FREEDOM IN THE MAKING
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SMALL FARMER CULTURE IN GRENADA FROM SLAVERY TO NEOLIBERALISM AND BEYOND

By

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<tr>
<td>AIFLD</td>
<td>American Institute for Free Labor Development, agency of the (US) AFL-CIO</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFL-CIO</td>
<td>American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (US)</td>
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<td>AGWU</td>
<td>Agricultural General Workers Union</td>
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<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (Cuba)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Agency for Rural Transformation</td>
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<td>CARDI</td>
<td>Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute</td>
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<td>CDGLH</td>
<td>Citizens In Defence of Grenada’s Lands and Heritage</td>
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<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Canadian University Service Overseas</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Eastern Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Food sovereignty</td>
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<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Fair Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTAA</td>
<td>Free Trade Agreement of the Americas</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCFA</td>
<td>Grenada Cane Farmers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFAFO</td>
<td>Grenada Federation of Agricultural and Fisheries Organizations</td>
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<td>GFNC</td>
<td>Grenada Food and Nutrition Council</td>
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<td>GMMWU</td>
<td>Grenada Mental and Manual Workers Union</td>
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<td>GRENCODA</td>
<td>Grenada Community Development Agency (NGO)</td>
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<td>GRENROP</td>
<td>Grenada Network of Rural Women Producers</td>
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<td>GRO</td>
<td>Grassroots organization</td>
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<td>GULP</td>
<td>Grenada United Labour Party</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIVOS</td>
<td>Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Dutch NGO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>UN International Fund for Agriculture and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IICA</td>
<td>Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture</td>
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<td>MNIB</td>
<td>Marketing and National Importing Board</td>
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<td>MREP</td>
<td>Marketing and Rural Enterprise Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>NACDA</td>
<td>National Agency for Cooperative Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NJM</td>
<td>New Jewel Movement (from “New Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NNP</td>
<td>New National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECS</td>
<td>Organization of East Caribbean States</td>
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<td>PFU</td>
<td>Productive Farmers Union</td>
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<td>PET</td>
<td>Plantation economic theory</td>
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<td>PIA</td>
<td>People in Action (NGO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>People's Revolutionary Army</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRG</td>
<td>People's Revolutionary Government</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWI</td>
<td>University of the West Indies</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHAPCO</td>
<td>Wharf Agricultural Products Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>WINFA</td>
<td>Windward Island Farmers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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The demand for food sovereignty—for the right of people to define and control production of their own food—has become the foundation for the world’s biggest social movement. La Vía Campesina (LVC), the organization that originated the idea, is food sovereignty’s global champion, with more than 200 million peasants, small farmers, and rural dwellers in its allied affiliates. This dissertation examines the FS issue in the Caribbean, where 100,000 LVC members live and work. Its focus is the island of Grenada, where a still-vibrant peasant farming tradition endures despite growing dependence on imported food. Grounded in fieldwork and historical investigation, the project examines Grenada’s small farming inheritance, the practices associated with it and their ongoing value. It also analyzes the constraints to the assertion of FS there, from the persistent hold of export-oriented plantation agriculture on the island’s economy to the pressures of neoliberal governance and international debt.

The project’s centerpiece is a history of the Grenada Cane Farmers Association, an LVC organization. Beginning in the 1980s, its members refined the intercropping techniques and collective labor methods of their sugarcane farming forbears in a
process of repealantization of a kind that has become increasingly common across the world. The sophisticated farm system that GCFA members developed stimulated local food production in some of the poorest parts of the island and brought new pride and well-being to small farmers. The study details the setbacks the organization has suffered as prized cane lands were sold for tourist development, two hurricanes devastated the island, and recent governments pushed to commercialize small farm production, curtailing aid to small and subsistence farmers.

Agriculture, the study concludes, remains the heart and soul of Grenadian culture. Commercialization of agriculture and the spread of consumerism threaten that culture, further entrenching poverty among the poor. As proponents of FS insist and this study illustrates, freedom for Grenadian communities in the twenty-first century—as for the newly-freed Afro-Caribbean peoples of the nineteenth—continues to reside in their right to access the world around them, to practice their material culture, and to feed themselves.
Figure 1-1. Grenada parishes and principal places cited in this study.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: PRODUCING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

*We the peasants are the producers of food that feed... the world. Yet we have been pushed to such dire poverty that we cannot even eat what we produce.*

—Vía Campesina statement to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, April 5, 2004

*Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods... It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations... Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture.*

—The Nyéléni Declaration on Food Sovereignty, February 27, 2007

This study investigates the practices of Grenada’s small farmers to identify a basis for establishment of food sovereignty (FS) in that country. It also examines barriers to establishment of FS in the small island setting. The project’s focal point is a history of the Grenada Cane Farmers Association (GCFA) and its efforts to advance the cause of island sugarcane farmers, beginning in the 1980s. The dissertation seeks to contribute to FS discussions in two ways: by demonstrating the value of historical investigation to an understanding of the viability of small farmer cultures, and by exploring the implications of the FS idea on the ground in a single setting, where the transnational FS construct must ultimately be implemented.

The dissertation had its beginnings at a February 2006 University of Florida conference on Latin America’s rural social movements. At the conference I heard presentations by members of La Vía Campesina (Spanish for “the peasant path or way” [LVC]) and learned about the FS idea that the organization had introduced. Hailed by Honduran LVC leader Rafael Alegría as nothing less than “a new model of
development,” the concept had spread across the globe in the twelve years since its formal inception in 1996, with 150 million peasants, small farmers, and landless people across the world in organizations fighting for the goal. Impressed by the powerful, still developing idea, I decided to make it my dissertation focus.

Initial research showed that several investigators (Desmarais [2007], Borras [2004], and Windfuhr and Jonsén [2005]) had traced the development of LVC over the period since its founding, along with evolution of the FS concept. A useful next step, I decided, would be to explore the construct from the perspective of small farmers in a given place. In choosing a setting I turned to the Caribbean, where I had previously lived and worked, in writing a Master of Arts thesis about land issues in Jamaica (Kopka 2003), and later as a journalist. I was aware of the region’s rich small farming tradition growing out of slavery, and of its key role in the development of export agriculture and capitalism. LVC was active in the Caribbean, then counting nearly 100,000 members in organizations in Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Martinique, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent.

My next step was to contact Annette Desmarais, who was developing a protocol for LVC’s engagement with researchers. I was encouraged by her sense—shared, she said, by others in LVC—that examining the relationship between the FS construct and local struggles might prove a useful next focus of study for the organization. In the same vein, she told me, LVC leaders had begun to focus on better understanding the policy implications of the FS idea. Desmarais informed me in a July 2007 email that it was critical that “LVC... be involved in defining the research agenda and process” of any such project, and I worked to meet this obligation. I developed a short proposal and sent
it to LVC organizations in the Caribbean, requesting permission to collaborate with them in writing a history of their organizations, to live and if possible work alongside their members in rural settings, to develop an understanding of their lives and challenges.

**Early Project Phases**

Initially I proposed a comparative project, hoping to study LVC organizations in two countries, one English- and one Spanish-speaking. My query drew invitations to visit and discuss the project with members of the Coordinating Body of National Peasant Women’s Organizations (CONAMUCA) in the Dominican Republic, and the Grenada Cane Farmers’ Association in Grenada. During initial 15-day visits to each country I laid out my ideas and worked to profile each organization and its mission. A questionnaire that I forwarded to solicit leaders’ attitudes about FS and current challenges helped to orient me to their work (Kopka 2008). After meetings and discussion with various members, both organizations invited me to study them, and pointed me to village settings where members were working, where—after visits of several days to each—I received invitations from local members to live on my return.

These visits were followed by three-month stays in both countries (the second Grenada trip is described below). But soon it became clear that my efforts would produce more data than I could hope to organize in one dissertation, and I decided to focus on Grenada and the Cane Farmers Association. Part of the Windward Island Farmer Organization (WINFA), an umbrella group that is an LVC founding member, the GCFA was a 23-year-old sugarcane farmers’ organization of 1,200 to 2,000 people. At the time the GCFA was struggling to overcome the devastating effects of two recent hurricanes that had left 90% of the island’s housing stock destroyed or damaged and 60,000 of its 100,000 people homeless. The 2004 and 2005 storms had knocked out
both of the organization’s sugar mills, bringing sugarcane production more or less to a halt on the island. In the meantime, the leadership was trying to create a new national farmer organization, reaching out to other farmer groups in hopes of creating a wider farmer movement.

In no way did the GCFA's problems dissuade me from studying the organization. They were, I felt, suggestive of the problems that farmers faced in the current period. My interest also went beyond the group to the island's strong farming traditions. Grenada is home to some of the region's most developed and enduring “peasant” traditions. It offered an opportunity to study that tradition and the agricultural methods that formed its basis, to focus on the deeper connections of regional farming to slavery, on ways that the region's dominant plantation economic institutions shaped life in the Caribbean and were reshaped by the responses of the creolized African people who performed the island's agricultural labor.

In 1939 it was estimated that Grenada had more small farmers than all the other Windward and Leeward islands combined; through at least the 1980s this remained the case (Brierley 1988:67, 65). In a 2012 interview Judy Williams, the head of the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA), the island's biggest non-governmental organization (NGO), told me that Grenada had the largest proportion of small farmers of any Caribbean island. This was also asserted by agronomist and former Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) director Ken Buckmire, who told me that Grenada had the most varied multicropping tradition of all of the Caribbean countries, as well. All of these conditions made Grenada a strong subject for study in a period when peasants’ and small farmers’ agrodiverse practices are being looked on
with new interest. Finally, as I also came to realize, the GCFA had in the 1980s undertaken something remarkable, engaging in a conscious attempt to integrate the peasant practices central to traditional island small farming in a new and ecologically sophisticated small farming system. These efforts anticipated what more recent theorists have identified as a process of repeasantization in the period just before the term gained currency among FS advocates. Working with the GCFA presented an opportunity to study such a process up close with its inventors.

In Grenada my investigation centered on the island’s north and south shores, where small-farmer sugarcane cultivation became most heavily concentrated after slavery, and during the GCFA-led cane farming resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s. These happened to be the areas where a great deal of Grenada’s production for local consumption was historically—if tenuously—carried out, by “Negro” farmers (Brierley 1974:174-176, 207), whose labors formed what I came to see as the core of Grenada’s FS inheritance. The most intensive cultivation, however, had for some time been concentrated on the south shore of the island, where much of Grenada’s tourist development is also located, and where traditional sugarcane farming exists in implicit, sometimes explosive tension with the tourist construct. Working in both places stretched my time and resources. The portrait of the north shore town of River Sallee, where I lived with my family for three months in 2008, remains partial. But I believe that the effort to describe it, along with the GCFA portrait, helps to draw out quite different aspects of Grenada’s struggle for food and farmer independence. The north shore setting provides a historicized perspective of a village “surrounded by plantations,” a contested domain in a still largely “undeveloped” part of the country (development, in
such usage, implying commercialization). The south shore setting, meanwhile, where such development is now more advanced, is viewed from the organizational perspective of the GCFA and an attempt—in the teeth of such development—to assert a right of poor farmers to FS, even as that idea was still coming into being.

**FS, The Vía Campesina, and Dissertation Questions**

The LVC—with the FS movement it founded—has roots in the wave of “indigenous, landless, environmental, and rural women's movements” that developed in Central and South America and the Caribbean during the 1980s and 1990s (Deere and Royce 2009:2), and in meetings between regional farmers that took place in the context of the Nicaraguan Sandinista Revolution and El Salvadoran civil war (Edelman 2003:185). “Farmer to farmer” exchanges of practical and organizational knowledge between participants from many countries, which had begun in Central America in the 1970s (Desmarais 2007:84; Merchant 1992:211-213; Giménez 2006:2-5, passim), were another key contributor. The exchanges—including those attended by GCFA members who had traveled to Cuba, Honduras, Barbados, and Trinidad to participate—enabled farmers “to learn what was happening in each other’s countries as a result of structural adjustment programs and . . . free trade agreements, how national governments were altering rural structures,” and how farmer organizations were responding. They “were critical to building strong ties of understanding, trust, friendship, and solidarity” (Vía Campesina 2006), essential for the consolidation of a new transnational movement of farmer organizations and rural dwellers.

GCFA General Secretary Elliot Bishop headed the WINFA delegation that joined Central American, US, European, and Canadian organizations in a foundational 1992 congress of the Nicaraguan National Union of Agriculturalists and Livestock Producers.
in Managua (Desmarais 2007:25). He came, he told me 16 years later, to press the case for a global farmer organization, and discovered that this idea was on many minds. A declaration issued by the gathering denounced the inclusion of agriculture in the global tariff and trade negotiations (GATT) that led to establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), insisting that poor countries should be able to protect their agricultural products. It also condemned the impact of foreign debt on the world’s poor countries (Edelman 2003:194, 204), a particularly powerful threat to Grenada, which was on its way to becoming the seventh-most indebted country per capita in the world.

The LVC was officially born the following year, in 1993, at Mons, Belgium. Forty-six farm leaders from 36 countries, including the GCFA’s Bishop, took part. A statement issued by the gathering declared that small farmers faced extinction. It addressed the unsustainability of commercial monocrop agriculture, and insisted on individual countries’ right to shape their agricultural policies without interference (Desmarais 2007:76-77). Three years later the organization introduced the FS idea in a declaration at the 1996 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Forum in Rome. Made in the name of the half of humanity still living in the rural sector—where, incongruously, three-quarters to four-fifths of the world’s hungry people are (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006:10; FAO 2004:6)—it declared access “to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food” a human right, and called for global agrarian reform to help insure it, and for a shift away from chemical-intensive Green Revolution methods to agroecological farming models. The declaration lamented the fact that high international debt rather than basic needs was driving poor countries’ trade and agricultural policies. And it insisted on the right of each nation to build its own capacity to produce its basic foods. As these
statements suggest, the FS claim goes beyond notions of food security, which would compel governments to insure that adequate food is available to their populations (most often in the form of short-term, often imported food aid\textsuperscript{11}), insisting instead on peasants' and indigenous peoples' right and even obligation to see to the sustainable provision of their own family and community food needs.

FS is an idea in evolution. But among critical components of the construct are the following:

- A right of local and native peoples not to have their lands taken, including through the "land grabbing" schemes of governments, investors, and corporations (McMichael 2011; Borras et al 2011) that have become common in our period.

- A right of countries not to have cheap imported or unhealthy food—whose prices small farmers cannot compete with—dumped on them or local markets, including in the disguised form of food aid. (Martinez-Torres et 2010:160). Food is not just a commodity, but essential. It must be protected from speculation, FS advocates insist.

- A right to the seeds and agricultural knowledge that are farm people's patrimony. FS opposes the dependence of small farmers on commercial and biotechnologically-engineered seeds and on production value chains imposed by international agribusinesses, identifying such dependence as threats to the development of a democratic agriculture.

- A right of women to land, resources, and decision-making power, integral to the establishment of FS. Women, the "historical creators of . . knowledge about food, agriculture and traditional aquaculture," are being pushed out of agriculture by mechanization and commercialization (Dagenais 1993:95).

- The right of farmers to define the relationship with those who consume their products, including in elaborating new mechanisms of trade and exchange. FS does not oppose markets, but insists on the right of poor countries to prioritize local production and markets, and to trade with each other in more reciprocal fashion, rather than be forced to trade their resources for finished products from rich countries—including cheap food products from wealthy countries whose prices local farmers cannot compete with.

Each of these issues forms part of the story in Grenada. Today Grenada imports 70% of the food it consumes while island farmers—in one of the world's most fertile places—
are pressed to grow for commercial production and export, in strong part to meet the
country’s massive debt obligations. The institution of slavery was in fact predicated on
the idea of production for export, and the production of cheap raw exports continues to
be prioritized over production of local food and basic needs today. Historically and still,
the poorest people in Grenada have been without secure access to land. And the
farming population that produced the most food for local consumption has held least
secure tenure there—their dispossession has been fundamental to the maintenance of
the plantation system. The push to fully commercialize Grenadian agriculture, a matter
of policy in Grenada, stands to harm women and children most, yet women are rarely
mentioned in government documents or position papers. The loss of vital farmland to
tourist ventures, in land grabs by the government itself, has severely undermined small
farmers and subsistence production in the present period.

To the above list, therefore, my Grenada research suggests that another
important principle—implicit in many of the definitions of FS above—should be added:

- FS must mean a collective right to subsistence, conceived not only from the point of
  view of the individual farmer or family but community and nation, with national self-
  sufficiency as ultimate goal, with governments becoming instrumental in pursuit of
  such goals. People must have the right to feed themselves.

From consideration of these features of the FS idea and the problems that gave
rise to it, shared by peasants, small farmers, and rural dwellers around the world,
comes the basic question for this project:

What would FS really mean in Grenada?

From it I derive five more specific questions that the dissertation addresses:

- What practices might be said to constitute the core of Grenada’s FS inheritance?
  Which of these could be asserted by Grenadians to create FS today?
• How did the GCFA make use of such practices, and what does the organization’s experience tell us about their ongoing viability?

• What are the inherited constraints to establishment of FS on the island? How and at what levels do they operate?

• What are the prospects for mobilization around the FS idea by Grenadian small farmers and rural dwellers today?

**Political Ecology, History, and Lived Experience**

In addressing the above questions, I draw on concepts and methods of political ecology, a disciplinary perspective that “blends a focus on the relationship that people have with their environment with close attention to the political economic forces. . . that shape and condition” them (Oliver-Smith 2004:10). Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield describe political ecology in terms that suggest its value for a project like this one, as “a multiscalar approach that integrates. . . ecology and political economy perspectives” (Zimmerer and Basset 2003:31). This scalar approach leads me to focus on the world-historical, regional, national, and local aspects of Grenada’s agriculture and economy as I seek their implications for FS. Recurring themes in the political ecology literature include conflicts over land, flora and fauna, soil, and water, and studies of social movements and organizations that are active around these issues; all of these assume importance in the Grenadian context. Among political-ecological concepts I employ is the idea of metabolism—the consumption of resources for economic production in a given area (the island setting, the area around a village) and the impacts of such production on surrounding nature (the “landscape.”) Equally important is the organization of such production by wider “accumulation regimes” under capitalism, including at world level. Consumption also implies an attention to cultural questions, especially as they relate to a people’s foodways. This means not just their eating or
culinary habits and the development of them, which assume importance here, but how people have through time obtained their food and used it—especially to feed themselves, and their communities.

Although I was interested in the agricultural practices of small farmers, especially those that they inherited, I was as eager to understand their dealings with the wider world, including how these governed their access to land and resources. This meant looking at relationships between farmers and their communities; between farmers and markets (the local, “petty,” economy versus capitalism); and between farmers and the state. The question of the state and its power over small farmers and rural dwellers looms over this study as well as for LVC, which maintains, as Desmarais told me, “an arms-length relationship with governments” and state power. The twentieth century was often unkind to small farmers. Governments on both left and right, committed to industrialization, pushed for development of a Green Revolution monocrop agriculture that victimized small farmers and local, more diverse production (see Chapter 2). As I came to see it, any assessment of the potential adoption of FS in Grenada also had to be predicated on a realistic assessment of the “demands and sanctions of powerholders” on small farmers (Wolf 1966:11), beginning with governments: What has been the role of the state (and the plantation, instrument of colonial power in the Caribbean for four centuries) in the lives of farmers and evolution of their practices? What support has it given farmers and/or how has it thwarted their desires for land or local economic development? What roles might the state fulfill in enacting FS?

In examining these questions, I draw a crucial distinction between state, or governmental power, and nation. The state exists in implicit tension with the needs of a
country’s citizens. Nation, on the other hand, is the expression of popular desires and needs through which the people seek to enact their will, including through the state—beginning with the essential element of their reproduction, food. In the Caribbean, the idea of nation sometimes carries beyond island borders to include the identification of descendants of formerly enslaved peoples with one another. Such a pan-African and Afro-Caribbean “nation” and heritage, which is both a spiritual and an ideological construct, is an inspiration for this project. I believe that it should form part of the basis for any regional Caribbean farmer/FS movement. That is because—as the project’s historical chapters show—denial of the historic aspirations, needs, and material culture of the region’s Afro-descendant peoples has been the basis on which wealth continued to be extracted from them and the soil right up to now (even as the notion that the Caribbean countries are “Black nations” obscures this fact). Certainly, it is this history that the official record ignores and that this project seeks to bring to light.

Ultimately, I wanted to link such insights about Grenada and Caribbean history to the present, including in descriptions of day-to-day life in settings where farmer groups are active, to keep the people implicated front and center in the narrative. “The individual enters as a bearer of social pressures,” anthropologist Michel-Rolphe Trouillot writes, “cognizant of some of these pressures, likely ignorant of others, but always able to influence the totality.” The shift to what Trouillot calls a “microlevel” scale of analysis implies “acknowledgement of the individual’s capacity. . . to generate. . . ‘more history’ than the history of which he or she is a product” (1988:17). Seeking out continuities between current and historical practices, learning what involvement in local LVC groups
means for farmers, and telling their stories—unearthing the history they made—loomed among the most important objectives of the study.

**Project Design and Timeline**

The project unfolded over four phases of travel to Grenada: in the fifteen-day exploratory March 2008 period described above; in a three-month phase between June and September 2008; in a month-long follow-up trip in June 2010; and in a fourth nine-week stay from April through June 2012.

In the first three-month period, which was devoted to fieldwork, I lived in the north shore village of River Sallee. During this time I obtained life histories in long conversations, many of them recorded, with my River Sallee hosts: GCFA North District Chairman Reginald Buddy, and Bernadette Roberts, the vice president of the River Sallee Women’s Agricultural Group, both of them longtime members of WINFA and LVC. I engaged in various kinds of participant observation—planting, loading, “liming” (loafing), sometimes helping around their house and houseyard, and sitting with local community members during the evenings at the bar that forms the front end of their house. During this period I developed an initial portrait of River Sallee, talking to people like the retired local schoolmaster, and also conducting oral interviews with GCFA members about the history of the organization, sometimes traveling to the south shore for several days to do so. I also conducted interviews with sugarcane farmers in the Hermitage area in St. George parish in the island’s interior. I spoke several times a week with Bishop, Buddy, Roberts, and GCFA founder and official Joseph Gill, filling out my picture of the GCFA’s history and obtaining what documents they could provide (Many organization documents had been lost in the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes.) All of the interviews with sugarcane farmers were digitally recorded.
During the 2008 River Sallee stay I interviewed 29 “farmers,” two-thirds of these in River Sallee and the surrounding area, as far away as the neighboring village of Mt. Rose. I also interviewed and visited the gardens of several middle-class Grenadians to understand their attitudes about small farmers and farming. The interviews began with a set of questions but were otherwise open-ended; all included tours of farmers’ houseyards or fields and I sometimes walked with them to visit various additional fragments that they cultivated. The interviews inform the discussion throughout the dissertation. Among other things, they enabled me to try out ideas that I obtained in discussions with GCFA and other officials, in the newspapers, from television programs, or my reading. All saw agriculture as existing in a state of crisis, exacerbated by the failure of government to organize the farming sector. Perhaps the most important finding was that—like GCFA members—all or almost all farmers desired to enlist in a project of national revitalization of farming. Almost all saw themselves as implicitly part of such a project to begin with, for which they received no acknowledgement or reward. (“We grow the damned food!” one farmer told me in exasperation.) Although many were not GCFA members, most saw traditional practices, especially the use of maroon labor collectives, as a critical way to effect a revival of small farming; some saw it as the only way small farming could be saved. The interviews—which included several sessions with agricultural extension officials—showed that a great deal of small-farmer production served subsistence purposes. Still, most expressed great anxiety to be better rewarded for their labors. The interviews also confirmed the degree to which government agricultural policy was not being formulated with small farmers’ involvement or communicated to them.
During 2008 I also spent a week on a farm with GCFA founder Joseph Gill, working through the mornings and early afternoons, engaging him in conversation about farming, the GCFA’s development, and Grenada history. I also spent three days on the island of St. Vincent, interviewing and visiting agricultural installations with WINFA officials; and traveled to the Grenadian island of Carriacou to conduct interviews with two farmers there. During the last two weeks of the 2008 stay I moved to the capital, St. George’s, where I interviewed various public figures about food and farming, including Grenada’s Food Security officer, the heads of several local rural development agencies, and the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council. With knowledge about the FS idea generally lacking or nonexistent, I developed a short presentation on the subject that I offered to various people.

In 2010 I returned to Grenada, working for a month in the national library, conducting research among government documents, newspapers, and archived material. During that visit I made a presentation in two half-day sessions to Bishop, receiving continual feedback from the GCFA General Secretary, and in abbreviated form to Buddy and Roberts, including about the organizational history of the GCFA that forms the basis of Chapter 5. I spent two days interviewing south shore residents about the effects of tourism and tourist development on fishing, subsistence food gathering, herding, and local quality of life, and engaged in follow-up interviews with most officials interviewed in 2008. And I interviewed historian and former Prime Minister George Brizan, from whom I gained considerable perspective about recent policies and programs of Grenada governments in agriculture.
The more that I learned about contemporary Grenadian agriculture, the more firmly I believed in the importance of the historical chapters to the project. Reversal of the historic orientation of poor country economies from the extraction of resources and production of metropolitan wealth toward their people’s own basic needs remains the greatest challenge of most poor countries. That orientation also remains the greatest single unspoken source of tension between the wealthy North and “poor” South, whose countries, as Brizan once wrote with meaningful double entendre, are not poor but “made poor” (1998:346). The FS idea offers a powerful instrument with which to effect such a reversal, to challenge the continued power that the wealthy countries and international interests hold over the poor and small farmers, and the appropriation of their labor to build the wealth of others.

In 2012 I made a fourth, nine-week trip to Grenada and received a critique of the first full draft of Chapter 5, discussing its findings over several days with Bishop, Buddy, and Roberts. These conversations revealed previously unrecognized political tensions that had underlain some GCFA efforts. Since Chapter 5 depends on the word of a small number of officials, I worked to triangulate the data, furnishing the document to six long-time observers of the sugarcane sector and the GCFA, who provided readings, feedback, corrections, and other perspectives on the material. In addition to their written commentary, they provided verbal feedback during wide-ranging interview sessions that opened various perspectives for future work. Apparent from some of these interviews (which were recorded), was an often sympathetic stance of agricultural ministry extension officials to small farmers dating back to the 1970s and first years of independence (see Chapter 3), which suggested another layer of knowledge to gather,
especially concerning the evolution of houseyard and small-plot gardening in the country. Two senior extension officers agreed to meet for second, lengthier interviews, and gave me tours of their gardens. I was also able to conduct follow-up interviews with many of the officials whom I had interviewed in 2008 and 2010, in person or by phone.

Chapter Overview

Taking for granted that tiny, historically dependent Grenada cannot be viewed in isolation, Chapter 2 examines the world-historical perspectives through which the country is presented in the dissertation. It looks at the key role of the Caribbean in the evolution of capitalism and the twin imperatives of development and modernity that grew up with it. Central to the establishment of the emerging global system was the dispossession of peoples in Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean, their connection through global circuits of consumption and exploitation of their labor. In these developments, as I show, agriculture and an increasingly speculative view of land-holding played an often underestimated, absolutely central role. The altered relationship of human beings and communities to food under the new system is examined, as are the powerful effects on nature (a “metabolic rift”) that the system set in train. Observations about the meanings of subsistence to emerging “peasant” and industrializing economies are offered, and the peasant idea—critical to this project and the FS construct—interrogated. The idea of a “national” (i.e., state) economy—the wealth-production that it emphasizes, the primary needs that it obscures—is examined, along with the enduring stamp of “plantation economics” on regional life. Many of these patterns are intensified in the present period of neoliberal globalization, in which the wealthy northern countries have struck back at twentieth-century attempts by the poor countries to attain economic freedom, binding
them in structural adjustment agreements, indebtedness, and trade regulation, further diminishing popular and national sovereignty.

Chapter 3 investigates the alternatives to plantation economic dependence elaborated by emerging peasant farmers and communities in the shadows of the plantation. These alternatives came to form the core of what I call the island’s FS inheritance. The chapter shows how agricultural systems developed by proto-peasant slaves and the markets in which they sold their surplus supplied the material and cultural basis for island post-emancipation development. With shared labor practices like the maroon, institutionalized by the Free Village movement in the post-emancipation period, these practices suggest a continuing modern alternative to commercial and import food dependence, a basis for FS and local economic expansion. But these developments did not come without continuing misery for rural dwellers, a fact that helps to obscure the considerable power of the small farmer and Free Village achievement. They also created an enduring class split in the countryside between small farmers and estate workers—those workers who continued laboring for the planter class—that must be overcome to establish FS.

How would an emerging state, amid a rising political clamor against their historic dispossession, respond to the political demands of the rural populace? To what degree could newly independent governments, given the island’s historic dependence, be expected to satisfy such demands? Chapter 4 investigates these questions in the period around the birth of the Grenadian island state, from 1949 to 1984. It focuses on the agricultural and land policies of first Prime Minister Eric Gairy, who galvanized estate workers and ended the unchallenged power of the plantocracy. And it examines the
agricultural policies and actions of the 1979-1983 People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) that overthrew Gairy. The broadly popular PRG sought to effect explicit measures of food independence, many readily equated with the struggle for FS. But its leaders were in many ways intent on Western-style modernization. Failure to place power or land in the hands of Grenada's people helped to bring about the revolution's collapse. The 1984 US invasion and dismantling of the PRG government—a quiet, unpublicized, and undemocratic counter-revolution—made Grenada a laboratory for neoliberal experimentation that has powerfully influenced island developments since, imposing many continuing barriers to autochthonous Grenadian development, including the development of FS.

Beginning in the aftermath of the invasion, the history of the GCFA, told in Chapter 5, constitutes an important chapter in the saga of Grenada's Afropeasantry: an attempt to use the foundation of the peasant past to create a contemporary agroecological farm system and provide the social basis for a small farmer organization. From the late 1980s, members successfully adapted and refined these models in a genuine early project of repeasantization, measures that retain enormous promise as FS models in the present period. The chapter details the blow the GCFA suffered in 1998 when the government seized and sold members' most productive traditional lands for a tourist resort. It examines ways that the GCFA's organizational structure, shaped by neoliberal currents of the emerging period, influenced how members handled the crisis, and what the organization's current prospects suggest about the establishment of FS in Grenada today.
Chapter 6 offers an overview of Grenada’s economy in 2008 with an eye on farmers and rural dwellers, especially women. The island was then recovering from two major hurricanes, dealing with the surge in food prices that accompanied that year’s oil price hikes, and a world economy edging into recession. The chapter invokes political-ecological notions of metabolism and vulnerability to look at tourism, sand mining, home construction (“the built environment”), and the labor question, all of which powerfully constrain farm communities and food production. I work to establish the roles and size of the small farmer cadre, landless workers, and women farmers, their class and sectorial relationships to the economy and development of FS. The chapter includes an interview with the head of Grenada’s Marketing and National Import Board (MNIB)—key rural sector player—about FS and small farmers. A picture of recent efforts to accelerate commercialization of small farming is offered, as is an analysis of the impact of these steps on small farmers and any push for FS.

