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Dominica, Factor 7: Animal Agriculture

Dominica, Modernizing and Creating Exports out of Fisheries

The world today feels more distant than ever before. As teenagers are growing up in the United States it feels like life oftentimes revolves around them. They stress themselves out day-in and day-out constantly worrying about deadlines and the next thing around the corner. They have to deal with the difficulty of juggling school, extra-curricular activities, boyfriends and girlfriends and part-time jobs. They constantly face the popularity pyramid, fight against peer pressure and deal with the desire to be accepted for who they are. They have the difficulty of standardized testing, deciding what they want to do with their future and sometimes they even have trouble finding time to eat three whole meals a day. The teenagers in this country have it so terrible, or do they? Teenagers around the world are not given a free high school education and they certainly don't have to worry about extra-curricular activities, simply because they don't even exist. Many of them don't have boyfriends or girlfriends, but instead face the struggle of having an arranged marriage at a young age. They don't work simple, part-time jobs, but instead work labor intensive jobs all year long. They are forever stuck in a hierarchy pyramid with no option of moving up or down. They aren't given the option to have some of those "fun" nights that teenagers in America have to learn how to say no to. They also live with the struggle of knowing that they will never even be able to accept themselves for who they are. Teenagers in other countries do have Americans beat in one area though; they will never face the trouble of fitting a time for all three meals into their day, a lot of times they simply won't even be given the option to eat once.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, nearly 870 million of the 7.1 billion people in the world were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2012 ("Central Intelligence Agency"). That's one of every eight people, many of which are children in developing countries. The world population is continually growing and expected to reach nine billion by the year 2050 ("Central Intelligence Agency"). As the number of people in the world increases, so does the world's problem with chronic undernourishment. This is a problem that we need to put an end to, and we need to do it fast. This end won't be an easy task; it's going to take every agriculturist's and every scientist's help to discover new methods to help battle hunger. This will also take every county doing what they can to produce food, not only for the people in their country, but for the people in other countries as well. Not every country has the resources or the climate to produce all of the food necessary for their county's people, that's where the importing and exporting of goods will come into play. Every country will need to take advantage of every resource they have and work together to help put an end to chronic undernourishment.

The Caribbean Sea, also known as the West Indies is home to over 7,000 islands ("Central Intelligence Agency"). Of those, 13 are independent island countries, one being the county of Dominica. The beautiful, small country of Dominica is only 751 square kilometers, which is just slightly more than four times the size of Washington, D.C. This small island is currently home to approximately 73,449 people, making it the second smallest populated of the 13 independent island countries. 86.8 percent of the country's residents are of African American ethnicity ("Central Intelligence Agency"). The country's terrain is nothing more than rugged mountains of volcanic origin, which explains why it was one of the last islands in the Caribbean to be colonized. However, the Island is covered with rivers and waterfalls and has 148 kilometers of coastline. Tropical rainforests cover approximately two-thirds of the island which calls for quite a bit of rainfall every year. Annually, Dominica receives about 127 centimeters of rainfall on the coast and 762 centimeters in the mountains ("Central Intelligence Agency").

The typical family in Dominica is quite different than those that are here in the United States. Marriages there are based on individual choice but are often limited by religion and social class. Lower class individuals get married earlier in their lives than those who are classified among the upper class ("*We are Dominica*"). Divorce in Dominica is legal; however it rarely occurs because it is frowned upon by the religious in the country. Children in these families are much different than expected. Many young people actually have children with multiple partners prior to marrying, because of this; the families tend to vary in size. The men are still expected to contribute financially to their children's upbringing; regardless of their relationship with the mother ("*We are Dominica*").

Due to Dominica's rich volcanic soil and abundant rainfall, it is quite simple to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables and root crops ("*CommonWealth*"). People who live in urban areas of the country, such as Roseau, the country's capital, usually either purchase their produce at the market or by street vendors. They are also known to receive food from their relatives who live in rural areas because it is the cheaper method. People who live in rural areas of the country normally grow their own food. They tend to only grow enough for their own family's consumption though and don't bother attempting to produce more to sell to others ("*CommonWealth*"). Their diet also includes some locally raised livestock; such as goats, pigs and cows. The country imports much of its staple foods, such as sugar, salt, rice and flour, which can be purchased at one of the several American-style supermarkets in Roseau ("*CommonWealth*"). The problem, however, is that the imported goods are quite expensive and aren't likely purchased by the lower class. They also consume crabs, river crayfish, opossum, agouti and fish, but these items aren't as easy to find or gain access to. However, bananas are the largest part of Dominica people's diets because the fruit is grown practically everywhere on the island ("*CommonWealth*").

Just like in America they tend to eat three meals, however, lunch is their largest, most important meal of the day. The typical diet also includes those foods that the country serves during the holidays or while visiting another family's house ("*CommonWealth*"). The slaughtering of livestock and the preparation of large meals is used to celebrate holidays and important religious ceremonies. It is also expected that when guests visit a friend's house that some food or drink is to be offered ("*CommonWealth*").

Dominica's education system is set up similarly to that of America's. They have preschool but it is mainly only offered to those who can afford it ("*We are Dominica*"). The next step in a child's education is primary school. Primary school is offered to all children age five through 15. Students must score a high enough score on the Common Entrance Examination by age 13 to be given the opportunity to attend a secondary school ("Central Intelligence Agency"). Positions in these secondary schools are limited so it is often important for rural students to do well in school to receive one of these spots, as it is seen as a way out of the rural farming life ("Central Intelligence Agency").

