economies were by the depression of the 1990s. Farming had become one of the few options open to people in the region.

In addition, credit usage varied between these two provinces. The Province of Havana stood out for its much higher credit use than Santiago (51.6 percent, and 32 percent of my survey, respectively; see table 1). This probably resulted from the use of more advanced technologies, with higher production costs, in Havana.

Problems of access to agricultural inputs also varied between the two provinces: whereas 29 percent of those included in my survey in the Province of Havana said that input shortages had affected their production levels, 53.6 percent of my interviewees in Santiago did. This difference may be explained by the fact that the Province of Havana has a higher priority in input distribution than Santiago because of the importance of its food crop production and the greater use of organic inputs in the Province of Havana may have reduced the impact of the crisis for farmers there.

THE OUTCOME OF THESE DIFFERENCES: STRIKING INCOME DIFFERENTIALS

Cuban researchers have found these two region's populations to have different income levels (Quintana Mendoza 1996). My survey revealed a similar situation for small farmers. Of those I interviewed in the Province of Havana,¹³ 80 percent said they earned an average of more than 500 pesos a month [the national average for a monthly salary was 217 pesos in 1998 (Rodríguez, 1998, 5)], and 40 percent said they earned more than 1,000 pesos a month (see table 3). In contrast, 96.2 percent of those in Santiago¹⁴ said their average monthly income was less than 500 pesos; and 76 percent, said it was less than 300 pesos.

Because of the problems associated with income self-reporting, I used several additional indicators to gauge how my informants were faring. One was their ability to make improvements on their home or farm after 1990. Given acknowledged differences in income, there was surprisingly little variation between my informants at the provincial level in this regard (see table 1). But, the starting point for these improvements was distinct: the homes and farms of most of my informants in the province of Havana were better off than those in Santiago. Differences at the municipal level ranged from San Antonio, where 81.3 percent had made

13. Just over 19 percent of my informants in Havana were unable or unwilling to respond as to their average monthly income.

14. Seven percent of my sample there was unwilling or unable to respond to my inquiry about their income.

TABLE 3 *A Comparison of Four Municipalities:
The Income of Small Farmers*

	<i>Province of Havana</i>		<i>Province of Santiago</i>	
	<i>Güira</i> (N=15)	<i>San Antonio</i> (N=16)	<i>Palma Sor.</i> (N=15)	<i>Stgo</i> (N=13)
100–200 Pesos/Mo.	—	—	60.0%	15.4%
200–300 Pesos/Mo.	13.3%	—	26.7%	30.8%
300–400 Pesos/Mo.	13.3%	—	—	23.1%
400–500 Pesos/Mo.	—	6.3%	6.7%	15.4%
500–600 Pesos/Mo.	—	18.8%	—	7.7%
600–700 Pesos/Mo.	13.3%	18.8%	—	—
700–800 Pesos/Mo.	—	12.5%	—	—
800–900 Pesos/Mo.	—	—	—	—
900–1,000 Pesos/Mo.	—	—	—	—
1,000–1,500 Pesos/Mo.	13.3%	37.5%	—	—
1,500–2,000 Pesos/Mo.	6.7%	—	—	—
2,000–3,000 Pesos/Mo.	6.7%	—	—	—
No Answer	33.3%	6.3%	6.7%	7.7%

Source: Author's survey data, 1998.

improvements, to Palma Soriano where only 60 percent had. This range paralleled the extremes in self-reporting of income.

I also asked if they had purchased any large farm animals or agricultural equipment since 1990. In the Province of Havana 45.2 percent of them had been able to do so in contrast to 32.1 percent in Santiago (see table 1). These figures better corroborate their income differences than those for home improvements.

Another indication of income, broadly defined, was access to other benefits—such as the option of purchasing scarce household appliances at subsidized prices or of using a vacation home at least a few days a year—that can come with CPA or UBPC membership. These benefits were more common for the CPA and UBPC members interviewed in the

Province of Havana than in Santiago: 60 percent of the CPA and UBPC members from Havana had bought appliances through their cooperative since 1990, while 33.3 percent had in Santiago. Fifty-three percent of the CPA or UBPC members in Havana reported taking such a vacation since 1990, compared to 33.3 percent in Santiago.

The number of people a farm employs also indicates its economic status. If it is doing well it will absorb more labor, and if it is doing poorly farm household members may be forced to generate off farm income. Given that this pattern is clearest on individual farms, these data only describe CCS members and *parceleros*. Small farms in the Province of Havana were twice as likely as those in Santiago to employ sons, daughters, and other relatives in addition to the owner. Moreover, Santiago's small farms hired less permanent and temporary workers than those in Havana.