Both continuities with and erosion of Grenada’s agricultural inheritance are evident in River Sallee, the rural north shore village that is the subject of Chapter 7. Farming in River Sallee takes place on borrowed, squatted, rented, family and community-owned land and in impressive houseyard gardens, including those of farmer-partners Bernadette Roberts and Reginald Buddy, profiled here. A fragile sense of community as well as wider nation persists in River Sallee, evident in its preservation of the Saracca, an annual harvest festival rooted in West African customs that continues to bind sometimes-ambivalent community members amid a growing First World culture of consumerism and rural poverty. In addition to the Saracca, the chapter describes efforts by area farmers to maintain access to lands in a local common property
arrangement. The fragility of such arrangements are highlighted by the chapter’s documentation of the recent loss of several communities’ customary lands through a land grab by the government, which has designated those lands—in a move like that suffered by the GCFA on the south shore—for development as a tourist resort.

Unsurprisingly, the Conclusion finds, solutions to Grenadian food dependency lie in organizing for land reform, in a campaign for empowerment of people in the rural sector and for FS. They lie in a new understanding between farmers and the landless poor and in coalition with groups beyond the boundaries of the island, as well as in a new embrace by Grenadians of their own officially—and systematically—neglected collective material culture. The roots of such neglect, Chapter 2 shows, are global and historical in character. Uprooting them will entail a confrontation with that history, in both a global and local effort, and long term struggle.

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2 I wrote for the Jamaica Gleaner during a seven-month stay in that country in 2002 and 2003, and continued to contribute to the paper until 2010. During the dissertation period I also traveled to Cuba and Barbados and—for this project—to the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Grenada, as well as the Grenadian dependency, Carriacou.


4 My three-and-a-half months in the Dominican Republic, the findings from which are largely set aside here, nonetheless contributed to this project in helping me to view the challenges faced by the GCAF in a more international light. As co-coordinator of LVC Caribe, Juana Ferrer Paredes gave her blessing to my ambition to study the organization’s workings in the Caribbean and oriented me to some of the tensions that the regional effort is faced with. In later travels, she urged me to consider myself an ambassador for the group, a designation that I assumed, if in low-key fashion, in visits to the Windward Islands Farmers’ Association (WINFA) in St. Vincent, and to Jamaica, where I interviewed leaders of the country’s Organic Agriculture Movement (JOAM), a potential future member of LVC. I also spent time on several occasions doing telephone translation between WINFA organizers and the LVC Caribe office, and translated several emails between the two bodies. These observations are offered in the spirit of full disclosure of the degree of my commitment to LVC’s aims. In keeping with the commitment to develop the
project with the organizations under study I also take it as my obligation to “return the knowledge” that I obtained “systematically…to its owners” (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991:9). In that sense my obligation to the LVC Caribe organizations whose aid I enlisted only begins with this dissertation.

5 “Tradition” in developmentalist literature regarding agriculture is often used to denote stasis, an ahistorical agricultural steady state that is contrasted unflatteringly with superior modern (commercial) methods, as George Beckford notes (2007:137). In the definition adopted here, which follows Beckford, traditional practices are simply inventions that have been known to work and that are therefore repeated; they may be of recent origin (Beckford 2000:169). “Heritage,” following this, will mean the wider body of such traditions in a given culture—cuisines form the part of this heritage related to cooking. Paulo Freire’s definition of culture, which I also adopt here, carries a similar sense of practice and utility, “not,” he writes, “a luxury or a simple aesthetic appreciation, but the sum total of the solutions supplied by human beings to the problems the environment sets them” (Verhelst 1992:17). Freire’s definition of culture also suggests that it may be fluid, a “continuous process of retention and renewal” (Trouillot 1992:30).

6 Consolidation of the enormous and influential Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC), formally completed in 1995, lent impetus to regional rural struggles as Latin American farmer groups united to fight the effects of neoliberalism on rural people. LVC’s organizational structure would be patterned on CLOC’s (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010:155 and 157).

7 One outcome of the world monetary agreement created at Bretton Woods in 1944, the GATT talks paved the way for ongoing negotiations to reduce global barriers to trade, taking for granted that this was a beneficial development. The negotiations resulted in establishment of the WTO, which has pushed agreements “liberalizing” trade that affect almost every area of human life, signaling “a pronounced shift away from more controlled to almost exclusively market-driven economies” (Desmarais 2007:49).

8 Bishop reported that he first heard the term used in 1989, at a Farmers Workshop in St. Vincent (Kopka 2008).

9 The US has refused to embrace the idea of a human right to food (Rosset 2003). It accepts the idea of food security only insofar as this means, “the opportunity to secure food and not guaranteed entitlement” (http://www.fao.org/docrep/MEETING/005/Y7106E/y7106e03.htm, accessed December 11, 2012).

10 1996 Declaration of Food Sovereignty

11 According to WINFA official Steve Maximay, Trinidad's official definition of food security—one Caribbean example—involves maintaining a five-day emergency food supply in Miami warehouses. Under such circumstances food security becomes a province of corporate interests dealing in durable processed food; local farmers lose out once again. The projected role of markets in attaining food security was set out by the World Bank ca. 1975. It stated that “the transformation of agriculture from peasant to commercial farming is a precursor to attaining food security” (2009:4, 20).

12 In asking for the names of farmers to interview in River Sallee, I found that I was usually pointed to men. Six of the people whom I eventually interviewed around River Sallee were women. This is not a terrible percentage in a landscape in which roughly one-third of “farmers” (see Chapter Two) are held to be women. But in seeking interview subjects I later came to feel that I had made a mistake in asking for farmers; I should have sought people who were raising food generally. Many people raise food in Grenada without thinking of themselves as farmers, either because they don’t perform such work on a full-time basis or because they don’t do it commercially. In short, the farmer could exclude many people whom I would have liked to learn from. This holds particularly for women and for women who might plant around their homes, or do the majority of their work there, or who only occasionally join partners or family members in farming labor elsewhere, as I discuss in Chapter 6. We are reminded that farmer historically tends to mean “tenant,” or “landholder,” whether as freeholder or renter (Meiksins-Wood 2000:99-100); often it is men who go into the wider world to farm, and who possess title to such lands. “Farmer,” in this
way, and farming, tend to both a certain gender-specificity and assumptions about landholding that may not include persons whom FS would benefit.

13 Mintz’s term for enslaved Africans as they developed various farming systems on Caribbean estates prior to their post-Emancipation emergence as modern peasantry (1989:151); see Chapter 3.

14 Little attention has been paid to Grenada's sugarcane small farming legacy. Historian and former Prime Minister George Brizan, as sympathetic as any Grenadian authority to Grenada's small farmers, devotes just a few lines to sugarcane as small farming inheritance (1998:262-263) in Grenada: Island Of Conflict. Historian Beverley Steele devotes just a single line to small sugarcane farmers in her history of the island (2003:175).
CHAPTER 2
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY Contexts: The Caribbean In the World, Grenada In the Caribbean

‘[T]he world’. . . with no apologies for the formulation. . . first became a modern concept in the Caribbean.

—Sidney Mintz
Goodbye Columbus

Mistaken interpretations of the cause of underdevelopment stem either from prejudiced thinking or from the error of believing that one can learn the answer by looking inside the developing country.

—Walter Rodney
A History of the Guyanese Working People

Overview

This chapter establishes a political-ecological framework for evaluating the FS struggle in Grenada. It highlights the role of the surrounding Caribbean region in the rise of global capitalism, and the way that this historical relationship shaped the discourses of development and modernism that dominate our own period. It examines the question of “the peasant” and shows how, in the Caribbean, the labor process of former slaves emerging from the plantations (in Grenada called estates) was a “resistant response” to a key development for capitalism: the industrialization of food production in an emerging economic system. It discusses the roles of primitive accumulation and continuing dispossession in founding and maintaining that system, and the various accommodations that small cultivators have made with outside demands on their production, occupying multiple laboring roles in maintaining subsistence (or partial “cash and subsistence”) livelihood. The role of plantation economic theory (PET) is introduced, a dependency theory perspective first articulated by Caribbean social scientists that championed the region’s Black peasant farmers. Regional countries
remain trapped in dependency, according to PET theorists, in the boom-and-bust cycles of a plantation economic system. Effects of this dependency are visible in the present period of neoliberal globalization, through which the wealthy Western countries—in a post-Cold War reassertion of their power—have sought, through harsh measures of economic discipline, to integrate poor countries in a new system of trade regulation, curbing their ability to organize their economies on behalf of their own citizens. Any investigation of Grenada's agricultural legacy and the quest for FS on the island, this and subsequent chapters argue, must be framed in terms of the ongoing tensions between the small farming models evolved by Grenada’s post-emancipation peasantry and the four-hundred-year legacy of plantation economy, Western colonialism, and its current forms.

**Development, Agriculture, and the Caribbean**

Critics sometimes trace the evolution of a “development project” and mindset to the period after World War Two and Cold War that followed, when the US began exporting economic aid and technical knowledge to counter Soviet influence in Europe (McMichael 2008:1-37; Sachs 1997:1-21; Esteva 1998:6-7).¹ In a landmark 1949 speech US President Harry Truman declared the poor countries of the global south “underdeveloped,” and argued the US had a responsibility to aid their growth (Sachs 1997:1-7; Peet and Hartwick 1999:41,145).² A vast enterprise grew up around the Truman initiative, with think tanks, graduate programs, government-funded aid initiatives, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in which the United Nations (UN)—then four years old—would play an ambiguous role. These institutions were undergirded by ideas of necessary modernization that suggested countries and people that had not developed in the West's image were not evolved (So 1990:18-20; Portes
1976:61-68), “trapped in stifling cultural traditions” (McMichael 2008:27), in need of Western guidance and models to develop. Often it was rural dwellers—peasants and other ethnic groups—who were targeted for development, and the resources of the world's rural sectors that such interests wished to mobilize. Designation as “undeveloped” and “underdevelopment” marked poor countries and people for Western aid and intervention.

Some critics charge that the “developmentalist” construct was and remains little more than neocolonialism (Goldsmith 1996:253). But the roots of developmentalism were planted long before Truman's speech. They stretch to when Europe first trained its sights on the Caribbean, in the period of primitive accumulation that helped give rise to the current system of capitalism. The Caribbean was the first focus of this globalizing gaze, the first platform for its projects of social and environmental engineering, of the forced removal and enslavement of millions of African people that made the European countries' emergence as world powers possible.

Historian Richard Drayton places agriculture at the center of the colonial development exercise, showing how British agronomists applied their emerging natural philosophies—in which religion and accounting were entwined—to the sugar trade and other activities in the Caribbean. The “sanctified knowledge” of “Improvement,” in the parlance of the day, meant enclosing land and “putting it to profit.” The scientific revolution “lent support to the mercantilist vision of commercial empire” and expansion, its imperatives “made into the facts of a rational Providence.” Out of the economics of British agriculture came what Drayton describes as “an ideology of development fundamental to the making of the British Empire” (2000:51-59).³ “The apparently
irresistible logic of statistics” also “affected domestic debates about expansion,” says Drayton. “'[P]olitical arithmetic' encouraged Britain . . . to continue its reach for Atlantic and Asian trade, and to reorganize taxation around this international exchange. Science, inherently expansive in its universal appetites. . . helped to commit Britain to this 'Blue Water' destiny” (2000:59).”

The Caribbean is therefore an ideal place to study not just the long-term effects of globalizing development and its so-called modernizing influences, but grassroots responses to it. “There is no better vantage point. . . from which to sort out what is 'new,' and. . . ‘old,’ about. . . capital and imperialism” than the Caribbean,” argues development economist Kari Polanyi Levitt (2005:10). This is especially true when it comes to food and agriculture. The fact that Caribbean production revolved around products like sugar—increasingly fungible agricultural commodity subject to speculation, forerunner of both oil (Abbott 2011, passim) and today's “flex-fuels”—makes it highly important as an object of historical study, especially as poor countries struggle to reorient food production toward their people's basic needs today.

With 50 million inhabitants, 30 million of them Spanish-speaking, the island region that today's Caribbean citizens inherit is one of irreconcilable-seeming contrasts—from socialist Cuba and its hard-won independence to Jamaica, the “most structurally adjusted country in the world.” According to Holger Henke and Fred Reno regional “political culture. . . is influenced by an extremely dense, contradictory. . . web of contending ethnicities, creolized value systems, hybrid cultural traditions, global life trajectories, international connections and discontinuities” (2003:xx). Such complexities form a barrier to development for LVC Caribe, with affiliates in eight Caribbean
countries—Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, Grenada, and Martinique—to the formation by small farmers of a united regional front for FS. But despite these obstacles, “the societies of the Caribbean. . . exhibit similarities”—“parallels of economic and social structure and organization. . . similar or historically related cultures”—“that cannot possibly be attributed to mere coincidence,” writes anthropologist Sidney Mintz (Benitez-Rojo 1996:35). The strongest basis for regional unity and future progress, agricultural economist George Beckford and other Caribbean post-independence intellectuals believed, lay in the shared “repository” of a “popular culture of self-reliance and independence” (Levitt 2005:58), rooted in the experience of slavery and struggles of their emerging post-emancipation populations. For Beckford “the free spirit” of the regional peasantry, “of free men and women who rejected the plantation to cultivate the land. . . was the hope for the future” (Levitt 2005:58). According to Mintz the story of the Caribbean peasantry constituted "the most remarkable drama of culture-building in the modern world" (1980:15). That culture, this dissertation argues, contained an alternative vision of development, one that the region can draw on in pursuit of FS today.

**Cultivating Independence: Defining Peasant**

*If the word peasant, as such may be void of analytical validity, it reflects nevertheless a range of commonalities. These. . . are not to be found in a common peasant essence. . . Rather, they spark from a labor process we can conceptualize.*

—Michel-Rolph Trouillot  
*Peasants and Capital*

*Like every social entity, peasantry exists in fact only as a process.*

—Teodor Shanin  
*Peasantry as a Political Factor*
What characteristics unite rural peoples, including Grenadians, to whom the term peasant is attributed? Investigators warn against the dangers of generalizing too greatly about peasants, an enormous group of people who have conducted their lives in highly varied historical, social, and material circumstances across the world. But if we assert the continuing value of a Caribbean peasant past and inherited modalities—as FS does—we must consider how researchers have employed the term. As with “development,” it is partly a question of who does the defining: can peasants define themselves?

In *Peasants and Capital*, his pioneering 1988 study of small farmers on the East Caribbean island of Dominica, anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot identified four ways of seeing the peasant idea, a concept and area of study then felt to be—like peasants themselves—in eclipse. The theorizing of agrarian economist and sociologist Alexander Chayanov, for one (Trouillot said), linked peasant cultivators as units of production and consumption based around the family farm, “axis” of a unique “economic structure” (1988:2), not commensurable with conventional utility economics (Wolf 1966: 111). A second view, that of rural sociologist Teodor Shanin, more strongly emphasized culture, and saw peasants sharing “a pattern of social life” whose traits Shanin sought to typify globally, characterized by “a livelihood based on subsistence” and “commodity production” not “usually involving profit maximization” (1966:245, 243). Such a manner of living involved a direct relationship to the land, which peasants might hold under a variety of arrangements, and “traditional village relations of solidarity and reciprocity” (Edelman 2003:187). Shanin’s description also emphasized peasants’ subjection to
more powerful socioeconomic forces but—importantly—underscored their lingering collective power of resistance to industrialization (1966:240, 246).

A third way of seeing peasants, associated with anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, saw peasant communities as “part-cultures” in that they were not isolate like classic “tribal” groups early anthropologists sought to study. It emphasized peasants’ historic trading relationships with towns and the ways that peasant culture was itself produced by such relationships. A fourth way of seeing the peasant—which Trouillot links to anthropologist Eric Wolf—interests itself still more widely in peasants’ “historically derived economic and sociopolitical relationships,” especially to the state and capitalism (Trouillot 1988:2). For Wolf it was “a structural relationship”—including to more powerful interests that commanded a share of peasants’ surplus production (in “rents”)—not any “particular cultural content” that defined the peasant (Wolf 1955:454; 1966:9). Peasants are, in such a view, very much part of the societies that surround them, despite the neglect they may suffer at the hands of the state.

Other descriptions point to peasant relations of production, including to the soil. Peasants partake of largely unmechanized approaches to farming (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006:13), it is suggested, and have limited access to agricultural inputs. The lack of machine power (“the priority of living labor over labor embodied in. . . tools”) means that they depend on their own and each other’s labor (Trouillot 1988:5), a fact with implications for collective action—I believe—that goes far beyond the issues of family relations that have often been stressed. Because they seek to feed themselves, their families, and communities, peasants grow a wide array of produce. This means that peasant subsistence bears a critical agro-ecological component: diversity, and the
development of the skills that growing and processing what they grow makes possible. Peasants also diversify their agricultural production (including for cash sale) to guard against the harm that might come with loss of any one crop. The insurance this provides is among important relative advantages that peasant farming holds over corporate monocrop "Green Revolution" farming, both for peasants and for nature. Contemporary peasants also engage in many kinds of work, as subsequent chapters show. Their "diverse livelihood strategies" and "occupational multiplicity" are regularly cited as a central feature of peasant life, including in the Caribbean (Comitas 1973; Besson 2002:214).

The foregoing by no means comprehensive observations can nonetheless point toward a working definition of peasants—and what Trouillot calls a "peasant labor process" (1988:19)—largely in keeping with that offered by historians Hillary Beckles and Verene Shepherd for Caribbean contexts: "small scale farmers who. . . produce most of their own food. . . and items for sale," working on “owned, rented or leased or squatted” land (2006:33). Among experiences common to rural regional dwellers to whom the term peasant is ascribed, in the view of longtime scholar West Indian scholar Woodville Marshall, are their continued ties to the plantations/estates; the multiple occupations that they are required to engage in for survival; continuing efforts by governments to push small farmers toward commercial agriculture (a pattern this dissertation shows continues); the negativity of elites toward them; and the “ultimately co-optative” quality of land settlement schemes purporting to meet their historic demand for land (in Laurence 2010:4-5). All of these issues are pertinent for Grenada.
Marshall also adapts Trouillot's notion of a peasant labor process, which suggests that small farmers labor on small units over which they exercise some control, possess most of the necessary tools for such work, and that much of this process is subsumed in a wider, commodity-dependent “space of capitalist production” (Crichlow 2005:14). The fact that the labor process elaborated by the Grenadian people involved groups of people—family, wider family, maroons and work teams, community, and even “nation”—rather than the isolated economic individuals that mainstream economics takes as starting unit of study is vital, as this project shows. In the analysis that follows I emphasize three further aspects of the peasant idea important for this project, linking these notions of peasant process with the struggle for FS.

**Peasants: Objects of Development or Modern Subjects?**

*The peasant is simply not adapted to the... rational manner of life.*

—Karl Weber  
The Protestant Ethic

Peasants have often been seen as anachronistic, “remnants of a premodern era” (Trouillot 1988:1), impediments to the institution of both an industrializing capitalism and socialism. That they survive at all has been viewed as remarkable (Trouillot 1988:1-2) and by some unfortunate: they are hard to discipline. But as of 2002, according to environmental geographers William Marsh and John Grossa, half of humanity still availed of subsistence agriculture to provide the great part of its basic needs (2002:137-139). Stalled efforts at global industrialization and collective social projects of peasantization and repeasantization suggest that these numbers may grow, reversing a century and more of peasant decline. Although a rootedness in soil and place may link such people with the past, they are also a contemporary phenomenon—increasingly
held by some to be the future of agriculture. In the Caribbean they are modern in all historic senses of the word.

The question of peasants' relationship to modernity, especially to industrialization, is important. Among progressives, including participants in the World Social Forum, the question of the modern, of an imposed “universalizing” vision of modernity—of whether the inherited Western vision of industrial modernity is inherently destructive, inimical to peasants, small farmers, and us all—has been debated in recent decades, such modernism condemned. Among other things, it is understood to privilege a packaged and delocalized urbanism: “[T]he hegemony of modernism together with the rise to dominance of urban industrial capitalism. . . led to the equation of 'civilization' and human progress with urban phenomena,” writes Araghi (1999:111). It conspires, Desmarais writes, “to make local knowledge irrelevant” (2007:40) and concentrates economic power (the power to produce) in just a few hands. In such a vision of the modern citizens become—tellingly from an ecological standpoint—“consumers.”

But suggesting that modernity is an all-encompassing or unitary phenomenon risks obscuring the alternatives, locking the peasant in the past and outside of modernity. It is a specific, historically- and ideologically-inflected modernism—a strand of the modern—that progressives critique. As political scientist Ellen Meiksins Wood has shown, the British capitalist current of modernism that evolved—if in a patchy pattern through various kinds of colonization—into our present world system is different from the modernist contexts of emerging Italian city states of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (Wood 1999:26, 87), in which research shows a far different relationship to agricultural production (Tarrow 2004:443), or the modernist vision that
took hold in a revolutionary eighteenth-century France, where the peasantry, unlike Britain's, survived (Wood 1999). The spread of capitalism on the economic pattern that developed in England was not a foregone conclusion, according to Wood, nor is its continuation assured. Nor is the English model the only path to industrialization, especially agro-industrialization, which can be conceived from a standpoint far more organic to local and basic needs production, and be carried out by different kinds of social organization, including in cooperatives. Such alternative currents of modernity—including peasant practices—offer alternative ideas of the future from which we may still learn. The example of the Grenadian peasant is important in this regard. It suggests that other worlds are not just possible, but exist.

Indeed, Caribbean peasants are exemplary in that they played central roles at the creation of the present system and built their post-emancipation cultures in resistance to it. As Caribbean economist Arthur Lewis described them, they are “creatures of colonial capitalism rather than part of its prehistory” (Best 1999:23).

Investigations of what the “actual lived” peasant experience consists of can help us to identify what it is in our received ideas about the modern that we critique. Caribbean peasants themselves developed their own unique alternatives to that system. They developed these in an ongoing, often conflictual dynamic with a modern (still prevalent) institution, the plantation. "Caribbean peasantries," Mintz has written, “represent a mode of response to the plantation. . . and its connotations, and a mode of resistance to” the styles of life imposed on them by that institution (1989:132-33).

**Peasantry and the Peasant Mode as Elective Resistance**

A central feature of peasant existence generally—noted above—is the degree to which peasants remain at some remove from the dominant mode(s) of production,
attached to the land and in direct productive relationship with nature. In Wolf's formulation, peasants “aim for” subsistence. Trouillot questions this assumption (1988:6), arguing that a large proportion of the Caribbean peasantry has long engaged in a “durable” relationship with capitalism (Trouillot 1988:6, 15). In much of the Caribbean an emerging post-emancipation peasantry remained tied, or partly tied, to the plantation, as some do to this day. Chapter 3 demonstrates the often adroit accommodation that Grenada's peasants made—on island estates and off of them—learning to grow export crops with crops for local consumption. Wolf and Trouillot's stances may be further qualified by John Brierley's matter-of-fact observation that “the non-commercial aspect. . . of producing food for consumption by the household” lay “at the very core of small farming in the West Indies” (1974:117); subsistence production, for many farmers, may be less the aim than the core strategy of their own reproduction. The compromises made and deals struck by (or available to) rural people in order to survive, the degree of their articulation with the commercial economy and shifting regimes of accumulation may also shift frequently, day to day or week to week, governing the degree of their misery or survival, determining whether they remain in farming (or return to it) at all.

Any notion of peasant independence must thus be qualified: the Anglo/Caribbean peasant laborer “may not be at the mercy of the capitalist to the same extent or in the same form as a full-scale proletarian wage-earner,” Trouillot observes (1988:9). Peasants may demur when invited to “modernize” or become “more efficient,” especially if this means a specialization that makes them unable to feed themselves. Or they may acquiesce in whole or part, sometimes cannily adding whatever new plant or strategy is
offered to their existing stock or repertoire. They may willingly try all kinds of
government- or NGO-sponsored development projects out of desperation, interest,
hope—for many reasons—departing from or modifying subsistence strategies to
accommodate perceived possibilities for advancement.⁸ There is also no doubting that
Caribbean peasants’ position as former slaves or people descended from them, their
desire to remove the yoke of the plantation, made the pursuit of freedom a conscious
one for Caribbean small farmers (Sheller 2000:5). In some real degree, if more
intensively at some times than others, theirs has been a conscious project of liberation
with food as its central subject, as forthcoming chapters show. At the heart of any
consideration of the Caribbean peasantry and FS, then, is its volitional character. This
means talking about the peasant idea in terms of both agency (including collective
agency and attempts to influence the direction of the nation, to make the state respond
to their needs) and future possibility.

The elective quality of peasant existence is what researchers speak of, in part,
when they talk about processes of peasantization and re-peasantization, the conscious
[peasant]. . . and infuse it with new and positive content” (Edelman 2003:187). Mintz
has called the Caribbean farmers who left the plantation to farm after slavery a
“reconstituted peasant class” (1989:132-133; 2010:74). The notion of class is of central
importance, because it was mainly in the degree that they worked collectively that they
succeeded. Theirs was a pioneering early example of a process that we are seeing
across the world today. The degree of conscious manipulation of the received past by
their successors in a project like the GCFA's revival of cane farming is as we will see also impressive, suggestive of the possibilities available to Grenadians in pursuing FS.  

**Subsistence in Theory, Subsistence in Practice**

For many people subsistence is synonymous with poverty. It may suggest alienation, and be implicitly contrasted with benefits that come from engagement in a consumer-industrial economy. Subsistence labor, public policy scholar Colin Williams notes, tends to be depicted as a “weak, primitive, traditional, stagnant, marginal, residual or dwindling non-commodified realm” (2005:46), echoing the broadly negative portrait of peasants and peasant culture projected by developmentalist models.

But for science—in ethnoecology, for example—subsistence is simply “the long-term relationship between community and land base” (Foster 2000:220). The etymology of the term—from the Latin *(subsistentia/subsistir)* “to stand still or firm” and coming to mean “to support oneself”—suggests this as well. In the same way that this study pursues the relationship of the small peasant farmer to wider society rather than focusing on “the farm” (too easily conflated with “the firm”), ecological subsistence and population studies examine issues like diet choice, group size, and the effect of spatial distribution of resources as well as the effect of these on group behavior, identifying how groups exist in relationship to wider nature. The study and pursuit of subsistence, in other words, can mean no more or less than the science of a given population's survival and the pursuit of measures to ensure it—measures on which human communities and even the human project are *predicated*. That something like this was once understood in the West is suggested by Martinez-Alier's analysis of the Greek term *oikonomia*, from which we derive our *economy*, “which we would today call ecological economics” or human ecology, originally held to be “the art and science of
the material *provisioning* of the ‘oikos’ or household” (1999:112, my emphasis). Success in human cultures of subsistence historically did not mean piling up reserves of capital (“chrematistics,” as Aristotle called it, or profit, what mainstream economics focuses on today), but derivation of a surplus that ensured survival beyond the horizons of a single season or crop\(^{10}\)—beyond mere survival, that is, or pejorative conceptions of subsistence to something more like its meaning in ecology.

It is not hard to see, then, that a subsistence society or culture, if consciously pursued, could include measures that reduce vulnerability: schools, health care provision, burial societies, community food lockers, shared secure places to shelter animals in hurricanes, even “independent money income” (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999:3)—what WINFA eminence grise Wilberforce Emanuel told me that he calls “FS plus”—but *not* doing these for super-profit or via super-exploitation of labor. (Here the notion of the “petty”—local, or small—economy, like “subsistence,” as opposed to the global economy comes into play as well.) As we will see, Grenadian and other Caribbean communities developed many such institutions in the post-slavery period, basis for my assertion that they struggled to create “communities of subsistence” and that the pursuit of a larger subsistence, a national or regional subsistence, is a worthy goal in small island contexts like Grenada’s.

Subsistence, then, including as a goal of peasant society, can mean the pursuit of sustainable livelihood. And in the wider sense, developmentalism has often constituted a front in what Desmarais (and Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen with her) concludes is a “war *against* subsistence” (2007:47; 1999:17), a war that has gone on in the Caribbean since the end of slavery, when colonial administrations and estate
owners worked to prevent emancipated former slaves from obtaining land to force them to continue working on the plantations. Uncovering the strategies employed by small farmers in this fight is therefore a goal of this project.

Critically, as suggested, subsistence does not mean going it alone. Traditional peasant subsistence in Grenada is not individual subsistence, I will argue, but a family and community endeavor, threatened by foreign Western notions of individuality and consumerism. Building on this inheritance, bringing the conscious pursuit of such interdependence to the fore, making it part of national and regional campaigns for FS, should be central to the work of LVC in the region, I would come to believe. Community subsistence, in turn, implies a necessary sharing of resources, including the most precious underutilized resource in a society that in 2012 was said to approach 50% real unemployment—human labor, energy, and thought. Here various examples of the kind of subsidiarity or ecocentricity that emerges as a central component of FS make themselves plain, including ways of organizing resource use in common property relationships like that described in Chapter 7, on Grenada’s north shore Plains of Chambord.\(^\text{11}\)

Despite the commoditization of many social relationships, human beings continue to share most of the earth, including the greater part of our labor. A lot of subsistence activity is shared, intimate, unmediated by technology. “Households. . . engage in a tremendous range of self-servicing activity,” Colin Williams notes (2005:36). Subsistence forms a large—in many places growing—part of most people’s activity including in the “First” World,\(^\text{12}\) in part because of the growing mechanization of labor, continual re-division of labor, under- and unemployment. Subsistence emphatically does
not equal drudgery, although as articulated with capitalism it may reduce people to it. Cooking and eating, our relationship to food—these constitute a major part of subsistence activity everywhere, as do things like child care and creation and maintenance of gardens, activities that (ironically) the wealthy—given the chance—engage in lovingly and with pleasure. “Anyone who thinks a subsistence orientation should be banished ‘to the stone age’. . . or to the Third World, because in our developed society we have allegedly outgrown [it],” Bennholdt-Thomsen writes, “has failed to recognize that subsistence does not disappear, but rather changes through history and takes different forms in different countries” (in Williams 2005:36).