Those who are selected to continue their education on the secondary level continue on and generally pursue a college degree ("*We are Dominica*"). The higher education offered on the island is limited, which is why most of the students who are obtaining a college degree go elsewhere to receive that level of education. This also means not many people end up coming back and living on the island once receiving their degree, which is why a 1991 census showed that only two percent of the population living in Dominica have received a university education and obtained a degree ("*We are Dominica*").

Students who participate in primary schooling often are made to wear uniforms and are expected to be obedient at all times. If a child is troublesome or rude, corporal punishment may be used in the classroom setting ("*CommonWealth*"). Children are taught at a young age to stand up for themselves and to take full advantage of the schooling they are given. People in Dominica think highly of education. The healthcare system in Dominica has only one main hospital, located in Roseau ("Central Intelligence Agency"). However, it does have smaller hospitals in Marigot, Grand Bay and Portsmouth. It also has even smaller clinics staffed with trained nurses scattered out around the island. The doctors include

Dominicans who are trained abroad, as well as foreigners from technical aid programs and staff hospitals. Despite being discouraged by healthcare professionals, combinations of prescription and natural remedies are often used. The natural remedies include the use of herbs, plants and tree barks to cure illnesses and induce labor. Some of the common health problems in the country include parasitic, nutritional, venereal, intestinal and respiratory diseases ("Central Intelligence Agency"). They also include illnesses like hypertension and diabetes ("Central Intelligence Agency"). Teenage pregnancy and sanitation are also major health concerns ("Central Intelligence Agency").

Agriculture is the main industry in Dominica, with bananas being the chief export crop. In the 1980s, Dominica, like other countries, experienced a "banana boom" when it was assured access into the United Kingdom market. Modest prosperity was brought to many banana-growing communities during this time. Dominica's dependency on their export of bananas continued to grow and it eventually became 70 percent of the country's export earnings in the late 1980s ("*We are Dominica*"). However, the dangers of this one-crop dependency became evident when Hurricane David and Hurricane Allen hit Dominica in 1979 and 1980, destroying an estimated 95 percent of the country's banana plants ("*We are Dominica*"). A third hurricane, Hurricane Lenny, hit in 1999, causing yet another large damage to banana plants ("*We are Dominica*"). Thankfully, bananas are quick to produce fruit after planting so Dominica has recovered quickly after each hurricane.

The hurricanes were a large threat to Dominica's banana industry; however, it wasn't as large of a threat as the threatened removal of preferential market access into Europe for the island's exports. In 1995, the United States and several Latin American banana-exporting countries complained that the European Union was breaching international free-trade legislation ("*CommonWealth*"). They felt like they were doing this by offering protected quotas to banana exports from former colonies, the Caribbean, Africa and in the Pacific. This is causing question for the future of the European Union regime because if they are forced by international pressure to dismantle their existing arrangement with exporters such as Dominica, the island will be forced to compete directly for the European market with large producers from Latin America ("*CommonWealth*"). Due to the fact that this dilemma has yet to be solved, and that at this point in time it isn't looking very good for Dominica banana producers, many of them have already dropped out of the industry in hopes of securing a job elsewhere. For now, the agricultural industry isn't looking very promising for the country of Dominica.

The next step for agriculture in Dominica is to look for new ways to expand the industry. The answer to the problems Dominica is facing can be found in their fishing industry. There is currently a relatively large fishing industry in Dominica; however, it is not modernized and almost exclusively serves the domestic market. For an island with 148 kilometers of shoreline, fishing should easily be their number one industry and the country should be spending their time, money and energy on this promising industry that will still be there even after another hurricane hits.

Supported by Taiwanese aid, a successful experiment in freshwater prawn farming, a small water creature similar in looks to shrimp, has already produced substantial amounts of prawns for the domestic and local markets; but, the industry shouldn't stop there. Dominica has the resources to continue to grow their fisheries and use them to create a new export industry for their country.

The next step is to simply get backing from other countries to get their expert help and support in establishing these new, modernized fisheries. The country of Japan has already provided support for a fish landing and processing plant in Roseau. This industry may take a little bit of time to get started, but once it does it will take off in Dominica. This idea already has so much possibility.

Some may argue that a small country like Dominica focusing on their fishing industry may not solve much of the world's hunger problems and they are right. However, once these fisheries are started in

Dominica, they will serve as an example to create systems similar to it in other island countries as well. Imagine the possibilities if all 13 of the independent island countries came onboard with the plan. One small change may not seem like much, but in the long run it can make a much larger difference than anyone could have ever imagined.

In conclusion, Dominica is a small country who has faced many difficulties with their extremely large banana industry. The best option to save this country's agricultural industry is to focus on animal agriculture by implementing modernized fisheries. These modernized fisheries would produce plenty of fish for the Dominican people to consume, but also would eventually build up to being one of, if not the largest agricultural export for Dominica as a whole. Potentially it could be Dominica's largest export all together. This method wouldn't only be helping the people of Dominica, but it would also grow and eventually help put an end to chronic undernourishment all over the world. Every country has a responsibility to do what it can. Dominica already has easy access to good water supply; it's just a matter of time before the new modernized fisheries take off.

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