

Secondary Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Activities Exercised by the Peasant Populations in the Localities of the Urban-Rural Commune of Maluku in Kinshasa (DRC)

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ABSTRACT

Due to unsatisfactory agricultural yields, many farmers engage in alternative activities during the lean season. The primary goal is to generate additional income to help meet basic family needs. These activities also contribute to improving household nutrition. However, despite their efforts, the income earned from these activities often remains insufficient in light of the many challenges these farmers face. The main alternative agricultural activities include market gardening, with a focus on short-lifecycle vegetables that are highly perishable and produced in small quantities due to local climate conditions. Other common non-agricultural secondary activities include: fishing, hunting, charcoal and firewood production, poultry farming, gathering wild fruits, and some artistic crafts and activities.

Keywords: Secondary activities, Agricultural activities, Locality, Peasant, Breeding, Fishing

INTRODUCTION

The commune of Maluku is the largest of the communes that makes up the provincial city of Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has an area of approximately 7, 948.8 km² out of the total area of Kinshasa. It is an urban-rural (Léon de St M., 1970). It is located in the North/East part of Kinshasa. It has urbanized and non-urbanized neighborhood which have a purely rural character.

It is true that in addition to traditional agriculture which remains essential in this rural landscape, the populations who live there take care also of other farms of production in the villages. These include market gardening, small-scale non specialized breeding of laying hens, goats, pigs, fishing, gathering, and the collection of various natural products, charcoal making, hunting and crafts.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED

The size of this municipality and the number of its inhabitants have created difficulties in determining all agricultural and non-agricultural activities exerted by the population of Maluku. Nevertheless, the observation and analysis made on some activities allowed us to make the observation included in this article.

a) The classic methods used are:

- The historical method which made it possible to understand the migratory movement of the population in this area, the activities carried out, their nature and their importance;
- The comparative method which facilitated the classification of non-agricultural secondary activities based on their income;
- The descriptive method which contributed to the description of secondary agricultural and non-agricultural activities carried out by peasants in villages.

- b) The research techniques applied are:
- The documentary research which provided useful knowledge relating to our subject. To this end, we read the works, various articles and official reports of the commune and certain urban and central service;
 - The field observation facilitated the discovery of activities and their progress in the villages;
 - The survey questionnaires addressed to key stakeholders had made it possible to have diversified useful information;
 - The interview was used during contacts with customary chiefs public service experts and identified partner NGOS;
- Statistics made it possible to exploit the data and produce the table and comments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The methods and techniques used yielded the results discussed below.

Market Gardening

This crop has become one of the recent peri-urban activities in Maluku. Its clientele has expanded following the adoption of certain consumer habits by the Kinshasa population. It is practiced in villages where is not a problem. It is generally done on carefully tended flowerbeds, in the bottoms of valleys and damp depressions.

The villages listed out in the production of the crops listed opposite their respective names.

N°	Localities	Crops
1	Kibonoka	Tomato, pepper, squash, avocado, potato, papaya
2	Menkao	Tomato, amaranth, sweet potato, eggplant, sorrel
3	Kingakati	Aubergine, amaranth, parsley, apple cabbage
4	Mbakana	Onions, banana, pepper, yam, papaya, okra
5	Bu	Banana, tomato, pepper, onions, sweet potato, yam
6	Kikimi	Banana, squash avocado, amaranth, pineapple, cucumber, sorrel

Source: Kayembe Kabasele (2024)

Fishing

To meet their fish needs, some farmers exploit the coastal beds of the Congo river, local river and marshes. This fishing is preferably practiced at night as professional fishermen do. Because at night, the water is calm. The fish come out of their shelters to feed. So, fishermen have the chance to catch them easily.

The caught fish are generally sold on the markets of Maluku. It is important to note that the fishing techniques and equipment used are basic and routine. They cannot achieve good production. This is why these amateur fishermen often join together in small groups to be able to use the main instruments such as: canoes, nets, spears, hooks, bass, juices of toxic plants and so on. All in the hope of increasing their production per group.

The quantities of fish caught vary depending on the fishing season between 30 and 70 kg. The main known fishing grounds are:

- 1) On the banks of the Congo river in its North/Eastern part at Kimpoko;
- 2) Maluku, Inga, Mambutuka;
- 3) On the bank of Lifumi and Mbuli rivers;
- 4) On the Nsele river which forms the border between the communes of Nsele and Maluku;

5) In the deep marshes located at the bottom of the vast valleys between the hills.

The preservation of fresh fish is difficult due to a lack of cold rooms. To get around this difficult, several processes are used. We will cite: salting, drying or smoking. Likewise, their transportation is not easy. There are few vehicles available to transport them directly to the points of sale in Kinshasa.