The subsistence economy—particularly women’s and peasant labor’s (Benería 1999:1-5, passim), go largely unrecognized by economists, in statistical portraits of national economies. But as our discussion of the peasant accommodation to capitalism suggests, capitalism profits from the peasant and from people’s subsistence efforts, appropriating labor with little or no remuneration from a variety of sources: women’s various critical labors of social and material reproduction; prison and slave labor; peasant labor; and underpaid/marginal or “off the books” labor. “Women's work under capitalism is universally made invisible and can for that reason be exploited limitlessly,” write Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies (1999:11).

From these observations it should not be hard to see that, as Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies say, the peasant and her/his labor exist in a similar relationship to capital as women and their unpaid work: by supplying their own food they contribute to primitive accumulation and are (therefore) useful to capital interests inside and outside of poor country economies. This relationship was first articulated on Caribbean estates
where the enslaved were charged with feeding themselves, and thus contributed to the estate’s profit margins. It persisted in the post-slavery plantation as well, placing the previously enslaved person in a position analogous to the British peasantry, with one critical advantage: the former slaves had some access to land, however insecure, that Caribbean landowners could not prevent, while the British peasantry had been forced off of theirs.

The question, however, arises: if FS implicitly champions a right to subsistence, how are women to receive just compensation for their work? FS in many ways becomes a demand to address this problem of the failure to compensate women’s and peasant labor, one reason why it is so important that the question of women and their roles is made central to the quest for FS as formulated by LVC, placed up front (as described in the introduction), where it is less easily swept from sight.

Mies situates the issues of women’s and peasant (and “colonial”) labor side by side in their analysis. “The exploitation of colonies, as well as that of women and other non-wage [subsistence] workers, is absolutely crucial to the capitalist accumulation process,” she writes. “Without the exploitation of non-wage labor, wage-labour exploitation would not be possible. To leave these two main areas of ‘super-surplus’ exploitation outside” of analysis “has led into a blind alley” for feminists and others trying to think through such questions, she claims (1998:200). The appropriation by capitalism of human subsistence labor is part of the larger, often violently appropriative ongoing process of primitive accumulation that makes capitalism possible in the first place. It is not possible to understand the structural position of “the peasant” or of women within that construct without this wider historical perspective.
Primitive Accumulation, the English and Caribbean Peasantries

In actual history... conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder... force, play the great part. In the tender annals of Political Economy, the idyllic reigns from time immemorial.

—Karl Marx
Capital

Capitalism made its great foundational leap forward as an economic system, economists tell us, through an accumulative push or series of pushes—quantitative amassing of resources—sometimes known as primitive accumulation, which underwrote early large-scale capital projects. Among such developments were various acts of dispossession, especially the removal of peasants from their traditional lands,\(^{13}\) facilitated by a movement of enclosure that began in the early sixteenth century, lasting well over 200 years. For Marx the separation of people from their means of subsistence was fundamental to how the new system worked:

The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property. As soon as capitalist production is once on its own legs, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a continually extending scale [emphasis mine]. The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production. (1867; my emphasis)\(^{14}\)

England's dispossessed poor had no choice but to seek work in England's emerging industrial centers or to emigrate to Britain's colonies, sometimes as indentured servants. Vagrancy and other laws were enacted by the British Parliament, making it illegal for people to remain idle.\(^{15}\)

The system placed human beings in a new relationship with nature, in which resources would be used first to generate profit rather than to sustain or develop livelihood or knowledge, and production was undertaken with profit as foremost motive.
A great deal of the process was speculative, and therefore wasteful. Competition for resources that cut production costs—to create products more cheaply and attract buyers—increasingly dominated industrial processes. Intensified exploitation of both people (lower wages) and nature (resources obtained quickly and cheaply) were central to success, and rationalized as features of it; a destructive and less organic quickening entered the system, which was often punctuated not by natural but economic crises like the Irish Famine. For the dispossessed poor, getting food now depended on offering the one thing they had to sell, their labor, in return for commercialized food (one's “freedom” to do this would be made much of). Food, Goodman and Redclift write, became “the single most important wage-good in the newly industrialized society” (1991:6). Making people dependent on its purchase was a critical step in the development of the new system—reason why there remains real liberatory potential in Grenadians’ and our ability, locally and as communities or countries, to feed ourselves. In other words, the transformation of food, with food stuffs becoming “an exchange value first and a use-value second” (McMichael 2009:155), is fundamental to the creation of capitalism.

The often wrenching economic developments described above required a further, more intimate ideological basis beyond the “sanctified knowledge of improvement.” To a great degree this was furnished by religion, specifically Protestantism. Indeed, Protestantism “re-forms” around the needs of developing capitalism. All of this might at first seem to take us some way from the issue of FS. But the evolution of Protestantism to embrace the new system—the elevation in Protestant religious rhetoric of ideas about work—carries enduring importance in the Anglo-Caribbean, where abolitionist groups worked to spread their vision of Christianity as they pushed to end slavery; where
Protestant missionary groups have powerful influence in shaping opinion; and where appeals to voters’ religious convictions routinely inform the actions of mainstream politicians.\(^{16}\) (It will also be seen to influence perceptions of local small farmer practices like the annual observance of River Sallee’s Saracca, described in Chapter 7.)

The keystone of the process, however, was and remains continuing expansion and dispossession. A system in formation required land, resources, and labor. The colonies—and slavery—would supply these components of accelerating growth that helped the fledgling capitalist economies of Europe to “take off,” as early development theorists put it. The seizure of colonial lands was a foundational instance of such accumulation.\(^ {17}\) According to early nineteenth-century English economist David Ricardo, the colonies helped to reinforce the development of capitalism in part by spurring the way that land acquired value—through speculation. (“For Ricardo, the dynamic of creating wealth began not with the act of exchange, but with the process of settling and cultivating an empty land, a space of colonization,” writes Timothy Mitchell [2002:85].) This fantasy of emptying, of clearing, comes to dominate today,\(^ {18}\) including in the way some Grenada lands formerly worked by farmers have been turned into national parks and—subsequently—sold to “developers,” harming local agriculture and prospects for assertion of FS. In the process, land formerly used to supply a basic immediate local need is swept up into international circuits of commerce beyond the reach of poor farmers.

Although Marx saw primitive accumulation as a kind of founding moment—capitalism’s Original Sin—it is not just foundational but ongoing. Capitalism is not self-perpetuating, its critics argue, but stagnates without the dispossession that is its basis.
Ongoing appropriation of land ("land grabbing") and labor is required to reignite the system, which continually stumbles over the very poverty it requires to work in the first place. Indeed, we are currently living through the greatest period of dispossession in human history, according to Farshad Araghi (2000:145-160). Samir Amin, in similar terms, describes ours as a new period of enclosure "at world level" (2011:124), and cites it as the single greatest contributor to the current food crisis. It is among the main reasons why people in the hundreds of millions have flooded into the world's cities since World War II's end, this shift itself an ecological disaster. "The history of this expropriation, in different countries, assumes different aspects, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different periods," says Marx. But "[t]he expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil," is capitalism's catalyzing mechanism, "the basis of the whole process."

What makes Grenada and peasants important, in many ways, is that the system's hold over the former slave and today's Grenadian farmer is incomplete. People in the rural sector often retain some slender hold on the soil, on the non-commoditized means of their own reproduction (including food). As remarked earlier, their labor is indeed expropriated; they are articulated with capitalism. But to the degree that they continue to prize independence they remain a threat. The potential remains for further, organized expansion of subsistence culture through processes of peasantization and the struggle for FS (Mies 1998:xvii).

**The Metabolic Rift**

The metabolic rift is a specifically ecological way to see the effects on nature of primitive accumulation and the growth of capitalism, which Marx discerned as a fundamental law of disruptive motion of the system's growth. The concept helps to
describe the “boom and bust” nature of the system, including plantation economic systems like those historically implanted in the Caribbean, and its expansive and speculative qualities. Marx described the rift as an outgrowth of people's and community’s separation from an immediate relationship to the soil, beginning with the historical removal of peasant farmers from their lands.

The rift offers a way to see not just the objectification for profit purposes of the landscape under capitalism, but the subordination of agriculture to increasingly industrialized production relations, in particular the reduced recycling of nutrients as new chemical- and input-dependent methods are introduced to agricultural practices and older methods that used animal (and often human) waste are replaced (Foster 2000.ix; McMichael 2009:161).

The problem was first described by German chemist Justus von Liebig (1803-1873)—inventor of nitrogen-based fertilizer—and formed into a more general observation about the wasteful up- and downstream impacts of the emerging system by Marx. The economist employed the concept of metabolism “to refer to the actual metabolic interaction between nature and society through human labor. . . and in a wider sense. . . to describe the complex, dynamic interdependent set of needs and relations brought into being and constantly reproduced in alienated form” under the new system, writes John Bellamy Foster (2000:158). The specialization of various kinds of production in the emerging system meant intense concentration of industrial or agricultural processes in certain places rather than their local integration for basic needs. Inevitably, this meant extraction of resources in previously unseen quantities in
some places and the piling up of waste in others, with large expenditures of energy to facilitate these.

Liebig had documented that when farmers stopped using their own “night soil” and animal manure to develop crops, as happened when large-scale farming accelerated, the soil became depleted and their yields fell. He postulated a global crisis if disruptions of this metabolic cycle persisted. The crisis soon arrived as agricultural yields dropped dramatically toward the middle of the nineteenth century, bringing a period of “guano imperialism” as the European powers and the US took command of small islands and even rocks—many of these in the Caribbean—to collect bird-droppings for their farming sectors. “In 1858 alone,” writer and researcher Andrew Leonard writes, “Great Britain. . . imported 300,000 tons of Peruvian guano, mostly for. . . turnip farming” [2008]. The crisis was a further spur to industrialization of agriculture, bolstering a rise in fertilizer production. Today fertilizers account for 31% of agricultural energy consumption.19

Marx and other social thinkers noted the increasing disruption of natural processes as the scale of industry and agriculture grew, including the pollution of the Thames River by human waste. They cited these as examples of a growing metabolic rift, a cascading train of disruptive developments reinforced, in part, by a growing country/city divide (Foster 2000:147-163; Foster 2002:160).

The rift is a phenomenon with repercussions far beyond agriculture.20 Our ideas about a distinction between the world’s rural and urban sectors may ignore the way they grew out of the metabolic rift, where towns grew around manufacturing with never-before seen levels of waste and environmental degradation not easily coped with by
nature or communities; dense habitation created new levels of waste; and food had to be shipped to people, increasingly processed as well as packaged, with increasing uses of energy facilitating these exchanges. “[L]ong distance trade arising from the separation of town and country was a major factor in the net loss of soil nutrients and the growing crisis in agriculture,” writes Foster. As early as the 1840s, Liebig was noting that there were “hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles in the United States between. . . centers of grain cultivation and. . . markets” (in Foster 2000:152-153), and the great transfers of energy and environmental disruption growing from this fact.

Agriculture is not a rural phenomenon per se (in fact, agriculture makes permanent settlement possible.) A city/country divide with agriculture confined to rural spaces is not inevitable but a product of the metabolic rift. Maintaining food production in closer proximity to people is one goal of FS, a way to repair the rift, to re-connect or create an implicit metabolic or nutrient “loop” or cycle, “the movement and recycling of elements. . . essential for life (Powers and McSorley 2000:55). In Grenada, as we will see, this rift—which yawns in the case of the plantation/estate (with imported tools and human labor, the distant export of production) is “repaired” in the making of the New Village Movement, and in proto-peasant and peasant agricultural practices. For this project such issues assume importance when we consider the built environment, the way that space is consumed and organized historically—first by the plantations, which arrogate much of the best land, sometimes for highly wasteful kinds of production; on the margins of plantations by “proto-peasant” slaves; in post-slavery communities, where almost every house had its own houseyard garden; and by planners and builders as impose First World suburban housing construction on portions of Grenada's
remaining lands. The rift persists in Grenada in the import of 70% of islanders’ food (its return from Grenada and other Third World locales in the form of finished products); in the import of fertilizer when alternatives could be used; in the import of animal feed; in the importation and stealing of sand; in the tremendous amounts of energy expended to effect these exchanges; in the degradation of local nature and loss of natural wealth to Grenadians inherent in such processes; and in the failure to use good local land for food production. Many of these issues were identified by Caribbean “plantation economic” theorists in the post-independence period, beginning in the middle 1960s.

**Plantation Economics and Agriculture**

A project of English-speaking “New World” Caribbean intellectuals (Polanyi-Levitt 1998:1) beginning in the 1960s, plantation economic theory (PET) takes for working assumption that Caribbean economies and cultures continue to be dominated by the institutional stamp of the plantation, and the social and political structures of the mode of production that accompanied slavery. “The originality of the work,” according to Polanyi-Levitt, “lies in the explanatory power of ‘the plantation’ as the original and fundamental institution of contemporary Caribbean economy” (1998:3). “Continuity over 500 years,” she writes, “has been the theme of Caribbean political economists, [who] located the roots of Caribbean ‘underdevelopment’ in . . . three centuries of slave plantation economy” (Levitt 2005:10). “The legacy of institutions, structures and behaviour patterns of the plantation system are so deeply entrenched,” writes Lloyd Best, “that adjustment tends to take place as an adaptation within the bounds of the established framework” (1968:32). Only superficially about plantations, PET “aims to explain why Caribbean economies undergo alternating cycles of ‘boom’ and ‘bust’. . . and why adjustment during the bust does not free” regional economies “from
dependence on the 'plantation sector.' It is, Girvan writes, "a theory of permanent dependence" (2009:2).

As a body of indigenous knowledge and theorizing by Caribbean thinkers connected to Latin American structuralist thought and dependency theory, PET warrants attention if for no other reason than that it asserts "the specificity of the Caribbean experience" (Girvan 2009:xvii). But it also speaks strongly to the study of FS and the Caribbean peasantry, whom its originators championed. PET theorists challenged the development models of Caribbean economist Arthur Lewis, who espoused a model of economic "industrialization by invitation," which offered incentives to First World corporate interests to assume roles in the island economies. It focuses instead on a belief in development based in "the residentiary sector," in small farmers and the energy of the Caribbean people (Girvan 2009:xxi). As a first order of business in combatting dependency, PET advocated development of food independence. The famous observation of Trinidadian historian and Prime Minister Eric Williams about the region, that "We consume what we do not produce and produce what we do not consume," was often repeated by PET theorists and influenced many Caribbean intellectuals. The cry would be taken up by the Grenadian PRG in the 1980s and fashioned into a new slogan of Grenadian food independence, which Grenadians sometimes quoted to me when I introduced the subject of FS: "Eat what you grow and grow what you eat."

Plantation economics foregrounds history, insisting that fundamental injustices that came with the institution of plantation slavery have yet to be addressed. PET also places critical importance on a subject often avoided in the Caribbean and Grenada:
race, and the African cultural origins of the region’s peoples. “Race,” said George Beckford, “is the specific element in the Caribbean reality” (2000:240). In the inherited plantation economic configuration, as Levitt puts it, “[l]abour power continues to be provided by the descendants of slaves, as manifested in the hierarchy of class and race” (2005:47). “At the heart of capitalism is the plantation and at the heart of the plantation lies slavery,” wrote agricultural economist George Beckford (2000:xlix).

Analysis of contemporary Grenada today reveals thorny questions of color, class, and race—all overlooked in conventional analysis of the country’s problems. The physical fact of skin color is today less the issue than the fact that Black ethnicity, the culture of the Black peasantry, has repeatedly been shoved aside in favor of Western agri/culture; that the wider Afro-Caribbean material inheritance is looked down on as unscientific or backward, including by post-independence governments; and that it is the less “creolized”22 people who remain dispossessed in the Caribbean, occupying the bottom of the economic ladder, while lighter-skinned people more integrated in Western commercial culture occupy the wealthier social strata of most islands.

Criticism of plantation economic theory includes the charge that it is in some ways just a recapitulation of the existing historical narrative, i.e., that it is descriptive rather than predictive (Best 1998:34-35). Figueroa and Witter charge that plantation economics fails to base itself fully in the social relations of production and lacks a method of class analysis (in Barrow 1998:44). Today, however, PET is an intellectual touchstone for most Anglo-Caribbean progressives and receiving new attention. As Girvan writes, it “provides an historical perspective on the relationship of Caribbean countries to globalization that is highly relevant to the present” (2009:xvii). Insofar as it
foregrounds history and the plantation and race, poverty, agriculture, and basic needs development, it offers a critical touchstone for discussion of FS in the region.

A current textbook for students in the UWI systems takes the dominance of the plantation economy in most islands as structural fact of life and notes these persistent plantation patterns of the region’s inherited economic system:

- “All of the inputs required for production including, initially, labour, were imported from outside.”
- “[P]lantation economies traded all of their output with the rest of the world and imported most of their needs.”
- “There was no macroeconomy in the period prior to Emancipation.” This “did not change significantly with Emancipation. What little there was. . . focused” on protecting plantation interests.
- Society evolved “along the fault line of the ex-slave, ex-plantation owner population.”
- “The pervasive nature of the. . . system” prevented development of “other. . . economic activities” or “of a significant middle class.” (Mendes et al. 2001:123-125).

All of these conditions continue to inhere in Grenada. Indeed, one of the most important questions after the 2008 elections that brought a nominally more agriculture-friendly National Democratic Congress government to power was what would happen to former the country’s former Crown estate lands, many of which remain in the hands of the government. This was and remains a burning issue in a country with limited land for growing and an imported food bill that has continued to rise for decades.

The “explanatory power of the models,” Polanyi-Levitt insists, reaches “beyond. . . economic structures, to illuminate the many ways in which the legacy of the plantation system has conditioned the behavior of all groups and classes” in the Caribbean, “including the state” (1998:2). Among parallels that emerge is the way that Caribbean
tourism assumes the form of other export staples stamped on the region by the plantation (Girvan 2002:2). Grenada Prime Minister Maurice Bishop spoke of the parallels between tourism and Grenada’s estates in the 1970s:

[T]ourism was never intended as a means of developing the national economy and society. Just like sugar, bauxite, bananas, and oil, in many of the Caribbean territories, the tourist plant was owned and controlled by multi-national corporations. Typically, the foreign investors came and took as much as they could in terms of tax holidays. Very little of the profit...was...re-invested in the island. Moreover, this process...meant that foreigners laid claim to significant areas.

Bishop also spoke of the problematic associations of whiteness and privilege in the tourist construct, how tourism created “enclaves of privilege” (quite similar to estate great houses) from which the general population was excluded (1982:67-68). Tourism also recapitulates a central feature of plantation economies highlighted by PET—the way that they foment strong external but weak internal economic linkages (Polanyi-Levitt 1998:3). 23

For my study the plantation economic theorists are also important because—with few others in the Caribbean intelligentsia of the post-independence period—they championed the region’s peasant class. They recognized the potential of the peasantry to lift the Caribbean economies when others did not—and, in the main, still have not. 24 “European Marxism saw a future role for the working class as the agent of radical social change,” says Levitt. But the plantation economists instead “saw the Caribbean peasantry—interpreted more broadly as the popular classes—as the agents of change and social transformation in countries of the region which remain locked into social structures and hierarchies of race and colour deriving from their plantation origins” (Levitt 2005:376). Levitt's observation suggests the rich promise that the Caribbean peasant tradition holds for LVC in the region, and for implementation of FS.
The National Economy

The degree to which colonialism and plantation economics condition thinking about food production, including the mechanisms through which economies are viewed—what is valued, what is not—cannot be emphasized enough. According to historian and political theorist Timothy Mitchell, the idea of a “national economy” came into acceptance during the 1930s. Constructed for the European powers by colonial planners, “it was both a method of staging the world. . . and a means of overlooking the staging,” an instrument through which countries continued to emerge as calculable, controllable spaces for the pursuit of profit. Through the lens of the national economy, planners—and inevitably, citizens—were disciplined to accept a method that valued outcomes over processes, profit over basic needs.25 “It is important to appreciate to what extent the realization of the economy belongs to the history of colonialism,” writes Mitchell. The “economy,” he writes, “appeared in the context of the collapse of an imperial order” (2002:82-83) as the European countries began to withdraw from Asia, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean, working to protect their access to material resources they had long worked to extract from them. As former colonies reaching independence along with much of the rest of a Third World whose cultures had been ravaged by colonialism, the Caribbean countries were saddled with such “national economic systems,” rationalized not with an idea of their inhabitants' development but the continued access to wealth of the neocolonial powers and emerging “comprador” elites in them.

In Grenada accurate views of the rural sector are hindered because of this inherited way of seeing. Subsistence production—including subsistence food production—is considered “informal activity,” and not recorded. The household (oikos) is
fully supplanted by chrematistics, the pursuit of profit. Among the contradictions of such accounting is the way that positive economic growth and the “heating” of local economies, measured as positive developments in a country’s gross domestic product (GDP), can have negative environmental consequences as resources are intensively consumed. Forcing poor countries to focus on export production to repay their external debts, neoliberal “structural adjustment” reinforces this dynamic. Losses to nature from extraction, meanwhile, are not measured in such accounting systems or in conventional economics generally; the question whether sites degraded or left polluted can be regenerated, whether they will require millions to clean up or be abandoned, is not engaged (until the cleanup itself can be made profitable). In short, the “economy” bequeathed to the Third World by the First “discounts the future,” writes Martinez-Alier (1999:130). The invisibility of those who grew Grenada’s food has helped to make it possible to ignore the fact that—from before the end of slavery to now—they kept Grenada fed, the rural sector from starvation. Bringing such activity into the light, honoring and adequately rewarding it, would be central to establishment of FS in Grenada.

**Neoliberalism and the Poor Countries**

With more continuity than departure from historical developmental practices, neoliberalism, or neoliberal capitalism—“the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank and all these international bullshit [that] do not represent the peoples’ interests,” as Pedro Stedile, a leader of Brazil’s Landless People’s Movement provocatively puts it (2007)—is the name given to the dominant economic philosophy of our period, which has held increasing sway over the global economy since the late 1970s. Although increasingly discredited in Latin America and parts of Asia, its institutions continue to exercise strong
power over the Caribbean. Associated with economists Friederich von Hayek, Milton Friedman, and the University of “Chicago school” of “neoclassical” economists (Gledhill 2007:332), neoliberalism has been guided by the anti-regulatory stance of its advocates, who take as faith that the market and market principles rather than governments are the best way to address human needs.

As the thrust of economic policy developed especially by the US and Great Britain, the set of trade regulations, institutions, and economic ideas that comprise neoliberalism may be seen to have several less publicized aims—ending the “embedded liberalism” of the welfare state and historic labor-capital compromise that made it possible to defeat Germany and Japan in WWII (see Harvey 2005:11-12; Mies 1998:xii), and thwarting poor country attempts to develop economic independence (Bello 2010 passim). In this, neoliberalism’s proponents have in the near term been successful. Among specific “structural adjustment” reforms exacted from poor countries under terms of loans from multilateral lending institutions like the IMF were policies that opened poor country economies to trade and investment and—forcing abandonment of price supports for local agricultural and industrial products—turned over increasing portions of their economies to market forces (Desmarais 2007:47). While these moves were couched in a rhetoric of trade “freedom” and sometimes billed as anti-poverty prescriptions, they were aimed—Walden Bello insists—at halting efforts by poor countries to develop their own industries under “import substitution” models and at opening their markets to US and European goods. (There is no doubt that such changes required a degree of acquiescence by poor countries’ wealthy elites.)
Various twentieth-century developments, especially in relation to agriculture and the rural sector, prefigured these changes, in which Grenada also played a part. Especially because of the way these involved the world's poor countries and their development, they merit attention. These include:

- Assertions of independence by nonaligned countries and former colonial states from the first decades of the twentieth century, gathering momentum after World War II (see Prashad 2007) that met strong pushback— including war against them— by the rich countries of the Global North in response. These included the war in Vietnam and the overthrow of socialist leaders in Iran, Chile, Indonesia, Cuba, Nicaragua, the DR, Jamaica, and Grenada— attempts to create greater economic and agricultural independence were cornerstones of the campaigns by the leadership in each of those countries. Every current Caribbean LVC country except tiny East Caribbean neighbors St. Lucia, Dominica, and St. Vincent was invaded by the US and saw a socialist or center-left government overthrown by US forces during the twentieth century.

- The Green Revolution, embraced by the US and Soviet Union beginning in the 1940s, mobilized large-scale fuel- and input-intensive (monocrop) agriculture initiatives in support of economic transformation, championing industrialization and consumerism. Tens of millions of people left the world's rural areas, swelling its cities, pushing the world toward ecological catastrophe.26

- A collapse of family farming, augmented by oil, banking and debt crises that drove up interest rates beginning in the 1980s, abetted monocrop agriculture’s consolidation and industrialization (Green 2003:27-30, passim). Farmers’ own knowledge was rendered increasingly unimportant by technological developments and rising dependence on inputs reduced already-small profits, driving many farmers out of business, into cities, or to suicide.

- Sale of enormous grain harvests, spurred by mechanization and other agroindustrial advances, helped to spur commoditization of select agricultural products and the growth and power of transnational corporations (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006:450-456).

- Extension of “aid” as instrument of US policy proved a key instrument for forcing open poor country markets to First World goods. Among classic examples were increasing dependence on American wheat sales by the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s and American rice aid, which flooded Haitian markets and drove many of that country’s farmers out of production, leaving Haiti dependent on imported rice. US food policy was often calculated to create dependence (Korten 2001 passim).27
Dissolution of the Soviet Union, formalized in 1991 brought an end to the aid that many poor countries had received from that source and left them without bargaining leverage they had often held with both superpowers during the Cold War. It brought more aggressive policy-making by the Western powers as they pressed their advantages.

**Structural Adjustment**

Walden Bello describes structural adjustment regimes—key feature of neoliberal globalization—as the “vehicle for a program of freemarket liberalization. . . applied across the board to Third World economies suffering major debt problems” (2000:65). The key to their imposition has been loans offered to struggling poor countries to pay their enormous international debts, and the conditions of those loans, which required fundamental changes in their economies and methods of governance. Such measures have included the privatization of state enterprises; trade liberalization; currency liberalization (“reform”28); the removal of price controls on food and agricultural goods; reduction of public sector employment; acceptance and promotion of greater foreign investment; privatization (sale) of profit-making or potentially profit-making state institutions; reduction of welfare protections for the poor; reduction of trade union influence in the public sector (Mendes et al. 2001:74); and cutting wages and weakening mechanisms that protected labor, including minimum wages (Bello 2000:65). Each of these changes, it turns out, was implemented or at least initiated by USAID and/or ended up affecting Grenada in the aftermath of the 1983 US invasion of the country, as Chapter 4 shows, clearly reducing Grenada’s ability to address its food issues through national policies or programs.

From the beginning of the 1990s, more than 70 countries have submitted to IMF and World Bank structural adjustment requirements in return for loans that rescued governments from default (Bello 2005:43).29 The continued threat of default is in many
ways the driver of policy, making the demands of IMF and other officials the law in many poor countries. “This concentrated control. . . has been the major avenue of US influence in low- and middle-income countries,” according to Bello. By the end of the Reagan-Bush era in 1992, “the South had been transformed,” Bello writes. “These 'reforms' have coincided with a sharp slowdown in economic growth and reduced progress on major social indicators (life expectancy, infant and child mortality) in the vast majority of developing countries since 1980," Bello continues (2010:65). The countries that ignored their strictures, meanwhile, have fared best economically during the period: China, Vietnam, and India (Weisbrot 2007). The same has more recently been true of many South American countries where the rejection of neoliberalism, translated upward from the streets has slowly become a matter of national policy.

Criticism of structural adjustment tends to stress its often-baneful economic effects on the poor. But by forcing neoliberal economic policies on poor countries in the Caribbean, the wealthy powers have also limited national and popular sovereignty. Structural adjustment poses “the biggest challenge to the concept of [state] independence in the Caribbean,” write the authors of a policy textbook used by students in the region (Mendes et al. 2001:73), where loan repayment and debt servicing have left many poor countries with crushing debt, and 14 of 30 of the world's most indebted emerging economies now lie (Kathuria et al 2005). Six Caribbean countries have debt-to-Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratios of over 90%, with Grenada worst of these at 113% of GDP in 2008 when I began work there (King and Richards 2008:ii-1; Bynoe 2008:3). “The relevance of the State in the societies of the Commonwealth Caribbean is a matter of great concern to [regional] policymakers” according to Mendes et al.
Governments’ ability “to deliver upon their electoral promises has been undermined,” they write, “because . . . structural adjustment programmes are not limited to any particular party in power. Electoral change does not necessarily bring any changes in the structural adjustment programme. In the circumstances, the relevance of elections and the authority of Parliaments” may be questioned. The role of the state has been changed “from that of provider to . . . facilitator” (2001:73-74). Servicing and limiting debt, acquiring new loans, and striving to meet or set the conditions of loan agreements consume an enormous amount of poor country officials' time and energy.

**Impacts of Neoliberalism on Agriculture and Food**

The wider effects of such wholesale changes in governance have ranged from the banal but nutritionally consequential arrival of American fast food chains in the Caribbean starting in the 1980s (Houston 2005:xxxii), to cessation of the growing of various crops. Other effects on poor countries, Caribbean farming, and the region's rural sector include the following:

- Poor countries have sold off valuable assets (among these water companies) to foreign investors and reduced support for agriculture, cutting price supports and small-farmer subsidies, reducing technical assistance, and pushing small farmers to commercialize production (Deere and Royce 2009:55-56; Desmarais 2007:47).

- Trade regulations have been crafted by representatives of large corporations, boosting those corporations into roles of authority over national governments (Babb and Chorev 2009:464). The WTO’s General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and “economic partnership agreements” (EPAs) along with the terms of IMF loans, have required poor countries to open their markets to food products from wealthy countries at prices local farmers cannot compete with. By signing on to GATT,” Walden Bello writes, poor countries “have agreed to ban all quantitative restrictions on imports, to reduce tariffs on many industrial imports, and not to raise tariffs on all other imports. In so doing they have . . . given up the use of trade policy to pursue industrialization” or develop agriculture (2000:73).
Trade block treaties like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have collaterally hurt the Caribbean, which finds it harder to compete with or obtain entry for its products in partner countries (Pattullo 2005:8).

The opening of land for sale to foreigners, tourism, and agribusiness investors, and lowering of environmental standards as a condition of loans and trade pacts have had a negative effect on poor countries' ability to enact or carry out policies of environmental protection (Reed 1996:17), including zoning. The period has seen continuing privatization and commodification of “land, water, mineral and energy resources, and biodiversity” (Tiney in Deere and Royce 2009:81-82).