Thus, multiple indicators highlight the significant difference in income levels between the small farmers of the Province of la Havana and Santiago de Cuba. I would offer several hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. These two provinces' varying levels of economic development led to distinct yield levels. Major differences in productivity were revealed in my interviews with cooperative leaders in each province. This difference was compounded in the 1990s by the greater difficulties my informants in Santiago had obtaining inputs. The drought of recent years would have exacerbated the situation. As a result, farmers in the Oriente would have less produce to sell.

Reduced levels of produce also implied that they would have less produce to sell once they met their quotas with Acopio. The farmers from the Province of Havana had another advantage over those from Santiago: the group of crops produced by the former included fewer goods that had to be sold in their entirety to Acopio or another state agency. That is, once the farmers' consumption needs were met, certain products—including coffee, sugarcane, milk, and meat—had to be sold to a specified state agency. The particular agencies that purchased domestically oriented goods (e.g., Acopio) set substantially lower prices than what these goods would earn in the market. Aside from those products destined for export, the rationale was that these products are considered to be basic food stuffs that must be distributed through official channels to insure that the population's needs are met.

In fact, more of the farmers included in my survey from the Province of Havana sold their produce in the Mercados Agropecuarios than those from Santiago. In addition, more of them from the Province of Havana sold their produce to better paying state-run agencies, like Cítricos Ceiba and the Empresa Comercializadora, than those from Santiago. This meant that farmers from the Province of Havana had greater earnings from the produce they sold in channels other than Acopio, than those from

Santiago. Thus, farmers in Santiago were disadvantaged by the lower quantity of goods they had for sale and the prices they sold them at—both of which would have a negative impact on their income levels.

CONCLUSION

Two important patterns emerged from my study of the impact of economic crisis and reform on Cuba's small farmers. The first was the "repeasantization"—or the movement of people not previously engaged in agricultural labor into small-scale farming, thus reversing the general historical trend of small farmers being pushed off the land with the spread of large-scale agriculture—that took place in the 1990s, which was most evident among the Santiagueros. The second was the maintenance, if not growth, of income disparities between these two provinces during the Special Period.

As described I found evidence of the migratory trend that confronted Cuban planners during the 1990s: people leaving the Oriente and moving to the Province (if not the City of) Havana. This could be seen most clearly among my interviewees from the UBPC sector in the Province of Havana. Those who had migrated in the 1990s had not been active in agriculture before coming to Havana. Thus, a move from non-agricultural to agricultural work was taking place across regions. Yet, the pool of farmers interviewed in Santiago also contained more parceleros than that from the Province of Havana (thereby reflecting unpublished ANAP data [2000] on the parceleros). This suggests that the movement of workers between these two economic sectors was underway even within the Province of Santiago. My hypothesis is that Santiago's non-agricultural sector was harder hit by the economic crisis and reform than that of the Province of Havana.¹⁵ Consequently, it had pushed more people who had not been agriculturalists into farming than in the Province of Havana.

Although farming represented a viable option for those from the especially hard-hit Oriente, substantial income disparities still existed between farmers in the eastern and western parts of the country. The results of my study coincide with Quintana Mendoza's (1996) finding that, rather than being eliminated, important income differentials worsened during the 1990s. My data do not describe how the income of those I interviewed changed over time. Nevertheless, the differentials I found were even more dramatic than what he identified for the population as a whole, suggesting that here, too, there may have been an accentuation of regional differentials during the 1990s.

15. A Cuban researcher argued that this was especially true of the measures that formed part of the economic reform and were aimed at reducing excess liquidity (personal interview—researcher, economic research center, Havana, 13 May, 1999).

Yet, even in Cuba's poorer regions, as illustrated by the Province of Santiago, small farmers are no worse off than the country's average worker. In the Province of Santiago as a whole, roughly half of my informants reported an income higher than the national average, and half reported lower incomes. The self-reported incomes of those interviewed in the municipality of Palma Soriano were significantly below those in the municipality of Santiago, and on average, below the national average. However, it is worth repeating that people tend to underreport their income. This suggests that small farmers in the Province of Santiago as a whole are modestly better off than the average salary earner, while in other regions they are substantially better off.

In sum, Cuba's economic crisis forced its policy makers to reshape agricultural policy so that it, effectively, redressed some of the imbalances that characterized development policy in other parts of Latin America. With the shift in Cuba's agricultural policy after 1990, food crop production achieved a much higher level of priority than it had in the past, and with it, the position of the country's small farmers was fortified.

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