INTRODUCTION

This second research report of the University of Kentucky INTSORMIL Project in North Kordofan, Sudan provides information about agricultural production and marketing in the sample villages described in the first report (November, 1981). The basis for the information reported in this report is the farming systems model developed in the first report.

Our research project aims to analyze the farming system found in 15 villages* that are within 50 kilometers of el-Obeid, capital of the Kordofan Region. This is a transitional zone between clayey sand soils that lie to the south of el-Obeid and the qoz soils (stabilized sand dunes) that lie to the north. El-Obeid receives, on the average, 347 mm of rainfall annually, nearly all of it falling between July and October. The amount of rainfall is highly variable from one year to the next, and the pattern within a single season is quite irregular as a result of sporadic cloudbursts. The rainy season is often marked by a drought period that occurs after the first month of rains and lasts up to three weeks.

The agriculture of the region combines sorghum and millet production, primarily as subsistence crops, with the production of cash crops, particularly sesame, groundnuts, roselle and watermelon. Farmers endeavor to diversify their production even more by raising livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, horses) and poultry (chickens and pidgeons). Acacia senegal, which is a native of the region's sandy soils, produces gum arabic which is another important cash crop. Gum tree growth on exhausted land is a recognized means of restoring soil fertility while the land continues to yield an income. In addition, nearly every farming family supplements its income through non-farm enterprises (e.g. charcoal making and selling, hauling water, operating a shop).

During the cropping season poorer households sell labor services in order to pay for consumption needs. Dry-season migration to the cities or to the mechanized farming schemes in search of wage labor is a major source of income for some families. Still others rely on gifts of money sent by relatives who work abroad in high-paying jobs.

As pointed out in research Report No. 1, the project has two basic objectives:

1. To identify the socioeconomic constraints that impede agricultural production and marketing in the el-Obeid area. In this regard, special attention is given to the relationship between cash crops and millet and sorghum.

*The original sample on which a survey of villages was carried out numbered eighteen. The size of the sample has been reduced to 15 villages to economize research costs.