Eased restriction on foreign investment has given investors an increased say in what happens in poor countries, further undermining local sovereignty. Policy is often shaped to attract investors rather than to help the poor. Foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign portfolio equity investments, aided by structural adjustment, soared between 1990 and the middle of the twenty-first century's first decade, integrating poor countries in circuits of production with the First World. Wealthy local elites increasingly identify with their counterparts in other countries rather than their countrymen, and grow less invested in national projects that pursue equality or independence (Robinson 2004:23-25).

The extension of credit to poor countries by the World Bank and IMF is often tied up with so-called “crop diversification,” forcing countries “to shift from staple foods (crucial for food security needs) to cash crops that meet the luxury requirements of other countries,” according to policy analyst Devinder Sharma. Use of the word “diversification,” common for decades in Grenada, is euphemistic in such circumstances and can mean a reduction in agrodiversity if farmers forsake their extremely diverse growing practices to pursue cash crops.

The repayment of loans has become a driver of policy, fueling further dependency as farmers are pushed to grow export crops to gain foreign exchange and service debt (Green 2003:119-150).

"Reductions in state spending on health, education, transportation, utilities and food subsidies have all increased the burden" on women and their share of domestic labor, Deere writes, "principally by increasing the time that women must dedicate to caring and providing" for their families, "lengthening their double day" (2005:8).

Increasing poverty and a retreating state have reinforced the aid apparatus, spurring growth of charities and NGOs. Aid is increasingly delivered on a short-term or ad hoc basis, often at the whim of elite donors rather than guaranteed by governments. The idea that they hold any responsibility to directly aid their own populations has dwindled, except—perhaps—when it comes to the provision of jobs.
• Religious institutions—and fundamentalism—increasingly fill the vacuum created by a retreating state and the end of welfare services (Rapley 2004:128), leading to increased nativism and sectarian strife in a period where greater citizen solidarity is required to challenge such changes.

• Neoliberalism has stamped the language of development on poor countries. An increasing “discursive dependency” (Henke 2000:71) on neoliberal rhetoric makes it harder for poor country populations to question or challenge the system, to think their way out of their plight. Reports by international creditors and credit rating agencies are printed verbatim in the press as if they were simple facts rather than (often) instruments of external domination.

The impact of neoliberal policies on world agriculture has been dramatic. When the multilateral institutions came on the scene 40 years ago, Food First researcher Eric Holt-Gimenez writes, “the global South had yearly agricultural trade surpluses of $1 billion. After three 'Development Decades,' they were importing $11 billion a year in food.” But the global squeeze on the poor—with rising unemployment—also brings new demands for equality. According to anthropologist Marc Edelman, “[t]he upsurge in transnational agriculturists' movements. . . is a direct result of the worldwide farm crisis” (2003:188). Another anthropologist, David Harvey, says that neoliberalism has become the chief driver of human rights demands in our period (2005:178).

**Conclusion: A Global Food Crisis**

In 2008 the global economy entered a period of crisis, driven by increasing fuel prices and a consequent rise in transport costs for food. The crisis, said sociologist Philip McMichael, signaled “the end of the era of cheap food” (2009:139). Food riots erupted in 30 countries, including Haiti, where the country’s foreign minister insisted that his government could not control food prices because it had signed agreements preventing it from doing so: “We cannot fix prices because we have to comply with free market regulations,” he said (New York Times 2008). Such was the loss of national sovereignty that elected officials felt unable to intervene when their own people starved.
Such were the blinders imposed by ideas of “market freedom” that some believed it better to do nothing. But the Caribbean was a "ticking time bomb" where agriculture was concerned, some regional observers warned. The region needed “to proceed urgently with the transformation of its rural economies” (Jessop 2007). As of February 2009 international food prices had risen 30%, with Haiti, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname, and St. Vincent most strongly impacted (Jessop 2007).

In June 2010 food prices spiked again. Central America and the Caribbean were hit especially hard: “Virtually all the commodities that matter for the region are partaking in [the] strong wave of . . . increases,” the World Bank reported (2011). The price shocks, it soon emerged, were part of an emerging global multi-year recession, that one study showed was worse in its early stages for the poor countries than the Great Depression had been (Almunia et al. 2009).

Disruptive world developments had long impacted a highly food import-dependent Caribbean. During the American Revolution, with trade routes between the North American and West Indian colonies disrupted, many thousands of slaves died when regular shipments of food to the islands did not arrive. This did not happen in Grenada, one of the “home fed” islands whose enslaved people had won the right to feed themselves and their masters in barrack houseyards and mountain provision grounds. Chapter 3 describes the emerging proto-peasant culture that made such self-provisioning possible in pursuit of a core Grenadian FS culture that, I argue, it is islanders’ every right to preserve and expand today.

1 The pattern was set with the post-World War II Marshall development plan with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund created to direct and finance European redevelopment. “The provision of what came to be known as development assistance was designed to. . . establish. . . political stability
and thus... prevent the spread of communism" (Bennett et al. 2005:79, my emphasis). Today “assistance” is also dispensed in the Caribbean by mainland China and Taiwan, Cuba, and Venezuela with contradictory consequences, as this project shows.

2 The inference is that the US had reached such a state of actualization—was “developed.” The suggestion that this was the desirable or inevitable trajectory of the rest of humankind was rejected from the outset by progressives. Economic historian Andre Gunder Frank, writing especially of Latin America, argued that the poor countries had been purposefully underdeveloped, and sought to chronicle the development of such underdevelopment (1966). As early as 1969, UN social planners were writing that the “fact that development either leaves behind, or in some ways... creates large areas of poverty, stagnation, marginality and... exclusion... is too obvious and urgent to be overlooked” (Jaypal 2000:106). Bennholt-Thomsen and Mies argue that the Truman speech inaugurated a “war against subsistence” and the world's peasant classes (1999:17).

3 Ecology has many of its beginnings in efforts to best use and maintain natural resources in the colonies: “It was in the... circumstances of environmental change at the colonial periphery that what we would now term 'environmentalism' first made itself felt,” write science historians Richard Grove and Vinita Damodaran. Dominica’s Roseau Botanic Station, St. Vincent’s Botanical Garden, and Grenada’s now-defunct botanical garden were institutional fruits of this enterprise which saw “natural philosophers” as early as the mid-seventeenth century decrying soil erosion and deforestation in Bermuda and Barbados, gazetting of forest preserves, and efforts to prevent rainfall decline (2006:4346-4347; Trouillot 1998:124).

4 Economist Michael Witter makes this declaration in Stephanie Black’s 2001 documentary Life and Debt. Grenada vies with Jamaica for that title, with a 2008 debt-to-GDP ratio that was worst of Caribbean countries at 113% (King and Richards 2008:ii-1; Bynoe 2008:3).

5 Ecologist G. Tyler Miller distinguishes between two kinds of subsistence agriculture, traditional agriculture that depends mostly on human labor and draft animals with few inputs and traditional intensive agriculture, in which the number of inputs is greater and intercropping or polycropping help to increase yields. Such agriculture has absorbed some of the innovations of commercial agriculture, the use of hybrid plant species and fertilizer, in particular (2002:213).

6 Trouillot’s vital analysis may nonetheless overlook these communal labor aspects of an (admittedly distinct) Dominican banana culture which remain a key, in my view, to answering the question of the continuing validity of peasant practices for present and future development of agriculture and wider culture on Grenadian rural dwellers’ own terms.

7 British capitalism also had its rivals and antecedents. The British emulated Dutch bookkeeping and other methods, for example (Drayton 2000:59; Wolf 2010:114-115)

8 See Michaeline Chriclow’s Negotiating Caribbean Freedom, especially Chapters 5 and 6.


10 Chayanov’s notion of an “annual household budget,” disparaged by Brierley as uneconomic (1974:60), suggests a process of planning, seed saving, etc., more strongly connected to oikonomia than chrematistics.

11 Common property theory (CPT), area of interdisciplinary study that is the province particularly of “anthropologists, economists, environmentalists, political scientists, and rural sociologists” (Agrawal 2001:2), seeks to identify arrangements by which communities share resources, including land and water, to maximize efficiency and preserve these.
“[I]f any mode of delivery is on the margins or receding... is the commodity economy,” says Williams, who cites studies showing that the decline of paid work in [several] wealthy countries has spurred a rise in the relative rate of subsistence to paid work. He quotes Byrne et al. (Williams 2005:47) saying that calling a society “capitalist” under such circumstances “is an act of categorical violence... that obliterates from view the [subsistence] economic activity that engages more people for more hours of the day over more years of their lives than any other.”

13 The seizure of land from and loss of power of the Catholic Church helped to spur these developments amid a parallel rise of Protestantism and its emerging alliance with British capital interests.


15 Similar laws were enacted after slavery in the Caribbean and southern US; they helped form the basis of the US prison industrial system. A number of southern prisons, including some in Louisiana, are also farms. Florida's Agriculture Department long administered the state's prison system (http://www.freshfromflorida.com/about_fdacs.html, accessed November 30, 2012); the connections to plantation labor are evident. Forced labor at low wages forms a significant part of the foundation not just world agriculture but the manufacturing to which it is connected. Of England in the period of industrialization Gras writes that “the creation of a 'free labor force' was a strongly coercive process.” There were few areas of England where industry was “not associated with prisons, workhouses, and orphanages.” “[T]he modern industrial proletariat was introduced to its role not so much by attraction or monetary reward, but by compulsion, force and fear” (Braverman 1998:46-47). This is the obverse of the agricultural coin: the workers were expropriated peasant farmers and their progeny.

16 Literary historian Ann Louise Kibbie traces a shift in Protestant theology from an anti-usury rhetoric popular in a medieval period that was deeply suspicious of the proliferation of financial methods to Biblical and liturgical emphases compatible with finance and speculation (1995:1023-1034).

17 The idea of primitive accumulation, according to agricultural economist Michael Perelman, originates with Adam Smith. Marx translated Smith's term for such original or “previous” accumulation as ursprunglich (original or primary) and his translators in turn translated this as “primitive” (http://www.csuchico.edu/~mperelman/primitive_accumulation.htm, accessed November 27, 2012).

18 “The power to colonize the land gave rise to private property, and thus to rent, or the income that flows from exclusive control of the land. As colonization spread and inferior land was brought under ownership and cultivation, the difference in rent between land of different quality opened up the possibility of an increasing profit, and... general expansion of wealth” (Mitchell 2002:85). Both John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx made use of Ricardo's ideas, Mitchell says, to identify the laws of motion in wealth produced from manufacturing.

19 http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/fossil-fuels.cfm, accessed November 27, 2012. Estimates vary, but including water use, a US state with a strong agriculture sector—California—consumes 30% of energy used across all sectors http://www.energy.ca.gov/research/iaw/, accessed November 27, 2012. Marx employed the concept of metabolism “to refer to the actual metabolic interaction between nature and society through human labor... and in a wider sense... to describe the complex, dynamic interdependent set of needs and relations brought into being and constantly reproduced in alienated form” under the new system, writes Foster (2000:158).

20 Transportation has played a critical role in both the development of agriculture and the unevenness of its development, according to Mazoyer and Roudart (2006:355-357, passim).

21 Even today, according to the US Department of Agriculture, 15% of food originates in urban spaces (Miller and Spoolman 2010:234).

22 While acknowledging the progressive intentions behind many writers’ use of the term, I generally avoid use of the term creole here, choosing to emphasize the African and Afro-Caribbean aspects of
West Indian farming culture. I agree with Mimi Sheller who writes that although creolization “has become a keyword for processes of dynamic creation, agency, and self-making in... global culture, there is a sense in which the theory... was displaced from its Caribbean context. In that dislocation it was emptied of its resonance as a project of subaltern resistance” (2003:203); Mintz lodges a similar criticism in Three Ancient Colonies (2010:192-195). It is my position that pursuit of a homogenizing equality can, however well intentioned, can tend to obscure the constituent elements of practices of injustice. As Waters notes, a melting pot vision of multiculturalism can also serve the purposes of corporate globalization, including in its attempts to capture consumers in new markets (2001:166). Cecil Gutzmore writes that creole-based academic discourse has tended “to exclude several Caribbean communities, especially Asians but also Amerindians, Maroons... and others.” According to him it “joins everyday usage in a tendency to de-Africanize and inferiorize Caribbean and continental Africans” (2007:191).

Among a list of shared features I compiled are: actual physical settings, with tourist venues often located on former plantation tracts, arrogating the largest, best tracts of agricultural land; (often) accompanying foreign ownership of tourist enterprises; the role of wealthy whites in promoting and using such facilities, while people of color recapitulate servant roles on them; pleasure/access to the landscape denied to locals as before; strong parallels to predatory colonial sexual practices, with poor country women enrolled as prostitutes around tourist venues.

Plantation economic theorists diverged from economist Lewis who thought that although “peasant activity was creative and quite productive... the process of development through the peasantry had gone as far as it could in the light of land scarcity and small acreages... available to each peasant,” a position somewhat like that which Marx took for peasants generally (James 1996:3).

John Maynard Keynes plays a central role in these developments, Mitchell shows (ibid above), preparing accounting measures later widely disseminated as a retreating Britain left India.

Although closely linked to industrialization, agriculture in this historic scenario was slow to “modernize,” some argue—in part because both rich and poor countries protected food prices, using cheap food to protect their agricultural sectors and spur industrialization in others (Goodman and Redclift 1991:87-88).

This has continued, with complaints that US “aid” shipments in the recent aftermath of the Haiti earthquake have further undermined Haitian farmers by donating food that they already grew, thus reducing in-country production http://www.minnpost.com/global-post/2012/02/post-quake-us-food-aid-hurt-haiti-farmers, accessed November 27, 2012.

Devaluation makes exports cheaper, therefore more competitive, thus bringing in more dollars with which to repay loans (Bello 2000:65).

Generally, the IMF and banks like the InterAmerican Development Fund finance economic projects internationally. The World Bank prepares the ideological ground and the WTO regulates trade. “The IMF and World Bank complement each other,” says the IMF’s website-introduction to the organization; “the IMF’s focus is chiefly on macroeconomic and financial sector issues, the WB is concerned mainly with longer-term development.” The US Treasury Department is the primary funding agency for all three and—as economist Mark Weisbrot notes—final arbiter over their decision making. (“Developing countries that do not meet the IMF’s conditions will generally not get credit from the much larger World Bank, regional lenders such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the G-7 governments and sometimes even the private sector,” writes Weisbrot, who says the organizations run “a creditor's cartel” (2007). The US, Japan, European Union, and Canada formulate most WTO policy (Bello 2010:83).

By the late 1990s the term structural adjustment had developed such negative connotations that the World Bank and IMF began a Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiative with poverty reduction as stated goal. The content of such initiatives is nonetheless much like the content of bank-authored Structural Adjustment Programs: http://www.whirledbank.org/development/sap.html, accessed November 27, 2012.
See for example Mark Weisbrot’s “Structural Adjustment in Haiti” (1997).

The WTO, says Bello, is animated by the desire to contain the economic threat posed by an economically independent south and to manage trade rivalries between Northern countries. Bello describes the Uruguay Agreement of 1994—which gives foreign corporate interests the same rights to act in poor country economies as counterparts in those countries (2000:73)—as “the culminating point of a campaign of global economic containment of the legitimate aspirations to development on the part of the Third World countries” (2000:55). The WTO “represents the defeat of everything that the South fought for” for decades, he says, especially for “fair prices via commodity price agreements;” “trade preferences to facilitate economic development” and greater “technology transfer to the South” (2010:73).


Throughout Afro-America cooking and eating were core areas of cultural resistance and persistence, as well as foci of ongoing creativity and dynamism. [S]ubsistence activities . . . became central not only to the physical well-being of these Afro-Americans but to their spiritual and moral life as well.

—Richard Price
Subsistence on the Plantation Periphery

Peasant development was emancipation in action.

—Woodville Marshall
Notes on Peasant Development

Overview

This chapter works to identify the practices, cultural patterns, institutions, and events that make up Grenada's FS inheritance, tracing them from the perspective of the country’s Afro-Caribbean small farmers, including the enslaved “proto-peasants” (Mintz 1989:151) who emerged after emancipation to form the island's peasant/small farmer class. This includes the bequest of Grenada's “first” (Indian) peoples to small farming practices; the contributions of escaped slaves—Maroons—who initiated their own processes of peasantization long before emancipation; and the development of provision grounds, which helped to make Grenada a “home fed” colony and won enslaved people on the island a measure of freedom before slavery was abolished. It also includes institutions of mutual aid developed after slavery in Grenada's emerging Free Village settlements, through which a collective culture of subsistence and sharing was elaborated by the country’s small peasant farmers.

As the chapter demonstrates, much of what Grenada's small farmers accomplished was a function of their resistance to the plantation/estates. But it was also
the product of inventive accommodation with its harsh demands. This includes multiple mixed cropping systems that small farmers developed on provision grounds and in houseyards, adapting native and West African agricultural methods to create a new kind of Caribbean farming whose possibilities remain undervalued today. The chapter insists on the importance of distinguishing the achievements of small farmers and the Free Village movement—their pursuit of a collective subsistence, their many successes—from the enduring subjection of Grenadians who remained on the estates.

**The First Peoples and Early Colonial History**

*There was adequate rainfall and abundant running water, and the soil was volcanic and rich. In the rainy season pumpkin and... yam vines, still grow wild and in profusion.*

—Omowale David Franklyn
Grenada, Naipaul, and Ground Provision

Grenada, which includes both the island of Grenada and the smaller island dependencies of Carriacou and Petite Martinique,¹ is the second smallest country in the western hemisphere. Southernmost of the East Caribbean Windward Islands lying just 100 miles from Venezuela, the 133 square mile main island is dominated by mountain rain forest and dotted with three very deep volcanic crater lakes. With its well-drained clay loam soils, “suitable for most crops,” Grenada is extremely fertile, if lacking in flat expanses suitable for mechanized agriculture and prey to erosion and drought (Ferguson 1990:55). Just six percent of the landmass has a slope of under five degrees (ARD 2007:9; Martin 2007:92), one reason why the country has long specialized in fruit and tree crops, historically intercropped with subsistence food production.

Grenada served as a step up through the Caribbean islands from the Amazon for various peoples—the erroneously dubbed “Ciboney,” Arawak, and later “Caribs,” or
Kallinago as they called themselves—perhaps beginning as early as 4,000 B.C.; the Kallinago reportedly called the island Camerhogne (Brizan 1998:3 & 11; Steele 2003:11 & 12). Their way of mounding earth to plant maize and other crops together prevails today. The mounds, fertilized “with wood ash and plant waste,” helped to hold moisture and reduce erosion (Steele 2003:22). The Indians grew “superb cotton,” Beverly Steele says, and made rope from wild plants like the agave cactus (2003:20). Foods grown by the Amerindians that are still eaten include plantains, annatto, sweet potatoes, manioc, guava, mammee apples, and pineapples as well as corn, beans, arrowroot, peanuts, peppers, yucca, and squash. They devised baskets to catch the tiny local fish, still called titiwere in the native tongue by Grenadians, and trained birds to help them locate fish at sea. Among many sophisticated methods of food preparation, they stewed foods with tamaulin, a sauce made of lemon juice, manioc, fish bones, red pepper and crabmeat, and casereep—a bitter cassava extract, that preserves and flavors meat—a practice that persists today (Steele 2003:20-23; Brizan 1983:13-14).

Columbus and his crew members sighted Grenada on his third, 1498, voyage, but 100 years passed before a group of London merchants attempted to settle there—the Kallinago drove them off (Douglas 2003:1). It was not until the mid-seventeenth century that the French established a long-term European presence on the island, which they called La Grenade (Carew 1985:91; Steele 2003:34). Although the French intention from the beginning was to foster plantation colonialism, and although the Dutch were by then establishing sugarcane on other islands (Wolf 2010:151), the earliest methods and social organization of the new settlers were patterned on French peasant farming (Brizan 1998:33).
Through what Brierley labels an openly genocidal policy (1974:5), the French killed or drove most of the Kallinago from Grenada. Half a century later in 1700 there remained just a few Carib lodges on the island, their inhabitants tolerated, writes Brizan because “they kept the colonists well supplied with fish, venison, fresh cassava, and quicou [Carib beer],” and provided “most of the animal protein for the colonists” (1998:30). The French also learned how to catch, grow, and prepare various foods from the Indians and adopted a number of food practices from them, some of which would be absorbed by the enslaved African proto-peasantry and emancipated peasantry. According to Brizan a small and medium white farmer class persisted through the slavery period (1998:88). In 1699 the island's tiny population numbered 257 whites, 53 people of mixed African and European parentage, and 525 Black slaves. “Most of these slaves,” Brizan states, “were employed on the island's three sugar estates and 52 indigo plantations” (1998:30).

**The Plantation System and the Imperial Matrix**

By the mid-1700s, “sugar had overtaken grain as the world’s most valuable traded commodity,” with West Indian sugar plantations becoming “the original prototype of the modern day transnational enterprise” (Thomas 2005:167-168). Sugar had a 100-year reign in Grenada, and “would remain the dominant crop throughout the slave period,” with cane “cultivated on almost all the lower lying land in the colony” (Brizan 1998:94; Grenada Handbook 1946:103). The Caribbean region possessed “an ecology admirably fitted to the mass production of food staples for the exploding urban consumer markets of Western Europe. Plantation business was, from the outset, big business” (Mintz 1989: 304). By 1763 Grenada had 82 sugar estates and had imported 12,000 slaves. Under the British, who came to control the island in that year as part of
the treaty that ended the Seven Years’ War, the number of slaves continued to rise until
the trade was abolished in 1807. By 1824, a decade before emancipation, 124
estates—many quite small by the standards of places like Haiti or Jamaica—were
producing sugar (Martin 2007:240).

Despite sugar’s dominance, export crops remained relatively diverse in colonial
Grenada in comparison to many Caribbean islands (Brizan 1998:94; Steele 2003:61-
62). Beginning in the eighteenth century larger-scale cocoa and coffee production were
introduced, along with cotton; during the second half of the eighteenth century Grenada
became a major coffee producer, with 82% of coffee exported to England from the West
Indies in 1763 coming from the island (Brizan 1998:43). This relative diversity, as we will
see, tended to bear positively on the peasant tradition that Grenada developed as
planters and enslaved alike adapted already rich inherited Indian and African patterns of
food intercropping to production of plantation crops. Brierley believes it was the
transformation of sugar estates into less labor-intensive cocoa and nutmeg orchard
production that over time helped to create “the most substantial body of peasant
proprietors [proportionally] of any island in the Leeward and Windward group” (1974:12,
8). When the sugar economy began to slide in the late eighteenth century, threatening
more specialized plantations in Jamaica, Antigua, and St. Kitts with ruin, the Grenadian
planter class “could still hold on to illusions of prosperity” (Carew 1985:90).

Still, the dominant economic principle in Grenada as throughout the region would
remain production for export. Under rules of an “imperial matrix” that sought to keep the
colonies squarely focused on wealth production for Europe, Grenada was to be kept
completely dependent and explicitly “prohibited from processing any of her staples,” a
restriction that remained when the British took over the island from the French (Brizan 1998:28-29; Mintz 1989:304). Such policies created tension between the home countries and estate interests, especially as time passed, with Grenadian planters engaging in “considerable smuggling trade with the Dutch in an effort to survive and . . . overcome the effects of metropolitan neglect” (Brizan 1998:32). In time the enslaved workers themselves, encouraged by planters, would begin to develop products to meet the island’s basic food and other needs, and it is reasonable to deduce that this tension helped to fuel the growth of slave production for island markets—and with it to provide a growing degree of freedom for some of the enslaved—as it expanded from provision grounds in the middle of the eighteenth century.6

The colonies produced great wealth for the European powers, as Guyana’s Walter Rodney, Trinidad’s Eric Williams, and Grenada’s George Brizan have documented. “Caribbean sugar,” Jan Carew says flatly, following Trinidadian historian Eric Williams, “provided the capital accumulation. . . to finance the Industrial Revolution” (1985:91). It also helped to create a new economy, based on speculation and profit. Howard Zinn writes of “the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expeditions, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy” (2003:12). By the end of the 1770s, tiny Grenada was the fourth largest sugar exporter to Britain after Jamaica, Antigua, and St. Kitts. Ninety percent of its population were slaves (Brizan 1998:42).

The cost to the English peasantry of this transition to industrial capitalism was discussed in Chapter 2. The cost—on both sides of the Atlantic—to the millions
kidnapped, enslaved, and carried to the Caribbean would be difficult to exaggerate. They faced “a rigidly regimented life of almost unrelenting labour” (Jacobs n.d:10) in the service of a “total institution” (Brizan 1993:84), the plantation. Physical discipline was routine, often murderous. Quobna Cugoano, brought to Grenada as a slave from Ajumako, now Ghana, at age 13, spent a year with a gang on a Grenada slave estate and later wrote of “seeing my miserable companions. . . cruelly lashed, and as it were cut to pieces, for the most trifling faults; this made me often tremble and weep. Thanks be to God,” Cugoano wrote, “I was delivered from Grenada” (1787 n.p.).

But as historians have increasingly recognized, the enslaved Africans were not passive in their servitude. An “ideology of anti-slavery was evident almost from the start of colonial rule in Grenada,” writes Grenada historian C.M. Jacobs (n.d., 20). Their resistance included everything from malingering to deliberate destruction of animals and property. The Abbé Raynal, an anti-slavery cleric who compiled an unflinching chronicle of European colonization of the Caribbean, wrote that estate owners lived in fear of burning and massacre (Steele 2003:72). During the transition from French to British rule that followed the 1763 Treaty of Paris, “a number of slaves, particularly in St. Andrew and St. John, escaped to the hills with guns, food, seed, tools, agricultural implements and clothing” (Carew 1985:89). By the 1790s, several established Maroon peasant communities could be found in Grenada, in St. Andrew and St. John as well as St. David parish (Brizan 1998:99).

The Maroons influenced the agricultural and other customs of the emerging proto-peasantry. In their mountain “fastnesses,” hedged around with signs to both intruder and potential ally (including, at least sometimes, the heads of European
soldiers on pikes) they suggested a systematic alternative to slavery in Cuba, the DR, Haiti, and Jamaica, as well as in St. Vincent, Dominica, and Surinam—across the Atlantic coast of the Americas and throughout the Caribbean (Price 1996: passim).

“Swidden horticulture was the mainstay of most maroon economies,” writes Richard Price, “with a similar list of cultigens appearing in reports from almost all areas—manioc, yams, sweet potatoes, and other root crops, bananas and plantains, dry rice, maize, groundnuts, squash, beans, chile, sugarcane, assorted. . . vegetables, and tobacco and cotton. These seem to have been planted in a similar pattern of intercropping. . . from one end of the hemisphere to another” (1996:10). These observations suggest a greater role for maroon communities in the establishment of Caribbean peasant agriculture than is generally recognized, many of which might be accounted part of the Caribbean’s wider FS tradition.11

**Provision**

Powerful notions of food security and food independence lie at the core of Grenada’s popular history and culture—indeed, of Grenadian notions of what freedom means. Central to these is the growing of provision, which offered a basic level of food security to people on the estates and through much of the region during slavery. Evidence suggests that enslaved people in the Caribbean often went hungry, at least those who worked in the fields—Sheridan concludes that Barbadian slaves received an average of just 500 calories a day (Tobin 2005:60). But in Grenada and some other parts of the Caribbean beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century slaves were allowed—later encouraged—to keep agricultural plots or provision grounds for their families,12 which enabled them to eat a healthier diet than was possible solely on imported staples like saltfish.
It was through provision ground planting and “self-provisioning” that colonies like Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Tobago, and Jamaica as well as the nearby French colony of Martinique (Marshall 2003:470; Beckles and Shepherd 2004:155) came to be “home fed” colonies. “Most of the slaves in these colonies subsisted not on rations of imported,” plantation-provided food, “but on the produce of own-account cultivation of provision grounds, supplemented by weekly allowances of salt provisions—mackerel, cod, shad, or herring,” according to historian Woodville Marshall (2003:470). Through enslaved peoples' own efforts in the little time afforded them for such gardens, they achieved in substantial degree in the eighteenth century what some argue it is impossible to do today—feeding the population on islands where they toiled. When possible, production also took place around slaves' houses, in “houseyard spots” or “kitchen gardens.” The allocation of provision grounds was being regulated by local ordinances in Grenada as early as 1766. Although estate owners had misgivings about the practice, it saved them money, made slaves healthier, and offered food security, becoming most important “during the crises of slave subsistence that took place between 1776 and 1783 and again between 1794 and 1815” when the American and French revolutions interrupted colonial trade (Marshall 2003:471).

Grenada's topography, influential in the shaping of so much of island agricultural history, contributed to the establishment of the provision grounds. There were numerous fertile “spots” (as they are often still called) on slopes where export crops could not be grown in volume which lent themselves to provision growing. In nearby Barbados, in contrast, most of the island's largely flat surface was pressed into service for cane, little or nothing allocated to provision. Before slavery's end islands like Barbados were left
vulnerable by lack of such a system. When the British prevented American ships laden with corn meal and herring from delivering these during the American Revolution as many as 15,000 of the Caribbean enslaved starved to death (Tobin 2005:59).

Mountain grounds in Grenada sometimes lay as far as ten miles from enslaved peoples' estate-land dwellings, according to Marshall (2003:473). He notes that the distances probably meant that healthier slaves or slaves with families (and more available hands for labor) were better able to take advantage of possibilities they afforded. Even today, the “deep rocky glens,” “mountain runs” (Marshall 2003:473) and “hidden folds of mountains” (Franklyn 2007:71) are used by Grenadians and other Caribbean people to gain a living. Coming and going over these distances offered opportunities to build relationships and foment resistance, as well as to form the productive connections that an emerging internal economy would depend on.