The fish caught are used for family food and for direct or indirect sale if the quantity caught allows it. Indirect sales are made through these links, members of rural family channels. Though these links, members of rural families send packages of fish to members living in Maluku or in the city center.

Often, women vendors in Kinshasa wait at specific points for the arrival of trucks carrying carefully packaged food, including smoked fish of Maluku. Price competition is evident in Maluku, when fish from Mayi-Ndombe, Mbandaka or Tshiopo arrive, as these fish are cheaper. This makes it difficult for occasional fishermen to sell their fish for as much as they would have liked. We point out that, a basket of smoked fish weighing 20 kg and coming from the above-mentioned localities costs \$26 compared to that from Maluku which is sold at \$40. This price difference, i.e. \$14 discourages local customers.

Hunting

Regarding hunting, this activity is practiced by farmers during downtime. This time comes after the major work of felling trees and burning fields. Hunting takes place at night and during the day. It is a reliable source of animal protein for peasant families and provides them with money.

The most commonly used hunting tools are: spears, arrows, nets, 12-gauge shotguns, bows and dogs with bells.

The most commonly caught game animals are: antelopes, porcupines, wild boards and rodents. Hunting can be individual or collective. Game is captured by trapping or by rigging.

To avoid conflicts between villages, hunters do not exceed the limits of their areas. Nor can they burn other people's bush without first receiving permission from the responsible customary chiefs. The hunters encountered in these villages declared that there are no animals following the anarchic deforestation by the manufacturers of wood embers.

Manufacture and Sale of Wood Embers

The increase demand for wood energy by Kinshasa households has led to the establishment of a vast system of logging. This exploitation is abusive and anarchic. Because, it is done without planning or any reforestation projects in the villages. This is how wooded areas are disappearing everywhere and even more so in the Northeastern part of the commune.

Coal production is a safe and secure source of income for many players. Indeed, a bag of coal weighs 50 kg sells for between \$14 and \$21. This price varies depending on the season. In the raining season, they are sold at a high price because their good quality. Prices are also vary depending on the discussion between the seller and the buyers. However, it should be noted that peasants renting land have difficulty finding wood to make charcoal. They cheat by cutting wood in neighboring concessions. This action is often the cause of conflicts between the concessionaires and the populations of the villages surrounding them.

Often, occasional ember makers form small groups to go and get wood elsewhere. After the operation is well done, they share the proceeds from the sale.

However, our investigations have shown that charcoal production is profitable for dealers who have large wooded areas capable of producing more than 100 bags of charcoal at a time for sale. Of this production, 10/100 are sold on site to street vendors. The remaining quantity is transported directly to Kinshasa by multi- ton trucks for sale.

Backyard Farming

This activity is not very developed among farmers in the villages surveyed. It concerns small livestock, the most common animals and poultry being: goats, dogs for hunting, cats to fight rodents, pigs and laying hens.

In several villages, it has been observed that chickens and ducks occupy kitchen corners and thus share accommodation with their owners. This practice is justified by the small number of these livestock and by the theft of domestic animals observed in the villages.

In this raising, the beats are delight, wandering and feeding themselves in the villages. They return to the hut at nightfall. These animals are sold to solve family problems such as bereavement, marriage or paying children's school fees. These animals are rarely killed to feed the family.

Gathering and Collection of Wild Fruits

These activities are intercalary. They often take place during the lean season. This involves the collection of fruits that grow wild in the forest and in the savannah. Although periodic and generally collected in small quantities, these products provide a food and financial surplus to the farmers who collect them. The products involved in this activity are: caterpillars, mushrooms, packaging leaves and various fruits from nature.

The collection of these goods is done painfully and in a limited way. Because, access prohibitions to other people's concessions are imposed. Violation of this prohibition is also the cause of conflicts in the villages.

Secondary agricultural and non-agricultural activities provide income for the farmers who carry them out. However, this income is low and insufficient. It does not allow farmers to solve their many problems, improve their living conditions or ensure the development of their respective villages.

Indeed, the impact of these activities is not perceptible on any of the prerequisites for development. Because, these prerequisites are seen in the food supply of the population, in housing and in the equipment visible in the peasants' houses.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result received from our surveys, we can conclude that agriculture remains the main activity of the populations of Maluku. Because they cannot find better in secondary activities. Therefore, it is well implemented and well followed, agriculture always brings joy and relief to courageous and persevering practitioners. This joy is visible in farmers who have sold their products well.

However, the intervention and support of urban and municipal authorities are essential. Because they would allow farmers to have good agricultural production which would reduce famine and poverty, two major obstacles to the development of this peripheral area of Kinshasa.

The provincial government should prohibit the conversion of agricultural land into poorly planned residential plots. It will be difficult to prevent erosion and landslides caused by such poorly planned development.

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