**Houseyards**

When possible, enslaved people's self-provisioning also included gardening in house or houseyard spots (sometimes called “kitchen gardens”), domains of production that were traditionally the province of women, to which less scholarly attention has been paid than provision grounds. Brierley, the only researcher who has written about houseyards at length in a Grenadian context, calls them "a time-proven facet of Caribbean agriculture," a "peephole" into the “historical antecedents, the traditional beliefs and practices of farmers, the basis of the local diet, and their role in the evolution of small farms." Although they had received “little more than a passing reference in the agrarian literature,” Brierley wrote, there was “probably no better starting point from which to gain an appreciation of Caribbean small farming” (1991:15). With provision grounds, houseyards formed the “primary component of subsistence agriculture in
Grenada,” and remained, Grenadian researcher John Angus Martin could write in 2007, much “as. . . practiced in the nineteenth century” (133). At the time of Brierley’s writing, houseyards held a more diverse array of edible plants than farm families’ secondary plots, “perennially providing a substantial, if not total, amount of the sustenance required by members of the farmers’ household.” Houseyard growing was not confined to subsistence consumption but could serve as an incubator for young plants, place for experiment with new plants, or place to protect valuable plants that might be stolen (Brierley 1993:15-16). “They are the principal training grounds where children acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to the cultivating of vegetables and fruits, and the tending of livestock,” usually from their mother, Brierley wrote. A number of farmers told me that they had learned about farming initially from their mothers or female family members in houseyard gardens, often a source of happy memories. “When farmers reach old age and are no longer physically capable of working all their holdings, they often retain only their [houseyard] garden which provides. . . their subsistence,” Brierley continued. It was thus “an oversight on the part of social scientists not to have subjected Caribbean kitchen gardens to greater scrutiny,” said Brierley (1993:16).

Thus began a dual pattern—also found in Jamaica (Besson 2002:196)—of houseyard and provision ground production, that helped to create, with diverse exceptions, some of the loosely gendered labor patterns that persisted after slavery. In part because of land scarcity, highly proficient use of even tiny amounts of land and a high rate of agrodiversity would come to characterize such production and Caribbean small farming in general (Hills 1988:1, 21, passim; Brierley 1991:18). “This art of food
cultivation,” writes S. H. Olivier, who traces several Jamaican agricultural practices to antecedents in African multiple mixed cropping, is... highly efficient. On a well-chosen and well-handled plot the quantity of food produced is astonishing and the yield is continuous” (Hills 1988:1).

The Provision Ground System, Its Constituents and Uses

Provision you always have.

—William Abraham Sylvester
Farmer, Mt. Rose, St. Patrick’s parish

The enslaved people’s achievement in gaining and expanding the possibilities in houseyard and provision ground cannot obscure the hardship in which they struggled. Brizan says that they worked from 14 to 18 hours a day on the estates and were legally entitled to “28 working days, besides Sundays, between 1 May and 31 January each year, to cultivate” allotted lands (1998:92). The amount of land that individual slaves managed to cultivate was probably no more than a quarter acre, and the threat of theft limited what they grew (Marshall 2003:274). Trouillot qualifies our sense of the provision ground achievement by noting that the gardens were in fact “appendages of larger units of production,” the plantations themselves (1988:18); they helped to make ongoing primitive accumulation by the planter class possible. But the amount of time allotted for provision ground work, won through open agitation as well as hard labor, continued to grow. In the 1820s slaves’ demands—coupled with abolitionist pressure—forced an increase in the days allotted annually for provision ground cultivation to between 26 and 35 (Marshall 2003:475).

Beth Fowkes Tobin, who writes about women and material culture, notes that some slaves developed customary rights to their provision grounds and continued to
farm them after slavery ended (2005:60). I did not meet anyone, 178 years later, who claimed to farm lands held by their own slave ancestors in Grenada. But Grenadians today share in this legacy when they farm mountain land first opened by the enslaved. This was the culture and emerging agrarian technologies of the alternative to slavery, the birth of what Marshall calls the “provision ground system” (2003:470), “rooted in the ingenuity of protopeasant slaves” who combined crops of New World, African, European, and Oceanic origin, making these the basis for emerging new agriculture(s) in the Caribbean (Besson 2002:197).

After emancipation, the populations of countries with well-established provision grounds are said to have fared better. Economist Arthur Lewis contrasted the “great prosperity” of the emerging peasantries of Jamaica, Trinidad, Grenada, and Montserrat with poverty in Barbados and other islands dominated by plantation sugar, whose economies suffered strong post-emancipation depressions (Barrow 1998:43). In retrospect, there is a simple message about dependence and the ability of any country to produce its own food to be drawn from the provision grounds.

The principle staples of the provision ground system across the region, Marshall says, were root crops or ground provision—yams, eddoes, sweet potato, and cassava, the latter (as noted) part of the Amerindian inheritance—as well as tree crops: plantain, green “bluggo” banana or sweet “fig” banana, and breadfruit (Marshall 2003:475). Provision, a term with a long history in English, French, and Spanish,\(^\text{19}\) generally means basic stocks or supplies. But in Grenada as in many places in the Caribbean, provision became something specific, a group of foods and way of eating them that continue to form the soul of island cuisine, a central constituent of many Grenadian diets. Today the
Grenada Food and Nutrition Council (GFNC) promotes the eating of provision along with leafy vegetables instead of imported foods as part of a healthy diet.\textsuperscript{20} For my River Sallee host Bernadette Roberts, provision meant “you cook a piece of everything—like a piece a' yam, bloggo, green fig [banana], sweet potato,” adding pumpkin. Boiled today with 'salt' (salted) pork, saltfish, herring (sometimes scallion) until they obtain a starchy amalgam that Grenadians and this writer find pleasing, they likely come very close to being eaten they way that they were 200 years ago. The added coconut milk, spices—the flour dumpling you might throw in, which extends the meal—are thought of as provision, too.

Part of their appeal lay in the fact that ground provisions could be stored, including left in the soil.\textsuperscript{21} In the absence of refrigeration (10% of Grenadians still lacked electricity in 2009 [Kairi:xvi]) they were foods that kept, providing a quintessential kind of food security, sustaining people during hard times, bad weather, even bad crop years. Traditionally, provision was also food laid up, or laid by. Here the comforting notion of providing, of advance preparation—across agricultural seasons and perils of weather and personal struggle—became part of the constellation of meanings, consonant with FS ideas, that the term carried. Provision is a subsistence institution, what the slave and emerging peasantry produced for themselves.\textsuperscript{22} There is a shared tradition of such foods and dishes uniting the Caribbean that might be used to unify and inspire regional FS advocates in LVC Caribe, and it is not hard to see how provision and a right to provide might go hand in hand with a fundamental assertion of FS and a right to subsistence in Grenada today.
The historic heritage of provision plants runs deep, Franklyn notes: “Sweet potatoes and cassava... were the staple of the Kalinago... Ciboni, and Taino indigenes. Then there was the yam, which was the staple of some of the West Africans who were brought to the Caribbean as captives and enslaved on the plantations... There were dasheen, tannia, and eddoes, all tubers. The breadfruit plant was imported from... the Pacific and shares a history with many of the peoples of the Caribbean as having been transplanted on the islands. The breadfruit plant was brought to feed the slaves and became a staple. It is the main item in oildown,” Grenada’s national dish (Franklyn 2007:70).

There is ambivalence among West Indians about foods from the slaving past just as there is about agricultural labor, so much that Grenadians sometimes call it “pig food” (Franklyn 2007:67). But Martin offers a sense that it is a kind of food that Grenadian pride has redeemed: “For many years... 'provisions' were held in low esteem, consumed by peasants and poor urban residents. They can, however, be found on menus at hotels and restaurants across the islands” (Martin 2007:16). Provision was a feature of every big or celebratory meal I ate in Grenada and in many meals I had with farmers and friends.

The provision grounds not only assured food security—they also gave rise to a regional cuisine. Many regional dishes prized today were pioneered by enslaved cooks over their own fires, or devised for the tables of estate owners, their families, and their guests. *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833), by the wife of a planter (Mrs. A.C. Carmichael), sought to attract British audiences by claiming insider knowledge of delicious slave
cooking in St. Vincent and Trinidad. It described how to prepare “tania [sic], callalou, pigeon pea, plantain, West Indian peppers, pig, chicken, goat, yam, beans, peppers, pineapples, guavas, starches from arrowroot and dried cassava.” Despite complaints by officials about the negative influence of imported foods on Grenada (see Chapter 6) all of the items on Carmichael's list are still eaten two centuries later. The list would provide a reasonable starting point if you asked people what they eat right across the region. It goes some way to demonstrating that there is a core Caribbean cuisine for LVC and FS advocates to organize around, investigate, and share knowledge and practices of—a productive basis for a regional FS future.

**Developing An Internal Marketing System**

European observers ranged between amazement at slaves' gardens and a tendency to discount their accomplishment. There was a contradiction, Tobin notes, between visitors' claims that the food grew itself in the rich Caribbean soil and the unceasing labor required to grow plantation crops. Owners, meanwhile, worried over the labor expended in provision grounds and not on their own crops, about the loss of potential income from products that slaves began to sell themselves, and at “the threat of African agricultural expertise and entrepreneurial ingenuity that found expression” in them (Tobin 2005:62), which clashed with dogma about the enslaved people’s inability to fend for themselves. In Grenada, Steele says, “slaves worked assiduously at cultivation. . . and soon supplied all of Grenada with fresh vegetables, fruit and ground provisions. They peddled these from door to door, but also sold produce in markets that quickly grew up in the. . . population centers” (2003:100).

Feeding themselves and plantation owners, too, slaves began to develop the internal economies of emerging island societies, including patterns of marketing,
communication, and urban and social development as they moved between their own quarters, market, and field (Marshall 1993 and 2003; Hall 2000; Beckles 2000; and Tomich 2000). Mintz and Douglas Hall say that the development of such marketing was closely connected to the development of the peasantry itself in Jamaica (2000:758), and descriptions of the work performed and products sold make clear this was the case in Grenada, too. Though prone to exoticize them, eighteenth and nineteenth century diarists and travelers noted the lively profusion of the Sunday slave markets—Sunday being the one day of the week, on many islands, when slaves could gather and sell their goods. The markets were the cooking pot of a distinctive new culture, where the creolized West Indians first saw themselves reflected, and heard and felt others give voice to experiences like their own.

Laws covering what could be sold appeared early in the life of the plantations in both the Windward Islands and Jamaica (Marshall 2003:476). Manufactured goods like soap and candles, cakes and drinks as well as preserves came to be found in the markets with baked and prepared foods (Beckles 2000:734-735). In creating and processing such goods, slave vendors refined new skills and production methods that would be employed when slavery ended. As they became more ambitious, tensions arose between them and local merchants—hindered in growth of their own trade by the same imperial monopolies that the vendors now undermined with their efforts.

“[F]irewood, fresh fish and dunghill fowls, goats, hogs, and vegetables” were all legal to sell and by 1790 slaves held a “virtual monopoly” on locally produced food, firewood, and charcoal as well as animal feed in those places, with planters depending on them for “the greater part” of their chicken and other fresh meat (Marshall 2003:476).
Women emerged as the chief sellers of produce, enlivening the “elaborate urban markets” of the Windward Islands. In many places market vending became a female monopoly, one that (in Grenada) persists today. In this gendered activity, the slaves “adopted the prevalent practice of the Gold Coast” of Africa, historian N.A.T. Hall writes, “from which many of them had originated” (2000:725). European travelers’ accounts suggest social development and advancement of the enslaved people who took part. Writing of Martinique’s market vendors, historian Dale Tomich notes that their initiatives “developed new... social patterns” that would be elaborated further with the end of slavery (1991:233). “The slaves made planting, harvesting, and marketing decisions,” writes McDonald; they “chose how and when to spend the earnings they accumulated, assessed how to apportion their free time, and weighed the advisability of this or that theft” (Tobin 2005:63).

The provision grounds, slave markets, and new patterns of social relations not only afforded the slaves certain rights, privileges, and material goods before emancipation, they helped to provide at least some of them greater freedom in its aftermath. Discussing St. Vincent’s provision grounds, anthropologist Virginia Heyer Young argues that they “were the basis of a strong peasant agrarian economy that gave to the Afro-Caribbeans the freedom to refuse plantation work in the post-emancipation era, making it necessary for plantation owners to seek labor elsewhere” (1993:71). Tobin says that “the slaves’ gardens provided the basis for a protopeasant economy that existed independent of and eventually in opposition to the plantation system” (in Young 1993:71). “[G]ardening was... an important site for the cultivation of freedom,” says sociologist Mimi Sheller. “The slave’s kitchen garden and provision ground has
come to be understood as... the seed corn from which post-emancipation freedom could be cultivated” (2000:24).

**The Role of Provisioning in Fédon’s Revolution**

Provision played a key role in what was perhaps the most important event that Grenada witnessed before the end of slavery, the 1795 rebellion against the English led by mixed-race (“free coloured”) French planter Julien Fédon. Steele insists that the uprising, traditionally called “Fédon’s Rebellion,” was a revolution. (“The intent was to create a new type of society... for both the free and the slave”). It succeeded for fifteen months, supplanting the plantation system with one of various freedoms (Steele 2003:115). Gamay, an enslaved woman, and a Maroon leader, Seka, helped plan the uprising and served as military leaders. According to Grenada historian Nicole Phillip, slave women were involved “in transporting weapons, plundering provision grounds... and taking part in the cultivation of food crops” for the rebels. Together, the allies planned the burning of installations like cane refineries that held the most odious connections to slavery (Carew 1985:119). Grenada’s was therefore not just a bourgeois revolution but carried out in partnership between Fédon's bi-racial middle class, the island's 12,000 slaves, and the communities of the “Bwa Nèg Mawon” (the Maroon forest), “rooted in a century and a half of discontent” with slavery (Carew 1985:91). The allies were joined by mutineer English soldiers and sailors, and “Frenchmen of all classes and colours” (Steele 2003:101,119). Maroons and slaves left the plantations en masse to fight with Fédon and his troops, who occupied the island for fifteen months.

Provisions and provisioning lay at the heart of the revolution’s early success. “Anticipating the blockade of the island by British forces... Fédon and the other
leaders planted fields of ground provision. . . in the hidden folds of the mountains” near his camp on Mt. Qua Qua, at 2,500 feet (Franklyn 2007:71). A doctor who survived a massacre that Fédon carried out against 48 captured members of the British plantocracy, “reported seeing fields of plantain the rebels. . . planted for the express purpose of the present revolution” a full two years before the insurrection began (Jacobs n.d.:3). The rebels’ ability to feed themselves “lessened their dependency on frequent raids on the plantations to procure food and lessened, as a result, their risk of being recaptured” (Franklyn 2000:71). The plantains in particular required a minimum of care, could be consumed cooked or uncooked, and provided strong natural cover, offering “the perfect [dietary] basis for. . . a revolutionary campaign” (Jacobs n.d.:36).³⁰

On my first ride over the mountains to Grenada’s north shore, GCFA Secretary General Elliott Bishop pointed out the peaks of Mt. Qua Qua where Fédon’s “Camp Freedom” lay and told me the story of Fédon’s provision grounds. Provisioning in the Grenadian historical imagination, his account suggested, lies not only at the heart of a process by which independence is produced on a daily basis but of a people’s rebellion against slavery. Like Simón Bolívar—still revered across the English-speaking Caribbean—Fédon is today looked on “unreservedly. . . as a symbol of emancipation and. . . protector of the oppressed in Grenada” (Steele 2003:146).

**Multiple Cropping Systems: Foundation of Provision Growing and Small Farmer Productivity**

Provision growing brought with it a strong developing tradition of intercropping and polycropping. Both methods played a role in the success of provision grounds and growing on the plantations and in the development, to the present, of all three major Grenadian export crops: nutmeg, cocoa, and banana.³¹ Inter- and polycropping, which
involve the combined cultivation of various plants in varying patterns and proximity, not only helped to make for healthier, more bountiful yields but to provide food security to Grenadians. Nowhere were these practices more developed than in Grenada’s houseyards (Brierley 1978:13-19; 1991:16, passim).

After slavery intercropping practices, honed and developed through houseyard and provision ground cultivation, became more widespread, the subject of experiment on farmers’ plots as well as the estates. “Apart from the provision that the small independent farmers grew on their pieces of ground,” Franklyn writes of Grenada, “the plantation’s owners interplanted their fields of cocoa and nutmeg with breadfruit, coconut, plantain, and even yams.” Dasheen, eddoes, and tannia, he continues, “were planted in swampy parts of the plantations and on the banks of drains and streams.” “The breadfruit trees, along with immortelles, provided shade for the cocoa trees but the breadfruit trees also fed the estate labourers” (2007:73). Here protopeasant farmers may also have employed knowledge brought from West Africa, where the growing of trees with other crops—“alley cropping”—is highly developed (Powers and McSorley 2000:274). A knowledge of the architecture of each plant, the length and reach of their roots and leaf systems, all went into such innovations.

Polycropping, a practice closely related to intercropping, involves growing various crops together, often in varying, sometimes staggered, combinations through the year; it can involve practices as simple as interspersing rows of several crops (beans and corn) with one another. Although polycropping might incorporate interplanting, it tends to involve a larger view. As agroecologist Miguel Altieri writes, multiple cropping designs
are adopted to ensure constant food production and vegetation cover for soil protection. By ensuring a regular and varied food supply, a diverse and nutritionally adequate diet is assured.

Extended crop harvest reduces the necessity for storage, often hazardous in rainy climates. Polyculture is used strategically to diversify diets, generate income during different parts of the year, plan for or stabilize production and labor levels, reduce risk as well as insects and disease, and intensify production and returns. (1995:108)

Such diversity is “one of the most important attributes of a stable and sustainable agricultural system” (Powers and McSorley 2000:266), its lack the most fundamental vulnerability of monocrop farming. “When a monoculture is grown,” Powers and McSorley write, “a pest can destroy the crop in very little time, or the crop may require expensive pesticide applications. Multiple cropping systems. . . allow diversity that can bring. . . stability to the system” (2000:268). Historical geographer Carl Sauer, writing of the entire Caribbean, highlighted both the sophistication of the multiple cropping techniques developed by protopeasant farmers and their adaptation of new food sources:

When Indians gave way to Negro slaves, the latter took over for themselves, rather than for their masters, the cultivation of the Indian crops, and added thereto such African things as the greater yam [Dioscorea alata, or purple yam], the pigeon pea. . . okra, and the keeping of fowls. The food potential of the tradition. . . is hardly appreciated, because its tradition as well as content are so different from what we know and practice. Yields are much higher than from grains, production is continuous year round, storage is hardly needed. (Mintz and Hall 2000:762)

Sauer praised peasant farmers’ methods while acknowledging that Western agricultural experts struggled to understand them, noting that they produced “at all levels, from tubers underground through the understory of pigeon peas and coffee a second story of cacao and bananas, to a canopy of fruit trees and palms.” Such assemblages made full
use of light, moisture, soil, and even steep terrain, and were “about as protective of the soil as is the wild vegetation” (Mintz and Hall 2000:762).

Adaptation was required: “Such agricultural tools as the short-handled hoe, the mattock, and the bush knife were adjusted to the new conditions. . . techniques associated with food processing, storage, preservation, and seed selection were perfected” (Mintz 1989:236). By dint of such efforts a “wholly distinctive crop repertory was created.” Mintz enumerates ways that the Afro-Caribbean protopeasantry combined familiar African crops. . . such as “guinea yams” (Dioscorea sativa) and okra, with native American crops, including corn, sweet potatoes, potatoes, tomatoes, and species of Xanthosoma [the family of large-leafed plants that includes eddoes and dasheen, or malanga]; European vegetables, such as cabbage and carrots; and Southeast Asian cultigens, including the breadfruit. Citrus, avocado, mango, coconut palm, papaya, soursop and akee trees were cultivated, to provide cover, fruit, and wood—together they illustrate well the intersection of different agricultural and orchard traditions. (1989:236)

All of these gained favor in Grenada.

**A Landless Freedom: Emancipation Planning and Peasant Food Production**

*The colonial and imperial agenda for emancipation was to give effect to a landless freedom for the Black community.*

—Beckles and Shepherd

* Freedoms Won

None of the foregoing should suggest that Grenada’s emerging proto-peasantry was not forced to struggle mightily. As emancipation approached, British planners sought ways to keep property out of the hands of prospecting ex-slaves. Economic historian Stanley Engerman notes that British officials studied the ratios of land to labor in the crown colonies and the potential effects of emancipation on production as they plotted to create a proletariat dependent on plantation labor and engineer a profitable
transition for the plantations, or at least forestall collapse of the Caribbean plantation economies (1996:306). “[P]lans hatched by abolitionists, and the suggestions that the West India Committee made to the Colonial Office, [were] almost all of a piece: regulation and restriction of . . . blacks’ freedom in the interest of regular plantation labour” (Marshall 2003:123). The measures included harsh vagrancy laws of the kind created in England at the inception of capitalism when the peasantry was forced off the land there, designed to force workers into wage labor (Brizan 1998:119; Marshall 2003:121). In Grenada “refusal to work. . . peddling, huckstering or hawking without a license were all considered acts of vagrancy punished by one month's hard labor” (Brizan 1998:119). Such acts—including one that made it possible to evict tenants of up to seven years’ standing—constituted “a concerted attempt to prevent. . . development of an independent peasantry” (Brizan 1998:134).34 As in England and the southern US, jails for those who broke the new laws—for offenses like “idleness”—became a structural feature of the economy and plantocratic rule (Brizan 1999:120). For the Caribbean’s proto-peasant farmers, then, the “war against subsistence” that Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies (1999:17) and Desmarais (2007:47) recognize as necessary to the imposition of capitalism, was being waged against them before slavery ended. Planners also considered ways to keep freed slaves bound to plantation and state, including taxing crops they raised to “create difficulties [for the farmer] where there are none,” as one contemporary British source said, an approach “successfully adopted in Australasia and the Canadas” (Engerman 1996:307).35

Since the plantations had “engrost” the best land across much of the region, “black people were forced to continue working for subsistence wages” (Beckford
As the sole market for former slaves’ labor, plantation owners could fix wages at a level just above subsistence. They took advantage of the opportunity to refine operations, reducing work forces by up to 40% (Marshall 1972:124). The peasantry that emerged would remain dependent on the plantation system, its “fortunes. . . linked with booms and depressions in the plantation sector” (Beckford 2000:262). Boom times brought profits to plantations but little benefit to peasants and wage workers; in hard times everyone suffered. This pattern has persisted (Girvan 2009:xviii).

The Post-Emancipation Peasantry and Free Village Movement

_Independence. . . meant freedom from dependence. New villages were founded in the hills and mountains by those who turned their backs on the plantations. They set about cutting and clearing their own spaces, literally and figuratively, in which to plant their ground provision, reassert their humanity. . . and reassemble their families. They referred to this process, to such production in the service of their own development, as ‘making freedom.’_

—EPICA
_Grenada, The Peaceful Revolution_

Planners' and estate owners' efforts notwithstanding, villages began to spring up at the edges of Grenada's estates beginning in the second decade after emancipation. Their growth was connected with the collapse of sugarcane production by the estates: “As. . . sugar estates were abandoned. . . villages grew up on their environs. By 1866, 33 sugar estates were abandoned and no longer produced sugar for export” (Brizan 1998:135). Estates sold some of the less productive land at their edges, Brizan told me in a 2010 interview. “The people who worked on them went into peasant farming. That was the beginning of the independent free village movement in Grenada,” one that took place in many Caribbean countries (most prominently Jamaica).
Marshall notes that acquiring land, “however limited in extent,” was the “great and universal object” of ex-slaves throughout the region (1968:255); for Grenadians it was “the grand criterion of freedom” (Brizan 1998:137). But this desire, Marshall says, brought them into direct conflict with the plantation:

The planter-dominated legislatures refused to initiate surveys of Crown Land as a preliminary to smallhold settlement, and they adopted strict legislation against squatting on Crown Land… [Colonial governments] either refused to sell surplus and marginal estate land, or they charged high, even exorbitant prices for small portions. Moreover, the legislatures instituted costly licenses for the sale of small quantities of manufactured sugar and coffee and for the production of charcoal and firewood. They also levied land taxes which discriminated against the owners of smallholdings. (1968, 255)

Still, emancipated slaves acquired land in growing numbers. In the parish of St. Patrick, where River Sallee is found, 3,303 people were living in villages in 1838, according to the Grenada Blue Book; 36,342 were freeholders (Brizan and Brizan 2005:69). By 1853, fifteen years after full emancipation, some 7,127 persons or 22% of the population were living in Grenada’s villages. The villages remained isolated, Brizan writes, “dispersed on the margins of the estates” (Douglas 2003:6). Colonial administrators made little effort to develop their infrastructure, let alone to provide for local welfare. Many of the people in them still worked on the estates. But it was in the free villages, Marshall writes, that the peasants “initiated the conversion of the. . . plantation territories into modern societies (1968:260).

The Maroon and Other Institutions of Reciprocity

“Informal cooperatives made their appearance immediately” in the new villages, Marshall writes. “[G]roups of ex-slaves pooled their resources to buy land, to lay down drainage systems” (1968: 261). “They founded villages and markets; they built churches and schools; they clamoured for extension of educational facilities [and] for
improvements in communication and markets” (1968:260). They also made use of cooperative arrangements to meet the labor demands of preparing ground for planting and harvesting. A central practice was called a maroon (sometimes maroune), named for the runaway slaves, “in which neighbors came together to accomplish a major project” (EPICA 1982:14). As work gatherings, maroons in Grenada (called “jambonis” in Carriacou [Martin 2007:155]) have been used to build, move, or repair houses and to harvest crops; they are usually crowned with a generous meal. The maroon system “was perpetuated and preserved by the cherished belief that one's hands were the other's” (Douglas 2003:30). It was employed by the PRG during the Grenadian revolution for collective work projects. In 1990 a national maroon was called to clear debris after the Finance Ministry burned down on the Carenage, in the nation’s capital, St. George’s (Franklyn 1999:37). Naming the practice for the self- liberated Maroons identifies it as a mode of resistance even as it institutionalizes it. Retaining the name and practice also forms its own commentary on the plantation economic system that replaced slavery, down to today.37

Food was and remains central to the maroon—including the drinking of rum that goes with the work. Participants are often served a breakfast of “cocoa tea”38 and saltfish souse, with “peas” soup or oil down for lunch. “There should always be more food than can be eaten,” Douglas writes. “If the meals were meagerly estimated or insufficient, the host's reputation suffered” (2003:30). Various songs accompanied maroon labor, including this fragment about the break-up of an enslaved family, in which the father was sold to Trinidad, the mother to Haiti:

_Weep for me, Lide, weep, Maiwaz. . .  
Sunday next, the schooner sails for Haiti._
Whoever loves me, console my children for me.

EPICA 1982:15

Sociologist Claude Douglas connects the Grenadian maroon with collaborative work practices like Haiti’s *coumbite*, “the lift system” in the Leeward Isles, “jollifications” in the Bahamas, Jamaica’s “day fe day” and “lend hand” practices, and the Trinidadian “gaiapa,” all of which have African antecedents (2003:30). As threatened but surviving practices involving reciprocity rather than exploitation, maroons are an initial egalitarian answer to the artificial dilemma of “labor shortages” in a region where unemployment is rife. They almost undoubtedly helped to prevent or slow the development of class differences among Grenadians in the period after slavery, and continue (in limited degree) to serve such a function—a fact that could be brought to bear in more conscious fashion by Grenada's government in pursuit of FS.

In addition to maroons many other social practices, in an emerging society where little currency circulated, hinged on reciprocity. “Sickness Benefit and Friendly” societies, “social security cooperatives that provided sickness and death benefits to members,” became hallmarks of free village life as early as early as 1836, social institutions in which women performed prominent roles. The 1932 and 1933 Grenada Blue Book listed 45 such societies, including one in River Sallee, with several others nearby (Brizan and Brizan 2005:78-81). Local savings collectives known as “Susu,” “became widespread in Grenada, especially among working women” (Brizan and Brizan 2005:82). “It was a powerful movement,” Brizan told me in 2012. Possibly of Yoruba origin, Susu are revolving savings clubs in which participants regularly deposit money—one person holding it as it accumulates—usually toward a specific purchase or investment, members withdrawing the accumulated savings money when their turn
arises.\textsuperscript{40} Susu remains popular in Grenada and elsewhere in the Caribbean, where such informal credit associations are also known as “partner,” “meeting turn,” “credit turn,” and “throwing box” (Senior 1991:146).\textsuperscript{41} Besson says that the institution “underscores the cash-dependent nature of the peasantry” (2002:228). But partnering can also make for carefully reasoned purchases carried out with the help of the community and may signal the uneven development of capitalism—its incomplete reach into the rural sector—as much as dependency.

Perhaps most importantly, such savings institutions, whose establishment constituted another strong movement in Grenada, made it possible for Grenadians and people of the region to obtain land. “They practised thrift and industry, and . . . laboriously accumulated the purchase money for land,” says Marshall. “Generally, they paid high prices,” he continues, up to 200 British pounds per acre; “more often than not it was marginal land which was barely accessible, not surveyed and even uncleared” (1968:256). Despite such disincentives, in Grenada, the number of smallholders rose from roughly 3,600 in 1869 to 8,000 in 1911 (Marshall 1968:257).

These rural institutions, most still in existence, were part of a wider system of social solidarity and sharing that typified life for the post-emancipation peasantry, whose erosion many people I spoke to lamented but which has not been erased—what might be called a culture of collective subsistence—whose revival and further institutionalization could be foundational to establishment of FS in Grenada today.

**Distinguishing Features of Caribbean and Grenadian Peasantries**

Several features of Caribbean peasant/small farming development distinguish it from such traditions in other parts of the world. The strongest of these was the continuing relationship to the plantations/estates and the economic activities that this
forced Caribbean farmers and their families to adopt. As Marshall writes, the peasantry “exists alongside and in conflict with the plantation; and it did not”—could not—“depend exclusively on cultivation of the soil for its income and subsistence. Early [Caribbean] peasants, and many of the later ones as well, often combined cultivation with activities like fishing, or shopkeeping, and casual estate work” (1968:253). Grenadians, like other Caribbean farmers, were pushed toward a high degree of “occupational multiplicity” (Besson 2002: passim) from the outset, turning their hands to such possibilities as they spotted them or as new conditions arose. But there is evidence that Grenadians were able to combine such paid work activities and farming with considerable success. In the late 1890s one source wrote that Grenadians (in comparison to those on other Caribbean islands) made reliable workers because “they have land of their own, and form a stable and satisfactory class” (Richardson 1997:192). At least during the late part of the nineteenth century, according to Bonham Richardson, “[t]he differences between Grenada’s prosperous small holders and the impoverished plantation labourers of the nearby sugar islands was often remarked upon; most, not all colonial authorities associated self-sufficient peasant virtues with Grenada's small-scale producers” (1997:47). Richardson writes that Grenada’s relatively low death rate in comparison to other Windward Island countries during this period “may have been a fortuitous result of an overall combination or mix of cash earning and subsistence strategies” (1997:47). Among products developed for export were arrowroot, cotton, spices, cocoa, citrus, bananas, and logwood—all products also used internally, according to Marshall. “[C]ocoa and spices in Grenada were regarded as peasant crops from the 1850s onwards,” he reports (1968: 257).
While the number of smallholders began to decline in other parts of the Caribbean from the 1930s (a period of rising organized labor activity that accompanied industrialization in places like Jamaica), it grew in Grenada and the Windward Islands. “In these islands,” Marshall noted, “are more nearly peasant communities than any of the other islands in the West Indies” (1968:260). He attributes ongoing growth of the peasantry after the 1930s in part to the fact that the plantation never “exercised full dominance over the economy and . . . landscape.” Grenada’s hilly topography, varied export production, and small number of large tracts all prove likely keys to such developments. Another is that little industrialization took place in Grenada and the other Windward islands, as happened in Trinidad and Jamaica: “There has been no alternative economic development in these islands to compete with agriculture. The peasantry has thus been able to sustain a competition with the plantation for land and labour in conditions more favourable to it” (Marshall 1968:259). The absence of such economic development, Marshall speculates, helped to root small island economies like Grenada’s in subsistence production and may have—in turn—stemmed a greater push for industrialization: “[T]he availability of much peasant-produced food might have canceled out the advantages of large-scale production for export markets by introducing important elements of self-sufficiency” (1968:259). From a contemporary FS standpoint—in which imported food dependence is perceived as an impediment to basic needs development—Marshall’s comment raises the possibility that what have often been seen as the liabilities of an economy like Grenada’s could come to stand as its strengths.
Land Sales

Despite the lack of historical aid by the Crown authorities to the establishment of Grenada’s peasant/small farmer culture, the island saw a limited distribution of land to poor rural dwellers at the turn of the nineteenth century. The 1897 report of the Royal West India Commission, in the face of an imminent collapse of the sugar economy of many West Indian colonies—flying in the face of the historic efforts of the islands’ planter class to thwart them—noted that peasant cultivators were “a source of both economic and political strength” for the region; it recognized that they needed land (Marshall 1968:262). The commission, which visited all of Britain’s West Indian colonies, recommended land reform. There was no change “affording so good a prospect for the permanent welfare in the future of the West Indies as. . . settlement of the labouring population on the land as small peasant proprietors” (Marshall 1968:262).

As it happened, Grenada was the only colony to follow through—if but partially—on the recommendations, not with anything approaching comprehensive reform but a series of land sales at low prices to peasant farmers. A 1901 law, based in a decision by Grenada’s governor to authorize use of Grenada Treasury funds for the purpose, enabled the colonial government to purchase and divide abandoned estates, making land available to peasant farmers, to be paid for in small installments. The project began in Carriacou, where for thirty years “most of the large sugar estates [had] remained uncultivated,” writes Steele. It proved a success, she says—244 lots and 51 building sites were made available “for the development of small farms” and a town from two estates. Much productive activity on the plots went into limes and coconuts for export, which helped to replace a failing cotton industry43 (2003:238-239).
Although Steele does not qualify the characterization, she also says that the scheme was successful on the island of Grenada, if not in the degree described for Carriacou. Portions of the Calivigny and Westerhall Estates, prime cane land on the island's southern shore, were purchased and made available, along with Crown lands at Morne Rouge and True Blue. Additional land was purchased to accommodate laborers returning from work on the Panama Canal in 1914 and 1915 (Steele 2003:238-239).

By 1940, 20 settlements had been created (2003:292-293). The schemes “contributed to a significant expansion of the peasantry,” Brizan writes, but “[n]one of the institutional structures that accompany land reform—credit facilities, subsidy schemes, marketing operations, economic and social infrastructure—were set up.” The estate system “continued intact” without “significant change in the system of land tenure or . . . structure of ownership” (Brizan 1998:252).

One critical clue to the limitations farmers faced despite such “reforms”: a good deal of farming continued to take place on vacant or squatted land. This tended to be land devoted to food consumption. In the degree that tenure of growers was insecure, local food production also remained vulnerable. This pattern continues to the present. The 1946 Grenada Handbook gives an idea of the patterns of growing elaborated since the end of slavery, and suggests the precarious basis on which production for local consumption took place:

With the decline of sugar, most of the estates had taken up cultivation of cocoa and later also nutmegs. The emancipated African also took readily to these crops: a quantity of vacant land in the interior could be bought, rented or just “squatted” upon very readily and offered . . . an independent existence and reasonable profits. The interior of the island to-day is almost entirely covered with cacao and nutmeg. . . and represents a well-wooded appearance. . . Dry lands round the coasts in the rest of the island are
cultivated mainly in peasant gardens on the shifting principle. (1946:103, my emphasis).

Obtaining a secure continuing basis for local production—to meet the core food needs of Grenadians—remains an unmet goal today, and would need to be a strongly articulated demand of any campaign for FS.

Here lies the core of a contradiction regarding peasant society and its limited success in Grenada: there was too much land to prevent formerly enslaved people from making productive use of it, but legal and state/colonial power and regulations, coupled with the hold of the estates and limited aid from government, prevented them from seizing fully any means of their own reproduction or furtherance as a class. To too great a degree such limitations have been construed as their failure, the limitations imposed by the plantation confused with the limitations of small farmers or their practices.

The Roles of Race and Color in Local Food Production

One feature of evolving post-slavery life worth noting: there were very few white people in Grenada—probably no more in 1891, Richardson says, than 250 or 300. Today many Grenadians assert that skin color is not an issue in the country. “Yet brown Grenadians dominated the rural areas,” Richardson writes. Powerful parish boards were dominated by “the wealthy, Coloured upper and middle classes” (1997:48). This does not explain how mixed-race (“brown” and Indian) Grenadians came to dominate export production, as Brierley writes was the case (1974:176, 207). But it does suggest—as did quiet remarks to me by some farmers—that the insistence that race and skin color were not issues in Grenada is something of a fiction. I note these distinguishing elements of farmer stratification because they bear on arguments about who makes up the country’s poorest farmers—as well as its rural landless population—and attitudes
about the kind of production they have traditionally been involved in on. As a more privileged class, “brown” (“mulatto,” or mixed race) Grenadians' ties to wealth and social networks would have afforded them greater access to export markets, and the capital outlays required to enter them, dating to the days of French mixed-race planters and their progeny on the island. Race or color per se are less the issue than the fact that a certain kind of farming, the kind of local food production historically associated with poorer “Negro” farmers, as Brierley described them in 1974—including sugarcane farmers on the north and south shores—has both suffered from greater insecurity of tenure and received less attention from Grenada's governing pre- and post-independence bodies. Such neglect of the island's smallest and least commercial farmers continues now as a matter of policy, at least since 2004’s Hurricane Ivan, though it is rarely identified as such or even pointed to as a problem.

**A Peasantry Frustrated**

While it is this project's purpose to uncover the achievements of Grenada's emerging peasant farmers and to highlight their potential contribution to FS in Grenada, it is critical to acknowledge the crippling conditions that they faced, and how those conditions persisted. Slavery was abolished in 1834, observes Gordon Lewis, “but the economic foundations of slavery, especially in the general picture of land ownership, remained basically untouched” well into the twentieth century. “[T]he social pattern of slavery—the vast masses labouring in poverty on the property of the minority—remained stamped in West Indian life” (2004:82). “In the immediate post-emancipation days, not only in Grenada, but in Jamaica, Guyana, Antigua and Barbados, planters vigorously resisted the peasant movement,” Brizan writes. One hundred years later some were “employing the self-same tactics” (1998:256). According to Theo Hills,
“planters campaigned vigorously against any government assistance to small farmers. . . well into the present [twentieth] century” (1988:4).

Brizan offers striking examples of the neglect of a vulnerable peasantry by the British island administration, planters, and colonial office. For 100 years after slavery, he notes, the daily pay on Grenadian estates averaged one shilling. “[T]he poor,” Brizan says, “were ravaged by disease” (1998:132-133). A 1934 commission appointed to investigate conditions among the working poor decried the state of peasant housing and found many “emaciated from hookworm, venereal disease and tuberculosis.” Children, “ravaged by yaws and gastro-enteritis,” “deficient in Vitamin B, calcium and iron,” suffered from “protein-caloric malnutrition” (Steele 2003:291).

According to Brizan, it was common during the period “to find as many as fifteen people. . . in a two-roomed house” (1998:263).

Among the biggest sources of bitterness for some sectors of the Grenadian peasantry were share-cropping arrangements that kept them tied to the estates. After emancipation, many who could not afford to purchase or rent land remained in arrangements where they cultivated provision grounds as well as estate crops for a small wage while living rent-free. Thirty-three percent of the formerly enslaved were doing this in 1844 (Steele 2003:175). In 1848 the metayer sharecropping system was introduced as the situation on sugar estates grew worse. Under it, estates provided workers with sought-after land to work and various inputs—sometimes including manures and plants; workers often built houses on the lands (Beckles and Shepherd 2006:29; Brizan 1998:139). Those employed under the system obtained no security of tenure, and the planters retained their lands and control of the product. By 1854 all of
the island’s coffee and cocoa estates were being managed under this system (Steele 2003:175). “Metayage,” Carew writes, “was a trap from which the cultivator rarely escaped” (1985:177). The system did not encourage careful land use or high productivity, and was still bringing accusations of cheating from workers in the 1930s, when the Great Depression forced more farmers to return to the estates (Steele 2003: 293-294).

One of the features of the system that most embittered farmers, still remembered by middle aged people I spoke to in Grenada, was being moved off of estate lands when the cocoa or nutmeg they planted had matured. William Sylvester, a south shore farmer, lived on a St. Patrick estate as a young man and experienced this with his family: “They give you a house spot in the center of the land, give you a piece of garden, then they move you, lock, stock, and barrel,” he told me in 2008. Among other things, this meant isolation: “We never had houses by the road,” Sylvester told me. Merle Collins’ novel Angel draws on this collective experience to capture the severe alienation that the system visited on rural dwellers, and how rural workers repeatedly harvested cocoa they themselves had grown “for the boss for one shilling an sixpence a day. Bon Je! [Good God!]” This conferred a feeling that one never got anywhere: “We always startin’, always in the beginning,” one of Collins’s characters says (1998:10-11).

**Conclusion**

By 1950, Grenada had reached “a certain conjunction of contradictions,” as one PRG member characterized it; the plantocracy “still controlled two-thirds of the richest cultivated land in the island” (Carew 1985:193). Its “twenty-eight closely knit families” had ruled the country for most of the previous century, coming to share power with merchants in St. George’s (EPICA 1982:25). The wealth and holdings of the two groups
contrasted sharply with that of 20,000 peasant farmers with holdings under five acres (Brizan 1998:250-252), or the remainder of the adult population that still toiled on the estates, earning an average of 82 cents a day (Steele 2003:293). “Peasants had become the most dynamic social force—yet they remained a social underclass, deprived of political or economic power” (EPICA 1982:25). Grenada had “more small farmers,” according to one source, “than all the other Windward and Leeward Islands combined” (Brierley 1988:67). Although they were uniquely successful, to too great a degree “[p]easant expansion. . . was not accompanied by growing peasant independence” (Meeks 2001:134).

But if there is value in peasant approaches to small farming— as LVC and agroecologists today insist—if small farmers are best able to take advantage of small holdings, local soils, and difficult conditions, growing food where the poor and hungry people are—then a more nuanced reckoning with the achievement of Grenada’s peasant farmers must take place. “The peasants were the innovators in the economic life of their communities,” Marshall writes. “Besides producing a great quantity and variety of subsistence food and livestock they introduced new crops and/or re-introduced old ones. This diversified the basically monocultural pattern.”

All of their efforts could not succeed: “[T]he success of peasants in combating attacks of disease on crops like cocoa and bananas was. . . severely limited by their shortage of resources” (1968:260). “The potential of peasant development was never fully realized,” Marshall writes, “because government. . . tended, most of the time, to ignore the existence of the class” (1968: 261). But the peasants, Marshall says flatly, “initiated the conversion of these plantation territories into modern societies” (1968: 261,
Girvan captures the contradiction and its enduring character when he writes that the “main source of dynamism in the Caribbean region” during the period under review here was the peasantry, but that neglect of this sector was “the principal reason for the absence of economic transformation” away from the rigid dependency of the plantation toward something approaching island or regional economic independence. The legacy of the slave plantation economy “in tastes, consumption patterns, investment behaviour, and government policy” all continued to hold back development (2009:xx).

Grenada remained little touched by the labor ferment that roiled the Caribbean in the 1930s and 1940s in Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad, and elsewhere (Cox 2007:30; Benoit 2007:98). Scholars offer different opinions about why this was the case. Brian Meeks insists that a deep paternalism prevailed in Grenada. He says that there was little state structure and therefore no middle class—who would have occupied that structure—to demand or foment change. Meeks also suggests, without providing statistical evidence, that through metayage much of the peasantry had been tied back to the plantation (2001:134). Grenada had experienced little or no industrialization, which helps to account for Meeks’s observation that Grenada had not become, like some colonies, “more commercial,” (2001:13), a way of life based in consumption that colonial planners themselves had hoped to instill, which might have aroused rising expectations in the poor population and generated greater demands for change. Currents of militant thought about labor organization had not impacted the country.

But it is also likely that the lack of unrest in the 1930s was a function of the peasantry’s relative success, its more extensive consolidation in Grenada. And it is possible that their ‘failure to rebel’ looks less like failure if we stop looking on the
peasant class as benighted or its aspirations and material culture as intermediary steps on some necessary road away (to modernity, for example), instead of as worthy ends in themselves. Meeks does not contend with the fact that by 1930 there were 16,000 and by 1949 just under 20,000 peasant landholders in Grenada, among the largest number proportionally in the Caribbean (Brizan 1998:250-252). Grenadian sociologist Oliver Benoit sees the relative numerical and cultural strength of the peasantry as a reason why Grenada did not erupt. But he also discerns a critical faultline among class forces in the countryside when he notes that the peasantry, “although diverse[,] . . . had little interest in associating with the estate workers. This isolated the workers and weakened their chances of carrying out a successful rebellion” (2007:98). Such lack of rural solidarity persists. Chapter 5 examines the continuing evolution of these forces in the period leading to independence, from the late 1940s through the 1983 US invasion.

1 Carriacou, at 34 square kilometers, has about 4,500 inhabitants, and is subject even more than the main island to drought; traditional crops are cotton and peanuts. Petite Martinique, 2.4 kilometers square with 900 people, supports a fishing community and—it is said—smuggling.

2 New research is altering understanding of the names and origins of these groups. The people historically identified as Caribs were made up of several ethnic groups “with more than one contributing ancestor,” and “were neither unitary nor arrived at the same time” (Martin 2007:38). The Ciboney, long held to be Grenada’s first people, may not have lived on the island (Steele 2003:11).

3 “It has been argued that the momentous shift. . . to an unfettered ‘free market’. . . began with sugar,” writes sociologist Mimi Sheller, as (taken with tea and coffee) it “became central to. . . rituals of respectability that ‘stimulated and ultimately reshaped the entire pattern of Western consumer demand’” (2003:83). As sugar prices fell the substance powerfully impacted what English working people ate (2009:63-64). Although tinged with the blood of African slaves in the Caribbean, Mintz says, sugar became “the general solace” of English people of all classes, “profound consolation” for those working “in the mines and factories” (Abbot 2009:69). Sugar prices, Thomas writes, “were highly volatile and subject to enormous swings” which encouraged a speculative outlook in the industry (2005:168) and came to set the pattern for wheat and other commoditized agricultural products.

4 Figures pinpointing the number of slaves brought to Grenada are “very fragmentary” but it is estimated that 20 million African people were transported to slavery in the New World (Brizan 1998:93-94). Such numbers demonstrate why an experience specific to the region’s Afro-Caribbean people must be reckoned as primary shaper of regional small farmer consciousness, material inheritance, and practices, as Beckford argued and Mintz affirms (1989:225), and as focus of political organizing by LVC.
Cocoa was introduced in Grenada as early as the late 1600s, cultivated as a trade item by the 1710s. By 1762 it had become “a significant secondary crop,” produced by medium sized farmers (Martin 2007:53). It received a boost as export after 1828 when a Dutch manufacturer invented a method to squeeze the fat from the beans, becoming for a time a mainstay of many Caribbean islands with volcanic rainforests (Parkinson 1999:344). By the 1860s, with the collapse of sugar, cocoa had become Grenada’s primary export crop. Expansion was facilitated through use of the metayer system (see later this chapter), low production costs, and the willingness of small farmers to embrace it as crop (Martin 2007:53), undoubtedly boosted by cocoa’s intercropping possibilities. In 1900 sugar was not even included on a list of Grenada’s exports (Brierley 1974:12, 8).

It would also fuel trade to other islands in what became known as “trafficking” or “the schooner trade,” practice once dominated by women, especially to Trinidad and the southern Caribbean (Brizan 1998:240; Martin 2007:249), and which grew considerably in the period before World War II. “In the years preceding the war, and up to the present,” Steele writes, “Grenadian traffickers plied the sea between Grenada and Trinidad in wooden... schooners, trading... ground provision and fresh fruits in exchange for Trinadian manufactures like soaps, soft drinks, biscuits, textiles” as well as kerosene (in Franklyn 2007:73). Such trade bears continuing promise for expanded markets for Grenada’s small farmers and as potential boost to Carriacouan ship-building.

According to Beckles and Shepherd, the Caribbean slavery experience was “the most brutal and severe in the Americas.” Slavers worked on the principle that forcing ten years of work from an enslaved person before they died “was good business” (2004:164). The slave population decreased 4% annually in the Leeward and Windward Islands (Thomas 2005:169).

Citing what may be the earliest recorded instances of marronage (runaway slave activity), Martin describes an escaped slave named Petit-Jean who with a group of over 60 others caused “extensive disruptions” on Grenada estates from 1716 to 1725 (2007:189). Gabriel Debien, working from the French archives, notes a Maroon uprising, perhaps that of Petit-Jean, in Grenada in 1725 (Price 1996:110). In 1767 another slave revolt broke out there.

A “Chronology of Resistance” compiled by Beckles and Shepherd shows 74 rebellions from 1638-1837—across the period of Caribbean slavery. It demonstrates “that there was hardly a generation of enslaved persons in the region that did not confront their enslavers with arms in pursuit of their freedom” (2004:167-169).

According to Brizan, then-Governor Robert Melville offered the Maroons amnesty in 1765 but was turned down (1998:100-101). Not much is known about the former lives of Africans enslaved in the colonies, according to Mintz, but many would have taken up cultivation readily. “In their majority they were from farming and animal-keeping (not pastoral, and not solely hunting) societies. . . or were war captives. Highly productive indigenous farming systems had led to big populations in much of West Africa” (2010:196-197).

Suriname Maroons grew some 70 “named varieties” of rice, 15 of okra, four of maize, four of sugarcane, six of watermelon, 15 of tannia, and 20 of cassava to relay only a partial list (Price 1991:109-111). In 2010 Tinde Van Andel reported that Saramacca Surinam Maroons were still growing a variety of black rice of African origin, O. glaberimma, for food and ritual uses (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2840666/ , accessed December 11, 2012).

Mintz says that the practice originated in Jamaica. The Latin term peculium was used to describe these slave properties, and in Jamaica it was assumed that if such lands were reappropriated by planters the enslaved cultivators must be given land “of equal quality and quantity,” with any lost production repaid (2010:53).

A 1788 law required Grenadian planters who could not offer off-site grounds to enslaved workers to allot “at least one-fortieth of an acre” near their quarters “for their sole use and benefit” (Marshall 2003:472). In 1790 one of Grenada’s biggest planters, Alexander Campbell, reported that it was the
custom to give slaves as much land as they could work, since it had been “universally considered the
greatest benefit to a planter that his Negroes should have a sufficient quantity of provisions, and the more
money the Negroes got for themselves, the more attached they were to the property” (Steele 2003:100).
Late eighteenth-century British law also came to dictate that each “adult” slave over 14 be allotted “his or
her proper ground.” Under abolitionist pressure, the 1788 law was amended to stipulate that a quarter
acre be given to each adult in Grenada and Tobago to grow food (Marshall 2003:473).

14 Despite this, Beckles has shown that the Barbadian enslaved managed to grow a considerable
amount of food on the very small plots allotted to them, and to create their own internal economy,
beginning as early as 1725 (2000:734).

15 Several scenes in Jacob Ross's Grenadian novel Pynter Bender take place in such hidden—in
Ross's novel, romantically exalted—mountain spaces (2008). Brierley notes that many farmers he spoke
to looked on trips to their mountain land as a kind of pilgrimage—as I had also seen in Jamaica—and
therapeutic: “they would spend the night, tend to a few chores. . . and return refreshed with what produce
was available” (Brierley 1987:197).

16 Agroecologist Mundie Salm notes that women often tend such highly diverse mixed cultivation
near home around the world while men are more likely to develop cash crops on other parcels,
sometimes traveling long distances to reach them (2010:28).

17 While he acknowledges women's role in houseyards. Brizan writes that “there was no rigid sexual
division of labor, rural women performing similar agricultural activities to men in addition to their domestic

18 The term “mixed farming” is used in various ways. As here, it may refer to settings where multiple
crops are grown, possibly in inter-cropping and polycropping arrangements. Or it can describe an
integrated system involving raising of animals and crops, in which Wolf says a good deal of output is sold
commercially (1966: 37). Joseph Gill refers to such a system as an “integrated farming system” in
Chapter 6, implying that it is one in which the metabolic cycle is completed by recycling of manures.


20 Note to author from Ms. Stephanie Simpson, Nutrition Education Coordinator, GFNC, July 10,
2012.

21 Yams keep up to six months without refrigeration. According to Reginald Buddy they are
sometimes left for an additional season in the ground for use in creating another crop.

22 See among numerous examples Mintz (1989), Besson (2002), Marshall (2003), Beckles and

23 Breadfruit (Artocarpus altilis), brought to the Caribbean from Tahiti by HMS Bounty Captain
William Bligh, is a fruit eaten as a vegetable, roasted, baked, fried, or broiled (Martin 2007:29).

24 In nearby Trinidad, where Grenadians often emigrated during and after World War II, poor
Grenadian laborers were derided as “eaters of provision” (Franklyn 2007:67). This reinforces the fact that
Trinidadians were familiar with provision too and notions of Grenada as a place where peasant traditional
production remained more dominant, dependence on commercial food less extensive. Franklyn quotes
Steele saying that “during World War II, when hunger caused by food shortages was everywhere
experienced in the Caribbean, in Grenada there was, relatively, plenty of food” (2007:73).

25 The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man was amended twice to grant freedom to enslaved
people in France's colonies, and citizenship to free colored citizens (Cox 1982:7). Fédon was named
leader of the French Revolution in Grenada by the French revolutionary government and the rebellion
was planned and carried out in collaboration with several commissioners whom the National Convention in France sent to the Windward Islands (Carew 1985:119)—Grenada's was therefore in important ways an act of that revolution (Ashie-Nikoi 2007:32). Taylor Caldwell quotes Fédon as saying that he intended to make Grenada a “Black Republic just like Haiti” http://www.bigdrumnation.org/notes/fedonrebellion.html, accessed August 15, 2012.


27 The black and biracial (“free coloured”) Grenadian middle class that Fédon represented was the largest “free” island group. They comprised 451 people in 1771 and had grown to more than 1100 by 1787 (Jacobs n.d.:2). Many considered themselves part of the French plantocracy. But they had suffered steady erosion of their civil and political rights. The English were more antagonistic to them than the French had been, strongly hostile to their Catholicism, and eager—having recently (re)acquired Grenada—to place their own discipline on island governance and plantation life (Brizan 1998:54-58; Steele 2003:102-107). According to a planter then resident in Grenada, French-speaking islanders outnumbered the British two to one (Jacobs N.d.:2).

28 Reportedly there were 24,000 slaves in Grenada at the time (EPICA 1982:18).

29 “They were whipped, bullied and brutalized by their superiors,” and “batches of them deserted and joined the ranks of Fédon's rebellion” (Carew 1985:93).

30 The Fédon Revolution ended when a “relentless offensive” by large-scale reinforcements of British troops overwhelmed the rebels' outposts through June of 1796; Fédon was never caught (Steele 2003:140-143). The first of three revolutions tiny Grenada has experienced, it was highly destructive. Seven thousand slaves died. Much of Grenada's physical plant, including buildings on more than 65 plantations, was burned to the ground. Three years' worth of crops were lost. All captured insurgents—likely thousands of slaves—were killed. “Hundreds more, suspected of harbouring subversive feelings,” were transported (Brizan 1998:79). Following their capture and execution, the heads of fourteen insurgent leaders were placed on pikes in the St. George's market (Steele 2003:142; Brizan in Carew 1985:159-160). Franklyn wonders whether Afro-Grenadian participants in the failed revolution would have remained free had Fédon succeeded. In Guadeloupe, he notes, Napoleon restored slavery and that island's mulatto class assisted him in doing so. The free colored class and free Blacks “were restored to their role as a buffer between the white plantocrats and the predominantly black enslaved masses” (1999:54).

31 Nutmeg was introduced to Grenada from Indonesia, possibly in 1843. Bananas were introduced as a substitute export crop after 1955's Hurricane Janet destroyed the country's nutmeg and cocoa crops (EPICA 1982:24,40).

32 Preparing and planting a "callaloo drain"—place, often on a slope away from the family dwelling—where the plant will receive continual moisture without being swamped, sometimes on a slope away from the house—is a first step in the establishment of many backyard gardens in Grenada (Denyse Ogilvie, Bernadette Roberts 2012 interviews).

33 Leguminous woody plant, also known as a coral tree, sometimes used to shade coffee.

34 Slaves' “freedom” did not, of course, extend to any choice in how or by whom they were governed. In December 1877, Crown Colony government was imposed on Grenada and most English colonies. It removed power from a local legislature that had made decisions under a former "Representative System," and invested it in an appointed governor and his appointed Executive and Legislative Councils—members of the plantocracy—effectively leaving the rest of the citizenry, including the formerly enslaved, without a voice in government. Agitation against the system, including by Grenada journalist William Donovan—prominent early activist and advocate of West Indian federation—brought greater local representation in 1925. Continuing agitation brought universal adult suffrage in 1951 (Martin 2007:61, 66-67).
Planner speculation constitutes a Rorschach test of period attitudes about race and emerging economic realities. Both the Colonial office and many abolitionists “accepted that the lure of . . . land would destroy blacks ‘inclinations to industry,’” and became preoccupied with whether former slaves might “revert” to a savage state once slavery ended (Marshall 2003:117). Many whites believed “that the plantation was a vital agency for civilizing the black masses and ought to be kept alive irrespective of economic considerations” (Lewis 1968:27). Among features of the debates were the notion that the emerging peasantry should be supplied with the “fictitious wants” that workers in England were being disciplined to develop, desire for which kept them at their labors. (“They have no stimulus to induce them to exert themselves. . . till they acquire fictitious wants, they will never become good subjects” [Marly 2005:249].) The role of a developing consumer economy in such calculations is apparent.


Jamaican provision grounds were called polinks, a term that The Dictionary of Jamaican English connects with the Spanish palenque, “a stockaded settlement of runaway Negros in the mountains,” or mountain provision grounds.

Cocoa is still often processed by Grenadians at home, the seeds ground with mortar and pestle and the cocoa rolled by hand, stored and grated for use later. It may be added to coconut, cow, or goat’s milk, sweetened with sugar-cane juice or honey, and boiled with a cinnamon stick, sometimes with a bay leaf.

A cooperative work practice like Grenada’s maroons exists among the Akhan people in what is present-day Ghana (Martin 2007:3).

Martin says that Susu was brought to the island by Yoruba slaves (2007:243).

A “backchat” about Susu at islandmixforum.com featured this comment from a visitor: “Susu, PARTNER ALL A DAT HAS PUT ME THROUGH SCHOOL AND through plenty of trips.. it’s going to be around fuh mi kids, my new house, car, and even wedding if he ever sticks to de plan!” (http://www.islandmix.com/backchat/f6/Susu-64646/, accessed April 6, 2011).

Marshall’s outline of the characteristics of Caribbean peasantries is described in Chapter 2.

Ten years later Grenada’s Governor reported that the initiative had worked because of “the sterling qualities of [Carriacou’s] hardy peasants,” and much of the money owed for land purchases had been repaid (Steele 2003:238-239).

Given that emigration rose from 2,575 people between 1891 and 1901, to 8,780 between 1901 and 1911, to 12,041 (over 10% of Grenada’s population) between 1911 and 1921, the economic success of the schemes should possibly be judged, despite Steele’s assertion of success, as relative. Wages on plantations in Trinidad, where the greatest number of people went, were higher than in Grenada, drawing many Grenadians to work there during this period (Steele, 2003:237).

“No East Indian sold vegetables,” Brierley noted in 1974; “and negroes are the only producers of sugar cane and those more likely to cultivate food crops. The reasons for this association between race and crop production are historical and a further reminder of the vestiges of slavery” (176). It was, meanwhile, "Brown" Grenadians who had come to dominate, with East Indians, plantation and export production. Brierley’s observations must be filtered through the perspective of his time, read against the grain like other period observations of small farmers and the rural sector. But they speak plainly to differences in perceptions of skin color and connected status in Grenada—of the building of class or even caste system around color, originating in a construction of race that was very much the product of colonialism itself. One example: “The uneducated black often suffers from an inbred inferiority complex on
the basis of his colour, and consequently seems himself at the bottom of a colour-caste system which, as far as he is concerned, limits his achievements and thereby his ambition in life” (1974:83).

46 Fuller investigation is required of the changing nature of the state apparatus from the end of slavery to independence.

47 A shilling carried the value of 1/20 of a British pound throughout the period. In an April 2008 interview, River Sallee farmer Alma Roberts told me that her grandfather raised 11 children on the wage.

48 When cholera swept the West Indies in 1850 one in twelve Grenadians and an eighth of St. Patrick’s residents died. On an island where there was one doctor the Governor—reporting on the disaster in an 1854 number of the Grenada Dispatch—could somehow write that the peasantry “appeared to prefer death either by disease or starvation to the outlay of a single shilling of their hoarded treasure” for medical aid. Mass graves, dug too shallowly by estate owners, spread infection through the rains into the food chain (Carew 1985:175-186).

49 According to Shepherd and Beckles, workers around the region on estates operating under metairie often had to take advances from or purchase necessities from owners, sometimes accumulating heavy debt (2006:30).

50 “Often, the repossessed plot was named after the exploited labourer either as a cruel joke or mockery or as a perverted form of acknowledgment,” writes Franklyn (1999:19).

51 According to Steele 5,323 people were employed as wage laborers on the estates in 1949, 1,549 of them full time, which unfortunately, does not tell us how many Grenadians lived on the estates (2003:293). The 1949 population was roughly 76,000 people (http://www.populstat.info/Americas/grenadac.htm , accessed August 1, 2012).
This chapter describes the revolutionary—if politically stunted—rise of Grenada's rural working class under the autocratic leadership of trade union leader and eventual first Prime Minister Eric Gairy, under whom Grenada reached independence. It examines the contradictory 1968 "Land for the Landless" reform that Gairy inaugurated, and its effect on Grenadians and the rural landscape. It appraises the land and agricultural policies of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) that overthrew Gairy during the four years that it held power, before a 1983 invasion by US forces brought its explicit attempt to overcome Grenada's plantation economic legacy to a violent end. The chapter argues that USAID-imposed changes to the government structure and tax system that followed the invasion—still largely undocumented—continue to limit the country's freedom of action. They placed Grenada on a path of structural adjustment, debt- and ideological dependency in which the island remains trapped, and reinforced many of its enduring plantation-economic patterns. Still, the chapter argues, the agricultural and rural legacies of Grenada's first two exercises in independent governance—the Gairy years and the PRG experiment—form a reservoir of experience and ideas that Grenadians have a right to recover and examine in placing the island back on the path to independence, including FS, today.

The Rise of Eric Gairy

Born in rural Grenada in 1922, Eric Gairy was introduced to trade unionism in Aruba, where during the 1940s he worked for an oil company and briefly studied law. On his return to Grenada the young Gairy saw, as former River Sallee headmaster and
local historian Elizardo Charles put it in a 2008 interview, that estate owners “still treated the people like animals, and gave them little or nothing for their work.” The planter class, constituting less than 2% of the population, owned 45% of the country's arable land. Especially on the estates Grenadians lived in squalor, without health care and usually without electricity or running water. Eighty-six percent of houses were made of wood, wattle, and mud; 80% of these were one or two-room dwellings (Ferguson 1990:10).

Gairy would soon catalyze what Brizan calls “a worker's movement” in Grenada, founding the Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union (GMMWU), helping to organize estate workers,¹ and leading a series of strikes that electrified the rural proletariat and altered the country's economic balance of power.

In 1950, shortly after organizing the GMMWU, Gairy demanded a 50% raise for workers at the Grenada Sugar Factory. Four hundred ninety-six workers walked out; another 400 workers on eleven estates joined the strike in sympathy. When owners rejected the demand for higher pay Gairy upped the ante, demanding 20% more for cocoa workers, who had recently been asked to accept a drop in their pay due to falling cocoa prices, drawing the cocoa sector into the fray (Meeks 2001:136). Although these actions did not yield immediate success, by January of that year Gairy had organized most of Grenada’s estate workers.² He called a nationwide strike, the country's first. Edward Frederick, in a PRG-era pamphlet, notes that brown as well as white-skinned persons were “terrorized” by strikers (1979/80:7). Gairy described the struggle to striking workers in terms that both evoke the making of a new united working class and hint at what Meeks calls the strongly “personalist” character of his leadership (2001:130): “My dear people,” he told striking workers, “there are no longer 7, 8, or 10
classes in Grenada today. There are only two classes; those belonging to the oppressors and those who belong to Gairy's Movement” (Franklyn 1999:85). Gairy's tactics were frightening and effective. As labor negotiations were taking place the private property of key members of the ruling class was set on fire. In a series of acts called “Sky Red,” roads were barricaded and elite schools burned along with crops. “On Estates, animals were maimed” while “groups [of strikers] picked the produce freely” (Frederick 1979/80:7). “The 1951 upsurge” was “remarkable for the level of tenacity shown by the strikers,” Meeks says (2001:137). In a sign of solidarity among the region's ruling classes, police were brought in from Trinidad and St. Lucia to battle with rioting workers (Brizan 1998:273; Collins 2007:26-27; Martin 2007:94). Gairy in turn won support from unions across the Caribbean, from leaders like Tubal Butler in Trinidad, Jamaica's Alexander Bustamente, and Robert Bradshaw in St. Kitts. When Gairy archly begged his followers to abandon the violence that he had himself orchestrated, he made clear to planters his power to control their actions. In the wake of Sky Red, planters met Gairy's demand for recognition of the new union, higher and retroactive pay, and for paid holidays for agricultural workers (Martin 2007:233-234). In a series of actions between 1950 and 1952, Gairy's GMMWU won higher wages for all the country's plantation workers. Absolute control of the country by the planter class came to an end.

As the first national figure to challenge plantation/estate dominance Gairy—who came to be known as “Leader” (Ferguson 1997:296)—became a hero to rural Grenadians. In elections early in 1951, his newly formed Grenada People's Party received 71% of votes cast and he was elected to the country's primary governing body,
the colonial Legislative Council. Between 1951 and 1974 Gairy won five of seven elections that he entered, becoming the country's first Prime Minister (Ferguson 1997:296). Gairy's contradictions, his desire to be accepted by the lighter-skinned members of the national elite, the corruption and personal enrichment that came to dominate his increasingly erratic administration, are documented (Benoit 2007:95-111). But he retained the loyalty of many of the country's poorest people through the PRG government of the early 1980s (EPICA 1982:36-39); his face still fills murals in the country's poor precincts. The symbolic violence of the “Sky Red” demonstrations and riots transformed Grenadians' sense of themselves. Gairy's studied elegance, even as he came to ignore the masses, was a source of pride to many—he was one of them made good. Under his early leadership, estate workers achieved a collective politicization and improvement in their living conditions.4 “When he took a group of terrified estate workers into the Santa Maria tourist hotel and demanded they be served a meal, or told domestic servant girls to revolt against a system. . . which required them to work for 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.,” he helped to “destroy their ingrained deference to their 'betters','” writes Gordon K. Lewis (1968:159-160).5 But despite his sense of drama Gairy failed to hand poor Grenadians decision-making power, keeping them in thrall to his decision-making and largesse with jobs, land, and other perquisites.

**Gairy's Land for the Landless Program**

In 1968 Gairy implemented a land distribution program—his most notable and far-reaching intervention in agriculture—distributing 1400 acres in tiny lots of a quarter to one acre in size to followers (Douglas 2003:9).6 Historians are more or less unanimous in criticizing the program. James Ferguson says that it amounted to a seizure “of political opponents' estates in the name of agrarian reform,” with some tracts
distributed to build political patronage, others given away as bribes (1990:68). By the mid-1970s, according to Meeks, the state had acquired “more than 40% of all estates in the country over 40 acres in size” (2001:140). Twenty-five estates in all were seized (Ferguson 1990:68), or what Brierley says was one-fifth of all estate land (1985a:304). The expropriated land “was by no means entirely apportioned. . . to the landless,”

Brierley notes, “since the majority formed the basis of a set of state farms” that became “noted for their inefficiency” (1985a:304-305). Gairy also rewarded loyalist members of his political party, the Grenada United Labour Party (GULP), by purchasing their farms at inflated prices. “Through such acts and creation of the state farms, writes Ferguson, Gairy “built up a significant state sector, based on. . . patronage and corruption. He also ensured a solid stratum of rural support” (1990:13) that hindered later PRG attempts to organize estate workers or boost production on the farms.

Authors of a 1977 FAO report found “no written documents” about Gairy’s land program, which was “unlike that” of reforms in other countries studied. The report identifies the following “apparent” features of Gairy’s program:

- Acquired lands and other Government-owned lands were subdivided into small uneconomic holdings and distributed by the Prime Minister himself.
- Careful screening of applicants was apparently not done.
- Rent was collected irregularly if at all.
- There was no central authority responsible for formulating and executing work programs, providing services, organizing marketing, or for providing infrastructure.
- No proper long-term leases were drawn up; tenancies were therefore insecure. (In Cumberbatch 1977:6)

Among problems with the so-called reform, according to Brierley, were that lots were given to people with too little knowledge to farm them efficiently; much land was of
marginal quality; and plots were uncertainly defined (1985a:305). In a 2012 interview, long-time extension officer Theresa Merryshow, who as a young agent helped to distribute plots on one estate, told me that many farmers possessed too few resources to farm them properly. According to Meeks, the program ended “without a significant redistribution of land to the ‘landless’ and saw an accompanying decline in the area of island land under production. In 1961 71 per cent of [Grenada’s] cultivable land was under cultivation, but by 1975 this had fallen to 54.8%” (2001:140).

Still, there was popular enthusiasm about the program—attested in 2012 interviews with Merryshow as well as in conversation with sugarcane farmers. Some of the sense of goodwill and benefit to small farmers and estate workers has been enduring, a sense that I acquired in none of my reading about the subject. It became my impression in talking to Merryshow and former chief of extension Orgias Campbell in 2012 that extension officers under Gairy, however lacking in resources, sought to help small farmers expand and improve their subsistence production, thus contributing to the maintenance of the peasant tradition on the island. This view is partly countered, however, by Brierley’s observation that program planners often pushed farmers to adopt “labour and capital expenses” they could not afford. Still, Gairy’s program made an impact on public consciousness in what, like the Sky Red protests, might be described as a symbolic or Fanonian regard: a sense of their power was transmitted to poor Grenadians, especially estate workers, some of whom were able to begin farming in a newly independent country run by someone up from poverty like themselves. As I learned from GCFA officials, a number of cane farmers benefited, receiving land from Gairy at Mt. Hartman and Calivigny.
However lacking in extent or structure, the Gairy program also saw creation of housing settlements on some lands taken, several of which grew into villages. These included Telescope, Grande Anse, and Corinth (Douglas 2003:9). Reginald Buddy, GCFA officer and head of GRENCODA River Sallee, is critical of these efforts. “On many of the plantations Gairy broke them up and planted concrete,” he told me. “Better use should have been made of the land.” Buddy’s observation nuanced a strand of accepted thought about the breakup of the estates that I heard offered on at least four occasions by Grenada officials and came to believe might be fairly commonly held: that although the breakup of the estates ended the unchallenged rule of the plantocracy, such moves were “the beginning of the end”—as one commentator put it—for Grenadian agriculture, plunging it into an unproductive chaos from which it never recovered. In many such cases, it is true, estate workers simply lost their jobs; often houses were built on such lands rather than farms (EPICA 1982:44). But the opinions sometimes carried an assumption that the estate workers had failed to make good on the possibilities that Gairy afforded them—i.e. that it was they who had failed or (still more problematic still) that setting them up as independent farmers was a fruitless endeavor, and that creation of a wider peasant class had been demonstrated as unworkable through Gairy’s action. The lack of wider support with which to initiate productive activity under the haphazard program is obscured by such received wisdom which—I am convinced—continues to guide planning today. There was, however, a further empirical basis for such opinions. According to East Caribbean researcher Robert Thompson, agricultural production fell by half from 1970 to 1974 as a result of Gairy’s “reforms,” “which not only removed estate lands from production. . . but also
reduced investment and maintenance expenditure” (1985:133). In the atmosphere of intimidation generated by the land seizures many estate owners ceased production. Between 1961 and the New Jewel revolution 43% of cultivated land was taken out of production, according to Thompson (1985:133). But it is regrettable that, for even some of the more enlightened members of today’s ruling elite, Gairy’s actions seem to have shut the door on the small peasant proprietor ideal.

Through the GMMWU's strikes and militant action, through expropriation, Gairy “broke the economic base of the plantocracy” (Thompson 1985:133), transferring power over many of the country's estates to the government. Gairy did not end the country's dependence on estate-based export production; in the end, he only hobbled these. As former PRG Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard would write in 2003, “After a total of nineteen years in Office, including the final twelve, when he exercised virtual dictatorial power, Gairy’s supporters remained the poorest and most marginalized Grenadians.” New Jewel leaders believed that Gairy kept them this way in order to cultivate their dependence on him (Douglas 2010:50).

The People’s Revolutionary Government and Its Legacy in Agriculture

The [PRG] government which came to power in March 1979 inherited a deteriorating economy, and is now addressing the task of rehabilitation and of laying better foundations for growth. Government objectives are centered on the critical development issues and touch on the country’s most promising development areas.

—World Bank memo, 1982

The New Jewel leadership—which entered power as the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG)—seized control in a largely bloodless coup while Eric Gairy was out of the country in March 1979. The New Jewel Movement (NJM) had developed an extensive critique of Grenada’s political economy, including of tourism, which had seen
considerable growth under Gairy.\textsuperscript{15} Despite residual loyalty in the countryside, the coup had wide backing from a Grenadian society that had become alienated from the increasingly erratic Gairy (Lewis 1987:6-7).\textsuperscript{16}

The conditions that the new government confronted were “appalling,” if not “disastrous” according to Gordon Lewis. A third of the population was illiterate. Most people went entirely without health care (Lewis 1987:25). “[T]he majority of Grenadians,” wrote James Ferguson, “suffered levels of deprivation and exclusion that had not drastically changed since the beginning of the 20th century” (1990:66). Grenada had reached full independence in 1974 but was still a “colonial, export-oriented, primary-producing” economy (Payne, Sutton, and Thorndike 1984:14). Grants-in-aid and loans that Britain and other countries had awarded the new republic on independence had dried up, in part because of military ties that Gairy formed with Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (Ferguson 1990:11).

Sporadic interventions in the rural sector notwithstanding, 90% of farms were no bigger than two hectares and held just 26% of arable land; 49 large agricultural installations held 38% of remaining farmland (Cumberbatch 1977:1). Hilbourne Watson calculates that 0.5% of large installations in Grenada contained just under 50% of all arable land (1984:5). Thirty-five-to-45% of farmland overall was idle, and more than half the labor force—an estimated 70-80% of youths—officially unemployed (Brierley 1985a:300, 305). Agricultural exports had fallen by almost 50% from 1970 to 1974. And praedial larceny was so extensive that new Prime Minister Maurice Bishop suggested it might be the most critical challenge facing the country (1985a:305).
But the country’s dependence on imported food, and general dependency, were more deep-rooted problems. Imported foods constituted 39% of all imports (Brierley 1985a:300), 70% of calories Grenadians consumed (EPICA 1982:76). The island’s most common fruit drink was Florida orange juice (EPICA 1982:78).

In a 1974 paper for a conference on the implications of Grenadian independence, Curtis McIntosh and T. O. Osuji captured the dynamic between agriculture and food in Grenada: “Food production,” they wrote,

has been oriented to export crops (nutmegs, cocoa, bananas) for further processing and re-export by the United Kingdom. The foreign exchange earned. . . was then used in purchasing imported food. Thus, what Grenada received in one hand, she gave. . . back with two. (1974:99)

The imported food emphasis meant a lack of links between local production and consumption (Thompson 1984:132). “[F]ew attempts had ever been made to make domestic food production attractive to long-term. . . investment,” Brierley noted, “either by providing adequate marketing arrangements or guaranteeing prices for local produce” (1985:55). The PRG would make ending such dependence the focus of its efforts as a matter of both politics and policy—approaches in many ways consonant with FS. Slogans like “Eat what you grow, grow what you eat,” and “Grow more food and build the revolution” were chanted at rallies and by poets. Whatever the revolution’s wider success, these actions were in many ways successful, according to Franklyn: “Grenadians began to develop greater pride in consuming their own locally grown products and. . . to attach less prestige to imported foodstuff” (2007:75).

**People’s Revolutionary Government Planning**

Although its leaders openly embraced the idea that their revolution was socialist, and had agreed upon a strongly Marxist-Leninist turn by the time of its collapse, the
PRG government's policies and programs until very near the end were far from radical. Mainstream or progressive accounts stress the mild nature of reforms the PRG introduced. Heine, for example, says that New Jewel's 1973 manifesto was “not... socialist,” but an “extremely detailed program of social, economic, and political reconstruction” strongly emphasizing self-reliance (1998:558-559). Brierley describes the PRG Manifesto as demonstrating a “basic human needs philosophy” (1985b:56). Gordon K. Lewis says that PRG policies “would have to be placed... in the British-Scandinavian camp” of social democratic governments of the period “where the modern state has increasingly taken over responsibility for... services vital to the public welfare” (1987:28).

Analysis from the Marxist left notes that the PRG had chosen what was then described as the “non-capitalist” path which was not, in fact, “a non-capitalist strategy” but “designed to rationalize and modernize capitalism under the auspices of the state” (Watson 1984:8). The idea was that this would prepare Grenada for a later stage of socialist development. The long-range problem with this approach was that the strategy retained much of the country's existing power structure, its relations of production, and patterns of landholding. It did not solve “the land problem,” Watson says (1984:8).

PRG polices need to be contextualized with efforts to end the dependency of emerging former colonial countries from the West dating back to at least 1917, as described in Chapter 2. Those efforts had culminated in the 1955 Bandung Conference and emergence of a non-aligned country movement—NAM—that the PRG, on taking power, joined (Ferguson 1990:67). In keeping with NAM's goals, a populist rhetoric of anti-imperialism was used to unite both Grenadian land owners and the poor in the
national effort, especially against the US, which responded to the PRG with hostility from the start.¹⁹ One feature largely missing from PRG perspectives—acknowledged by observers like historian and former Prime Minister George Brizan, the Agency for Rural Transformation’s (ART) Sandra Ferguson, and the GCFA’s Elliot Bishop today—was any real conviction that the peasant/small farmer inheritance offered a basis on which to center future development. Despite many promising ideas relating to agriculture in the New Jewel movement’s 1973 manifesto, for example, there is no mention of the peasant/small farming tradition or its intrinsic value in it. The party was bent on modernizing Grenada’s economy through a process of industrialization and the emphasis, in keeping with period thinking, was on production cooperatives, as Ferguson told me in 2012. Nonetheless, the PRG demonstrated considerable flexibility and practicality (Heine 1998:568), and did draw on peasant institutions like the maroon to mobilize village labor. Many of its plans for industrialization involved agriculture, “the sole natural resource,” other than its beauty and untapped potential of its people, that the country possessed, as the manifesto acknowledged (1973). While the PRG struggled with estate workers (the “Gairyites”), it found a reservoir of support among small farmers.²⁰

**PRG First Steps**

The PRG scored a number of quick successes that helped to consolidate its popularity among the poor. Many of these had the character of WINFA official Emanuel’s FS Plus (see Chapter 2)—the programs, devoted to rural workers’ basic well-being, that would have to surround any concerted government effort to create FS. It froze food prices and established price controls on several imported staples (Brierley 1985:56). Expanded social services included free education through high school; free
school books for the poor; free medical and dental care; hot school lunches and free milk for mothers and small children; and establishment of a revolving loan program to help the poor repair their homes (Deere et al. 1990:141). The PRG expanded popular access to higher education. In 1978 three people had received scholarships to study abroad; in 1983 more than 300 would do so, many to study in University of the West Indies (UWI) programs (Ferguson 1990:7). Income tax was abolished for 30% of the lowest-paid workers (Watson 1984:40). The PRG established a national bus service, following a recommendation voiced in the country-wide village-level “popular assemblies” it held after taking over (Heine 1998:561). The buses traveled roads that commercial buses did not, increasing the mobility of poor rural dwellers and the ability of farmers to move their produce. Although the popular assemblies would regrettably not continue, they were an attempt to make Grenada's political process more democratic, and included the holding of national budget planning sessions (Deere et al. 1990:91), “one of the most important experiments in grassroots democracy” that had ever taken place in the Caribbean (Heine 1998:561). A mass literacy program, developed by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, reduced illiteracy to 2% from as much as 45%.

While few women occupied top PRG leadership positions, women's lot improved, with establishment of a National Women's Organization, the creation of nursery and pre-primary schools, and wider access to education (Hodge and Searle 1981:19); “equal pay for women became the law” (Watson 1984:40). The new government established a National Commercial Bank, which thrived, making loans to rural workers and small farmers. It inaugurated a national insurance scheme that many of Grenada's older people still depend on. All such policies affected the rural sector and agriculture. As
Brierley put it, farmers “with improved physical health, a home no longer in need of repair, a more reliable water-supply, and better access” to their lands were “in a position to spend more time working” their holdings (1985a:306).

“Within a week of the revolution,” according to the EPICA authors, “the new government created an Agricultural Workers Council which visited all the estates and held sessions with the workers.” Some, it turned out, were making as little as 80 cents (US) a day, their hours determined each morning by management. They received no sick leave or overtime pay; most of their homes lacked electricity or running water (EPICA 1982:105). The PRG introduced guaranteed minimum wages, pensions, and other benefits for such workers. Almost 1,000 employees in the Grenada Farms Corporation, which the PRG established to oversee the estates became eligible for health care and maternity leave (Ferguson 1990:68). Estate owners were given deadlines to improve housing and working conditions, and most complied. Peasant farmers, meanwhile, were brought into a newly created Productive Farmers' Union, which emphasized extension of credit, training, and advice to small farmers (EPICA 1982:105).

Eager to enlist business involvement in the economy, the PRG moved cautiously where land issues were concerned. Such caution was in the end fateful for the new government; it had been foreshadowed by the New Jewel-business community alliance that had made the largely bloodless revolution and rapid transition to power possible. “The local business groups, after all, had been an integral element of the NJM; their reward was a recognized role in the new economic regime,” as Gordon Lewis puts it. “Both government and the local Chamber of Commerce. . . worked together” (1987:29).
More bluntly, Watson says that “the Grenadian bourgeoisie, and the petty bourgeoisie in particular supported the NJM strategy precisely because it posed no real threat to private property” (1984:19). Fewer expropriations or nationalizations took place under the PRG than had happened under Gairy (Ferguson 1990:10).  

**PRG Agricultural Policy**

_The land is the source of our wealth. We have no oil, bauxite, gold, iron, or other mineral products. What we have are agricultural products grown on our fertile soil and exported, $58 million worth of cocoa, nutmeg and bananas. Yes we grow and export food but we do not produce enough food to feed ourselves. In fact, we import a shocking $57 million worth of food every year._

—The Free West Indian, St. George’s, January 17, 1981

Many of the new government’s activities were tied to agriculture, where the 1973 manifesto underlined a need for increased professionalism and better management: “We will demonstrate that commercial farming can provide a decent and respectable standard of living,” the document said (my emphasis), and “attract better types of Farm Manager/Operator with a higher standard of education and a better understanding of farming principles.” The government would seek out “entrepreneurialism” in the countryside, the manifesto said. At the same time, it called for a “radical redistributing” of lands into cooperative farms that would assure a constant supply of staples islanders relied on. Many ideas offered in the manifesto remain provocative from a FS standpoint—it recommended creation of community pastures to stimulate production of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and rabbits. Its authors identified many of the pressing problems farmers faced: unaffordable inputs (fertilizer and seed); dropping produce prices; and unaddressed plant diseases (Bishop 1982:173-174). The country was “plagued by cycles of glut and shortage” with little or no storage or
processing; then (as today) millions of pounds of produce were left to rot annually, unharvested or unsold (EPICA 1982:78).

In a wider sense the aim was to lay a foundation for the restructuring of Grenada’s export-dominated economy, establishing links among its various sectors, ending speculation and corruption, and stimulating investment in areas with the best odds of generating employment and foreign exchange (Deere et al. 1990:140), especially through development of agro-industry. The PRG hoped to achieve this by improving performance and augmenting the public sector, which would come to encompass about 30% of the economy by 1983, including the estates and 23 state-owned companies; by creating a cooperative sector accompanied by a supporting, very mild land reform; and by preserving the private sector, boosting various key enterprises within it (Deere et al. 1990:140).

A processing company was created and the “Spice Isle” agro-processing plant built to produce jams, juice, and other products for export as well as for the local market. It would be hard to overstate the importance that the plant and ability to process their own food assumed for Grenadians; no one I spoke to at length about Grenadian agriculture 30 years later failed to mention it. It was important, McAfee writes, because it employed local people, provided a market for small farmers and made use of local crops that would otherwise have gone to waste. It embodied the type of economic activity that the PRG had hoped would increase the country’s earnings and reduce its dependence on expensive food imports. [The plant] linked agriculture, the main source of wealth and livelihood in Grenada for centuries, to industry, one of the keys to the country’s development. Thus, to many Grenadians, the plant symbolized a development strategy that would build a bridge from Grenada’s impoverished past to a more prosperous future. (McAfee 1991:97)
Plans for further development received the backing of international agencies, including a US $7.8 million dollar agriculture loan from the World Bank. The Canadian International Development Agency offered a US $6 million grant to finance a cocoa rehabilitation project and Grenada entered into negotiations with Indonesia to create a nutmeg cartel (Ferguson 1990:68-69; McAfee 1991:97; O'Shaughnessy 1984: 96).

Although the trading sector remained largely in private hands, taxes were raised on imports. The state created its own monopoly on the import of rice, sugar, flour, and fertilizer, breaking the monopoly previously held on these items by just a few private import firms (Deere et al. 1990:141). The existing National Import Board was also tasked with marketing and distributing Grenadian produce, becoming the “Marketing and National Importing Board,” or MNIB. The organization was required to buy produce from every farmer, a policy that many farmers I spoke to—as well as figures like former Prime Minister Brizan—still think that the board needs to revive. These developments stimulated and diversified commercial production (Deere et al. 1990:141). The uncertain position that the government would thus come to occupy between Grenada’s subsistence economy and promotion of a more commercial one is partly captured in this statement by the EPICA authors—strongly sympathetic to the revolution—who wrote that “while many older farmers are content to raise just enough” for their families,

young Grenadians view farming as an alternative to wage employment and expect it to produce a monetary return. The government is acutely aware of the marketing problem, and is formulating a careful strategy, analyzing potential markets and developing export outlets through the MNIB. (1982:81)

In addition to offering technical and other training to Grenadians, Cuba contributed to efforts to augment the country's agriculture- and food-related activities. Grenada’s new ally donated a block-making plant with which both new homes and farm
buildings were constructed, an asphalt and stone-crushing plant to build farm feeder roads, and a fleet of fishing vessels to better exploit the abundant marine resources that lay off of Grenada’s shores (Steele 2003:385). With UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) funding and Cuban help, a National Fishing Corporation was established. Over time, it was planned, the program would draw on the skills of traditional ship-builders on Carriacou to create a national fishing fleet. One hundred youths also received training as fishermen in Canada. The boost in the national catch that followed helped to make Grenada self-sufficient in the production of saltfish, a provisionary staple, for the first time. The island nation had previously imported EC 2.5 million worth of cod from Canada each year (EPICA 1982:79; Deere et al. 1990:140; Ferguson 1990:72-73). These measures—all designed to contribute to Grenada’s food independence—demonstrate the number and kinds of job that might rise from a national campaign for FS today, not just in Grenada but in many countries. They also suggest the degree of investment and energy that required to get such projects off the ground.

Idle Lands for Idle Hands: Land Reform through Cooperativism

According to the new government’s estimate, a third of Grenada’s arable land lay idle when the PRG came to power; much of it belonged to absentee owners. The PRG’s answer to the problem, linked with the cooperative movement, was a gradual “land reform” that took unused land into control on fixed-term leases. The project began with creation of a Land Reform Commission that held hearings around the country. At these, participants identified 4,000 acres of idle land (EPICA 1982:79-81), another exercise that could bear interesting fruit on the island in pursuit of FS today. Groups of people willing to work the lands were encouraged to present plans for their use (Brierley 1985a:306). After an application process that included training in cooperative
management, the lands were leased to these applicants (Brierley 1985a:306). A National Agency for Cooperative Development in Agriculture (NACDA) was formed to set up small production cooperatives as well. “The idea was to encourage small groups of private entrepreneurs in the towns and put to use thousands of acres of idle land while at the same time offering a livelihood for the thousands of country boys who were out of a job” (O'Shaughnessy 1984:95). These “idle lands into idle hands” initiatives included agriculture as well as craft and retail efforts (Hodge and Searle 1981:40); NACDA provided financial and technical assistance (Brierley 1985a:306).

In 1981 the PRG also put into place a law addressing unused tracts of land of more than 100 acres, creating a Land Development and Utilization Commission (EPICA 1982:77, 79). Under its guidelines, owners were compelled to develop such lands or lease them to the Agriculture Ministry (Brierley 1985a:306). The decision met no real resistance (EPICA 1982:77, 79).

The poor performance of the state farms inherited from Gairy was addressed by placing many under new management. These farms accounted for nearly 40% of Grenadian holdings over 40 acres with 40% of their acreage estimated idle, and thus represented a large potential source of growth for the agriculture sector. An incentive program gave workers on them a one-third share of their profits, and managers sought to expand production on them. In monthly meetings, workers were apprised of developments regarding the estates and their management and solicited for their input about improvements (EPICA 1982:77; Brierley 1985:56).

State Farms Fail To Lift Production

These biggest PRG projects would not, however, significantly raise production. The cooperative sector “failed to match expectations” (Ferguson 1990:69). “Despite the
aid offered by the Canadian government and [international NGO] Oxfam, among others, there was not enough business and managerial expertise among the unemployed youth in the Grenadian countryside” (O'Shaughnessy 1984:95). The PRG also struggled, a report in the *New Internationalist* report said, in “negotiating the lease or purchase of. . . idle land from private owners,” a comment that raises the question about the PRG’s inability or unwillingness, in the short run, to more directly confront the issue of historic land-hunger and denial of the rural poor.

Some of the inability to significantly lift agricultural production was attributed to an unwillingness on the part of Gairy’s followers to enter into the new national project. “The estate laborers. . . were tied firmly to Gairy by their lack of education and their emotional memories of 1951, and they remained largely loyal to him up to the time of his overthrow,” says a statement by the EPICA authors. “Their reaction to the March 1979 revolution,” it says, “was one of fear” (1982:104). In retrospect some of the problems with the PRG's approach may be revealed in this analysis by the same authors:

Ironically, while unemployment persists in Grenada, the agricultural estates face a chronic labor shortage because of the stigma historically associated with estate work. To counter this, PRG ministers have visited the estates to praise the workers and have stressed the “creative and exciting” aspects of agricultural work. (1982:77)

The passage suggests that a somewhat patronizing attitude informed the PRG's relationship with estate workers, who had historically sought land of their own on which to work. Estate work remained so unattractive to Grenadians that the government continued to struggle to find workers throughout the period (EPICA 1982:77). One is left to wonder what the long-lasting effects might have been if the PRG had sought, in some degree, to divide the estates among landless workers and their families, or if those workers had been encouraged to seize estate lands themselves in some
galvanizing act, the estate system abolished or diminished in pursuit of comprehensive agrarian reform. These are easy questions to ask today. But they have continued bearing on Grenada's future, especially any pursuit of FS by small farmers and rural dwellers.

**Other PRG Agricultural Initiatives**

Other agricultural initiatives were more successful, and gains associated with them sometimes substantial. A campaign was begun to make agriculture more attractive to young people, with new programs of education at a re-opened national farm school—Mirabeau—which had been closed by Gairy (Steele 2003:387). Joseph Gill, who would become a GCFA founder and leader, was educated at Mirabeau and went on to work as an extension officer for the government. Farmers from throughout the East Caribbean were invited to study in Grenada. “If you speak to farmers in St. Vincent, Dominica, and St. Lucia today you will still find people who came to study in the farm school,” Gill told me in 2008.

Although GCFA General Secretary Elliot Bishop told me several times that he felt the PRG had devoted too little attention to sugarcane, one River Sallee man I interviewed—David Augustine, a furniture maker and farmer—lauded the manner in which the Bishop government urged the public to participate in the cane harvest, as also happened in the early years of the Cuban revolution. Participation brought new respect to farmers, Augustine said, and their contribution to public welfare was better appreciated. Youth camps were held where children learned about farming and participated in agricultural labor. Students were sent for three-day overnight trips to farms, and agricultural study was introduced in primary and secondary schools (EPICA 1982:102).
The PRG also encouraged “kitchen” or “backyard” garden production in order to produce more food locally. It “was among the first governments in Caribbean history to identify the potential role of food production in kitchen gardens,” Brierley writes (1985a n.p.). The government also created campaigns to raise awareness of farming techniques and nutrition.

Whatever the merits of some of its policies then, or their relative success, the PRG promoted a level of basic subsistence; it adopted food independence as an explicit national goal. With surplus production being circulated nationwide by the MNIB, the PRG effort held many elements that would be applauded today by FS advocates. These measures, the reasons for their success and failure, deserve new scrutiny today. Fifteen years later, Brizan—a strong critic of the PRG’s politics, who in the intervening period served as Agriculture Minister and Prime Minister—wrote that “[s]tripped of . . . ideological aberration . . . many of the social and economic programmes of the PRG were good and could help develop self-reliance in our people and attack the disease of dependent underdevelopment” (1998:445).

**Small Farmers and the PRG**

“Many small farmers were involved in the New Jewel Movement. . . and participated in the March 1979 takeover” (EPICA 1982:104); some came to number among the PRG’s strongest backers. A Productive Farmers Union (PFU) was begun to give small and medium-sized farmers “a structure. . . with which to participate in Grenada’s democratic process” and make collective purchases of inputs (EPICA 1982, 78). Among other aims were expanding distribution of produce; improvement of extension services; reduction of praedial larceny; and contributing to the education of farm families. At its height the PFU had 1300 members (IICA 1989:15). But like the rest
of the “mass” organizations in the countryside, it never achieved real independence or became a driver of the revolution (Watson 1984:41).

A strong part of the rationale for the PFU—both GCFA official Gill and former Prime Minister Brizan told me—was that farmers should concentrate on what they did best, growing food, “not have to be marketers, too,” as Gill put it—a very different attitude from that forced on them today. A number of farmers that I interviewed insisted this was one of the greatest strengths of PRG policy. (“New Jewel—the trucks used to go round and purchase everybody mango!” said Brave September, one highly respected farmer.) The MNIB played a major role in working to find new outlets for Grenada’s products.

Most small farmers I spoke to between 2008 and 2012—including several whose families had opposed the revolution, like farmer and NDC Agriculture Ministry food security officer Ingrid Rush—praised the PRG’s efforts in agriculture and with regard to small farmers. Most often cited was the fact that the PRG emphasized agriculture and understood it to be central to Grenada’s independent survival. But some farmers—including September—spoke cryptically about the application of “heavy manners” or disciplinary violence by members of the People’s Revolutionary Army (PRA). And a number of farmers, including the GCFA’s Elliot Bishop, told me that they felt in retrospect that the PRG and its programs had been “too top down.” Transcription of party meetings and analysis make clear the gulf that existed between the PRG’s middle class/“petty bourgeois” (Meeks 2001:143; Watson 1984:41) leaders and the countryside. In response to pressure from members of the Political Bureau, as the crisis that ended the revolution unfolded, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop himself traced the
failure of PRG initiatives to “lack of strong links with the masses” (O’Shaughnessy 1984:116). Watson says that none of the rural organizations achieved true independence, a goal that might have changed the dynamic in the countryside and brought a concerted push for comprehensive land redistribution and reform.37

The Maroon Form under the PRG

According to Hodge and Searle, community projects under the PRG were “generally undertaken along the lines of the. . . maroon. Villagers contribute items of food and drink, and a large pot of oildown or pelau38 bubbles away. The Revolution has assured the survival of an institution that is dying out elsewhere in the region,” they wrote (1981:39). Sam Kee, a calypsonian who became manager of the village of Brizan Cooperative, talked about the development of “maroon form” and maintenance of “maroon spirit” in sustaining a government-backed project:

The first six months was the hardest for our cooperative, so to keep up the enthusiasm, I tried to keep them all in a maroon form by everybody in the morning bringing what they could cook. The maroon form is the way we pass round the village and ask people to give us help. Some give us corn, some give us peas and yam. . . The maroon spirit is one of the best we have right now, because the people getting the feeling that they together again. (Hodge and Searle 1981:52)

The term maroon was applicable in various situations and the spirit generated sometimes long-lasting. River Sallee’s maroon work brigade, begun in the “Revo,” continued after the US invasion; a number of village houses were built this way, according to GCFA official Reginald Buddy. Meeks notes that “community mobilisation and self-help projects were not inventions of the PRG, but had roots in the traditional rural culture.” Nevertheless, he writes, “under the revolution they were given new meaning as people increasingly saw themselves as part of a progressive, national community” (2001:149).
The PRG: Tentative Conclusions for Food Sovereignty

By many economic measures—and despite ultimately crippling fundamental contradictions—the PRG's four years brought success in the rural sector. Comprehensive planning with the broad needs of the polity had been introduced. The gross national product had grown 5.5% in 1983, as the World Bank, praising the PRG, affirmed (Lewis 1987:26). While most Caribbean economies languished in the period's world recession, Grenada's grew at a cumulative 9% a year. Official unemployment dropped to 14% from 49%. Agricultural diversification and agro-industrialization reduced food and overall imports from 40% to 28% during a period of collapsing agricultural prices throughout the world (Zunes 2003). MNIB purchase of produce from even very small farmers stimulated production, introduction of new crops, and increased well-being. It ensured a countrywide supply of many commodities. Agricultural extension services were improved and low interest loans made available to farmers (Brierley 1985:56). Structural changes required to address Grenada's rural sector problems would have taken “a whole generation to plan and execute,” Lewis says, but a great deal had gone right. Nontraditional exports, including flour and clothing, had grown by 28%. The PRG had established a Water Commission, critical for an expanded agricultural sector, and improved the water supply—the number of people receiving electricity and water doubled. Eight fish-selling centers had been built, with deep-freeze containers, the national diet shifting to take advantage of this protein source (Lewis 1987:26). “The revolution's social programs were undeniably popular; and the Grenadian population certainly did not suffer from the acute shortages of vital food items that prevailed in Guyana,” under the socialist Forbes-Burnham government of the period; “nor did they suffer from a repressive police-army system” of anything like the
ferocity that Guyana on the left or Chile and Argentina on the right did (Lewis 1987:26, 42-44).

Brierley says that according to Ministry of Agriculture personnel about 10% of Grenadian farmland had been brought back into production. Local sales of domestically produced fruits and vegetables doubled between 1981 and 1982 while export sales tripled, with “trafficking” of produce to nearby Trinidad tripling. Food had decreased from an average of 33% of imports in 1979 to 27.5% in 1982, both a serious inroad and—perhaps—suggestion of how progress might be incremental in this area. As a result of increased exports of nontraditional foods the role played by nutmeg, cocoa, and bananas, Brierley says, diminished—where in 1978 they had accounted for 90 of export value, in 1982 they accounted for 62% of it. The government had managed to “instill a new spirit of optimism among Grenadian farmers” and drawn people to farming—the average age of farmers had dropped from 62 to 51 years in the span of three years (Brierley 1985a:307; Brierley 1985b:5).40

The PRG effectively unionized the countryside; 80% of Grenadians were union members by 1983 (Ferguson 1990:25). The existing Agricultural General Workers Union (AGWU) grew from 1,000 members in 1979 to 2,300 in 1981, when the organization led a successful strike against the government on eight estates. The AGWU represented farmers in bargaining with the PRG (EPICA 1982:105).

The cooperative initiative, on the other hand, had in real degree failed to flourish (Ferguson 1990:23). Watson, drawing on Ambursley, reports that 23 cooperatives, 12 in agriculture and 11 in fishing and handicrafts existed in 1981; a paltry 146 acres and 160 young people were said to be involved. “The co-ops were failing. . . because the PRG
had failed resolve the land question,” he writes. “[A]s long as the agro-commercial bourgeoisie continued to dominate landed property and agriculture, and determine the conditions under which rural labor power and value were reproduced with committants of rural unemployment, inefficiency, parcellization, praedial larceny, labor shortage, etc., the co-ops had little chance of succeeding” (1984:38-39). One is left to wonder whether the Central Committee’s contemplated turn to broad collectivization would have brought success, further failure, or (in time) a turn to smaller-scale peasant-type farming. But there would be no next turns or further adjustments, no opportunities for the rural sector to unite and push the PRG toward a more comprehensive or small-farmer based land reform, no room (even) for further failure, as NACDA and most PRG programs were shut down by US officials after the invasion.

As with socialist experiments in many parts of the world during the period it is not easy to judge the ways, large or small, that outcomes in Grenada were distorted by US hostility, threats, and interference—what would have become of the PRG experiment had it faced less external pressure? The early popular assemblies, the use of maroons to perform collective labor and encouragement of backyard gardening, among other initiatives, demonstrated flexibility on the PRG’s part, a “willingness to try what works” (Heine 1998:560), especially in the revolution’s early days. Attempts to develop local agro-industry and escape plantation economic dependence, if contradictory, remained laudable from the point of view of GCFA members I spoke with and, in many ways, from the standpoint of FS. “In view of the region’s history and the current economic woes of many of the smaller islands,” Brierley wrote in 1985, “it might be asserted that Grenada under the PRG advanced farther down the road of economic
development in a shorter time than any . . . island in Caribbean history” (1985b:5). On the other hand, the failure to hand the revolution or land to the most historically deprived Grenadians led to further contradictions. As early as 1979, Meeks notes, the PRG was embracing a “traditional tourism-led model” that stood strongly at odds with both the agricultural diversification, cooperative, and import substitution models originally initiated by the PRG, and with the avowed Marxist-Leninist deepening of the revolution that had officially, if secretly, been embraced by the central committee (2001:163).

In 1983, after a PRG schism resulted in Prime Minister Maurice Bishop's murder and the revolutionary government “collapsed from within, albeit under severe pressure from without” (Meeks 2001:132), the Reagan administration seized the ensuing crisis as a pretext to invade Grenada. “[T]he US 'rescue mission'” that arrived on October 25 ended up “saving Grenada not from revolution,” in some observers' view, but from a collapse “that had already destroyed that revolution” (Ferguson 1990:4).\textsuperscript{42} Thirty years later, the GCFA's Elliot Bishop was still fuming that PRG leaders had let such a good thing slip away. “Those guys blew it!” he told me.\textsuperscript{43}

**An Exemplary Invasion**

What danger did Grenada pose to the US?\textsuperscript{44} Zunes states that “Grenada under the New Jewel Movement was reaching a dangerous level of health care, literacy, housing, participatory democracy, and economic independence” (2003). In fact, participation was on the wane, partly due to an inevitable lessening of the enthusiasm of the revolution's heady first few years. But Grenada had become an international cause célèbre, the “vanguard of social change in the Caribbean in the early 1980s” (Deere et al. 1990:140). The island made an appealing target for the US, and offered an opportunity to counter a series of recent military reverses in Vietnam and Lebanon, a
“propaganda coup” (Ferguson 1990:5) that the northern giant used to impose its nascent neoliberal policies on and to militarize the region.

The biggest source of US antagonism, as publicly professed, was an international airport being built on the island's south shore with Cuban aid—also with a loan from the IMF and the financial involvement of various US allies. Grenada's existing airstrip lay halfway across the island from the capital via a perilous mountain road and could not accommodate jet travel. But the new airport, the US argued, would make it possible for Soviet missiles to land in Grenada, or, its officials said, for Cuba to store arms for revolution in Central America.

In the course of the invasion US Marines occupied a processing facility—the Grenfruit Cooperative—where after various efforts to develop new products the rural women who ran it had discovered that they could process fruit for out-of-season sale. Coop members were evicted, and all of their records destroyed (Deere et al. 1990:110). Several of the fishing trawlers Cuba had donated to the country were bombed by US planes as they lay at anchor (EPICA 1982:79; Deere et al. 1990:140; Ferguson 1990:72-73). In another troubling action, remembered by several people whom I interviewed, US soldiers destroyed a number of the Grenada’s small tractors, designed for the steep terrain the country's farmers work in, donated to Grenada by the Soviet Union. One farmer I interviewed was at the time a heavy equipment mechanic at the government's farm school at Mirabeau. He lay in hiding and watched marines drive a number of the tractors into nearby ravines to destroy them. (“I cried,” he told me.) These likely violations of Geneva and other war accords would limit Grenada's ability to feed itself, or—indeed—develop commercially after the invasion.
On a quick trip to the island after fighting stopped, then-US Secretary of State George Schultz told media members that he thought Grenada was “a lovely piece of real estate” (Ferguson 1990:17). The statement drew scorn but showed how US planners saw the country: as a place where tourist and real estate investment would come to take precedence over basic needs policies or economic independence. Measures to attract business, meanwhile, would trade on Grenada’s supposed attractions as a source of cheap labor (McAfee 1991:99).

US planners quickly decided that Grenada did need an airport, however—for any expansion of tourism as well as for “shipping of agricultural and horticultural products” (Steele 2003:418)—and completed the construction work.

**Invasion Aftermath: USAID Interventions and the Loss of Grenadian Sovereignty**

> These places can’t get along without outside investment, outside technology. Alone, they are not viable; they will in the end have to become something like offshore states of the United States.

—Peter Johnson
Director Caribbean-Central American Action, 1984

> They take we lovely machineries and take it to Dominica!

—Everington Smith
Farmer

The conditions imposed on Grenada after the invasion, largely in the absence of democratic decision-making by Grenadians, were in many ways more radical than the changes made with the nominal assent of Grenadians by the PRG. “When the Reagan Administration came to power in 1981,” Walden Bello writes, “it was riding on what it considered a mandate not only to roll back communism but . . . to discipline the Third World” (2000:65). The invasion and re-making of Grenada governance must be seen in this light. James Ferguson calls the period after the invasion “one of dramatic economic
and social change, engineered predominantly by USAID\(^{47}\) and its associates. This change," Ferguson writes, "affected every major aspect of the economy," not least agriculture (1990:67). The post-invasion period requires more investigation. But even a brief examination makes clear that the changes had an enormous effect on Grenada, and continue to do so.\(^{48}\) The invasion offered an opportunity to implement "Reaganomics," an incipient form of neoliberal economic policy. In fact, almost all of the earmarks of a still-emerging neoliberal structural adjustment paradigm (Mendes et al. 2001:74) were implemented by USAID on the island.\(^{49}\)

An interim Advisory Council—a caretaker government—was named. According to Martin its objective was "the dismantling of PRG state-run enterprises through privatisation and closures and removing any and all vestiges of Socialism" (2007:1). In theory, the council had executive powers. But the body took its direction from US officials (McAfee 1991:98 and passim; Ferguson 1990:23).\(^{50}\) The Council’s chief accomplishment, according to Martin, was in quickly staging elections, thus helping to legitimize the changes that had taken place (2007:1).

According to Ferguson, Advisory Council members never saw the report USAID developed to guide the changes that followed,\(^{51}\) which called for "widespread deregulation. . . privatisation of many state-owned businesses. . . and the replacement of centralised price and import controls" on food and other products. The report highlighted government agencies and state businesses to be sold off; price controls and state-run import marketing for abandonment; and labor legislation to be rewritten or removed. "US advisors and consultants were attached to ministries with the task of
dismantling the state sector." The decisions saw no debate by the reconstituted parliament (Ferguson 1990:43, 22-23, 61).  

Among the casualties with clear significance for Grenada’s food independence was the Spice Isle Agro-Industry Plant, already damaged by US bombing which—as noted—the PRG had built to process a range of food products. In what was widely seen as a reward to Dominican Prime Minister Charles for helping to legitimize the invasion, the plant was sold to Dominica (Ferguson 1990:21). With it went 70 full-time jobs, work for more part-time laborers, and a critical outlet for small farmer produce. The lack of processing capacity for Grenada’s home-grown products, lamented by a prior generation of Grenadians, would be lamented by another. Some farmers had a hard time seeing the plant sale as anything but an attempt to renew their dependency on US and foreign food. “If you’re self-sufficient you wouldn't come to them,” is how Reginald Buddy put it. “The US called the plant a failure because it was not yet making a profit. But in less than three years, its sales were growing fast. Many private factories get tax concessions and are still operating at a loss after five years, but the same people don’t consider them failures,” said Chamber of Commerce president Lyden Ramdhanny, who emerged as a strong critic of USAID actions in Grenada (McAfee 1991:97-98).

The government’s agricultural school at Mirabeau was closed—graduates had emerged as strong partisans of the revolution. When it reopened the teaching emphasis was “theoretical, not practical,” former PRG extension officer Joseph Gill told me. Grenada’s coffee-processing plant was closed. The national dairy was sold to a Jamaican businessman for US $20,000; in short order it failed. A company established to market part of Grenada's nutmeg crop also quickly collapsed (Ferguson 1990:23).
The entire Grenadian army was disbanded and an estimated 3,000 employees in ministries most closely associated with the PRG (including Culture, Women's Affairs, Mobilization, and Education) were relieved of their jobs. USAID officials oversaw the firings (Ferguson 1990:24). Under USAID pressure NACDA—the cooperative development agency—was closed (Ferguson 1990:23). “They wanted to dismantle everything that was connected in people's minds with the revolution,” Joseph Gill told me in 2008. “And they were ably assisted by a lot of short-sighted people.”

“Just as structures and organisations established by the PRG were dismantled,” James Ferguson writes, “so a new USAID-funded bureaucracy was set up.” A National Development Foundation sought to move in the opposite direction of the PRG’s approaches to cooperative development, setting up small private businesses. An Industrial Development Corporation was created to facilitate foreign investment (Ferguson 1990:29). The bodies would influence approaches to agriculture in coming years and point investors to tourist projects on former agricultural lands.

**USAID Actions Regarding Agriculture**

“In its zeal to reverse what it thought were the anti-private property policies of the PRG,” McAfee writes, “AID paid almost no attention to what was, and continues to be, the foundation of Grenada's economy,” small farmers (1991:101). She notes that AID's Agriculture Sector Revitalization Project for Grenada produced more than a dozen feasibility studies and reports but that these contained “barely any mention of the living conditions, needs or opinions and aspirations of the country's poor rural majority” (1991:101). According to Brierley, most of the PRG’s agrarian initiatives were ended by an interim government “that was under pressure to distance itself from PRG ideology and development strategies” (1985a:308).53
USAID worked to place public land back in private hands. Most such land had been acquired during Gairy's tenure, a fact that USAID officials were unaware of. Since many of the tracts had previously been idle, some pre-Gairy owners had welcomed lease agreements with the PRG; few wanted them back. "[T]here wasn't exactly an outpouring of interest," AID mission head Peter Orr admitted (McAfee 1991:100). Several people who reacquired land did so for speculative purposes, taking land out of agriculture (Ferguson 1990: 24).

With so much land to be reprivatized, a "Model Farms" project which made such lands available to rent or own, was set up with the help of a $400,000 USAID grant (Ferguson 1990:32). McAfee describes the program as a "reluctant land reform" (1991:102), but it won the hopeful backing of the likes of George Brizan, who for a time became Agriculture Minister. Two hundred acres of Fédon's former estate, Belvedere, were repurchased at further cost and distributed to small farmers and estate workers (Ferguson 1990:69-70). A disappointment on its own terms, the Model Farms program also proved fateful for cane farmers—it was under it that a number of GCFA officials came to farm the lands at Mt. Hartman, for a time boosting sugarcane production significantly and drawing many other farmers to the area.

Grenada farmers needed land, but with the loss of the canning plant, uncertainty about USAID motives, and red tape, most hesitated to enroll. "Right now we have so much wasting," one woman told McAfee at the time:

Tomatoes, cabbages, dasheen are rotting because we can't get transport or sales for them. I'd put in more tree crops, but I don't know if I might lose the land. It seems like the government wants to give the estates to rich Americans, or they'll sell plots for people living overseas to build houses, but there's no way for farmers like us to get land. (1991, 100)
By 1989, Ferguson writes, the Model Farms program was “more or less inactive”; only 60 of the farms begun under the program were in operation, only 500 of 3,400 acres designated being farmed. Many projects were abandoned as not viable, and little program money was paid out. “[T]he scheme,” Ferguson writes, “had little impact on unemployment.” Still, breaking up some big farms had one effect sought by invasion planners: it splintered the AGWU, whose workers had been employed on them (Ferguson 1990:70-71).

A Radical Experiment

Likely most US officials believed in the rightness of the work they carried out in Grenada. But to say that the changes wrought by USAID were coerced would be an understatement in the circumstances of an invasion, with US troops in Grenada’s streets and Grenada officials now beholden to US officials sophisticated in such planning, not only for US funding for government operations but also—often—their forthcoming election campaigns as well. It would be difficult to exaggerate what a thorough infringement of Grenadian sovereignty the affair was. Yet there has been little discussion of these events in Grenada, according to people I interviewed in 2012.

Part of the reason that the post-invasion period is looked on with so little interest may be that Grenada was returned to its parliamentary system—events of the preceding period could therefore be characterized as an aberration, the new period as a return to normalcy. But the period that followed the invasion was clearly more than a simple restoration. To the social reforms of the PRG USAID had responded—largely out of view of the Grenadian people or media—with a reinvention of Grenada’s system of taxation and many of its legal codes. “[P]ost-revolutionary Grenada provided US technocrats an opportunity for a structurally adjusted blueprint,” working to make
Grenada “a laboratory and showcase of US ideological superiority,” write Mowforth and Munt 2003:250. If part of the quarrel the US held with the PRG was that it had not held elections—a repeated Reagan administration complaint—it is hard to see how changes imposed by USAID were democratic. After 1983 notions of unionism and cooperativism—of united or collective action, generally—lost critical momentum in Grenada, foreclosing many paths previously available to Grenadian poor and working people to create change there. “By the fall of 1988, after five years of US stewardship,” McAfee writes,

almost none of the development goals set by the US had been met. Grenada was deeper in debt than at any time in the nation’s past. AID-sponsored efforts to balance the government’s budget had failed. The country’s tax system, after being thoroughly re-designed by USAID officials and consultants, had largely collapsed. Unemployment, estimated by AID at 30% of Grenada’s work force, was at an all-time high. AID was withholding promised grants to Grenada’s new government in an effort to force it to comply with structural adjustment conditions. 56 (1991:95)

Although the PRG path had also meant dependency on grant-in-aid funding and loans—unsustainable in the long term—it had improved the lives of people in the rural sector. Now agricultural productivity fell into sharp decline, and hunger began to creep into some rural communities (McAfee 1991:95; Ferguson 1987:87). Grenada’s health system eroded as Cuban doctors were sent home; Vitamin A deficiency and a fall to pre-1983 nutrition levels were reported by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1989 (Ferguson 1990:88) “It’s like the whole country's in a coma,” one young Grenadian told McAfee (1991:95-96).

“By the time the US started to withdraw budgetary support, the government had abolished most taxes and had eroded its revenue base,” a member of the Industrial Development Corporation reported (Pattullo 2005:44). Lack of an adequate tax base
due to the regressive setup foisted on Grenada government after the invasion remains a critical—crippling—feature of Grenada's current constraints, and prevents the government from establishing almost any new initiatives, including in agriculture, without outside aid. This means that outside agencies, including the IMF and World Bank, strongly influence the direction of such projects.

**Conclusion: Truth and Reconciliation**

In 2001 a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in Grenada to examine the circumstances behind Maurice Bishop's murder and the events leading to the US invasion. The process, according to anthropologist David Scott, was in many ways a failure (2007). The invasion and its aftermath were not on the table for discussion. An open conversation about the period—including what was valuable and what misguided in PRG efforts in agriculture—awaits another day. “We are more preoccupied with who died than with how it affected our ability to feed ourselves,” former GCFA official Peter Antoine told me in a 2012 interview.

If the collapse and invasion were a tragedy that remains too little analyzed in Grenada, the benefits to US interests—the failure to establish a flourishing economy notwithstanding—were considerable. The invasion “led to the consolidation of conservative and pro-U.S. governments throughout the region,” stifling future attempts to bring structural change (Deere et al. 1990:93). Along with Jamaica, the East Caribbean—especially Grenada and Charles's Dominica—became “a testing ground. . . for the US policy of privatization, an unregulated free market and the aggressive promotion of US business interests. These policies,” McAfee writes, “increased the pressures on the poor and heightened the islands' vulnerability to external economic forces.” McAfee notes that USAID's efforts had a strongly colonial character, resembling
those of administrations “which shaped Caribbean economies through the mid-20th-century” (1991:56). Like the colonial powers, McAfee writes, “AID equates the region's potential for development with its ability to produce and supply resources—crops, minerals, labor and tourist attractions—for other parts of the world” (1991:57).

The aftermath saw growing militarization of the region. Police forces received training from US Green Berets who established police militias in Grenada and other island countries, with reports of rising brutality, arbitrary arrests, and abuse of authority following (Ferguson 1990:44,122,105). The invasion led to “the consolidation of conservative and pro-US governments throughout the region,” Deere et al write (1990:92). The country’s four-and-a-half-year attempt to break with the plantation economic past had been violently rebuked, Grenadian sovereignty forcibly overridden, and the country placed back on a path of dependency.

1 Road workers—another constituency that persists, among whom many landless and very poor rural dwellers number—also became members of Gairy’s union (Brizan 1998:223).

2 The granting of universal suffrage to Grenadians in 1950 proved instrumental in bringing Gairy to power, and in shifting power away from the planter class (Thompson 1985:133).

3 According to Steele, Gairy egged on strikers by saying that the land had been stolen from them 100 years before “and the time had come to take it back” (2003:354). Benoit notes that workers expressed rage during the 1952 strike at the way families had routinely been moved off of lands they planted when fruit trees matured. Some land was seized but was later returned to estate owners (2007:108).

4 Gairy paid small farmers scant attention. They ended up battling him when he tried to seize control of the country's cooperative nutmeg, cocoa, and banana boards between 1971 and 1975 (EPICA 1982:104; Meeks 2001:141). Despite the complex social ties between small farmers and estate workers this period likely drew stronger lines between the groups.

5 In 1967 Gairy was elected Premiere of Grenada and retained office through 1979, becoming Prime Minister when the country gained independence in 1974 (Heine 1996:558). “Gairy became a capitalist. . . and came to own a ‘vast array’ of businesses”; the “legal, juridical, bureaucratic and political party structures” that he built or shaped were “bourgeois in. . . orientation and design” (Watson 1984:8). Tourism expanded “and led to new developments in the construction and real estate sectors,” all of which impacted agriculture. Monopoly import privileges, tax breaks, government contracts, patronage, the land expropriations and “other legal and illegal incentives” allowed Gairy to control much of the expansion in
the urban sector, including in housing, resort construction, and small manufacturing (Thompson 1985:133).

6 According to Brierley, Gairy was prompted to initiate the program by “recommendations made in various economic surveys” that “advocated a more equitable distribution of land” (1985a:304).

7 According to a report made by one outside group sympathetic to the PRG government that supplanted Gairy’s, most of the lands appropriated “belonged to middle-strata farmers; the largest estates remained untouched” (EPICA 1982:44).

8 The Ministry of Agriculture’s 1995 Agricultural Census says 43 estates were acquired between 1969 and 1979, about 20% of the land distributed “to the landless” (1996:2).

9 According to Meeks (2001:143); Grenada’s class structure “underwent a modest. . . change” (Watson 1984:6). But “[f]or the most part,” Meeks says, the (generally lighter skinned) middle class “was deeply embarrassed by the fact that it was deprived of its ‘rightful’ share of power and. . . had to live under a black buffoon.” Such attitudes, it is implied, complicated middle-class revolutionaries’ relationship with Gairy’s followers (Meeks 2001:143).

10 According to the EPICA authors, the Gairy government had “no mechanism for collecting or keeping statistics.” At the time of the revolution that overthrew him the island’s population was unknown (1982:76).

11 According to Claude Douglas many lands seized were banana-producing estates and their break-up harmed that industry (2004:31).


13 Other factors contributing to agricultural production declines through the period included shortages of estate workers, neglect of infrastructure including farm roads, praedial larceny, inadequate extension and cuts to extension services, and owner reluctance to invest in holdings amid the decline (Brierley 1985:55).

14 This may also have influenced PRG decision-making when the group came to power.

15 New Jewel was one of a number of progressive parties that “emerged everywhere” in the Caribbean during the 1970s which included various tendencies in nearby Trinidad, the United Popular Movement of St. Vincent, and the Workers’ Party of Jamaica (Deere et. al 1990:90). As Gairy became more repressive New Jewel formed a coalition with an opposition group of “orthodox conservative” businessmen and estate owners, the Grenada National Party (Ferguson 1990:12). Despite vote-rigging by Gairy, their People’s Alliance won six of 15 seats in 1976 parliamentary elections with Maurice Bishop becoming leader of the opposition (Thompson 1985:134).

16 Gairy became a tyrant. “Based on clientelism and thuggery, Gairy’s later periods in office were marked by. . . mismanagement and repression” (EPICA 1982:42-42; Ferguson 1990:11). A group of paramilitary Gairy toughs called the Mongoose Gang, sometimes compared to Haiti’s Tontons Macoutes, terrorized his political opponents (Ferguson 1997:296; Douglas 2010:76).


18 According to Manning Marable, the manifesto was especially influenced by the writings of CLR James, by Tapia (a reformist Trinidadian party of middle-class intellectuals of the early 1980s), and by Tanzanian Christian Socialism (in Lewis 1987:6-7; also see Heine 1998:558). But “there was no one monolithic view. . . at its inception, nor was there a single political line. . . throughout” (Watson 1984:16). Other influences on both manifesto and revolution ranged from events in Nicaragua to the “non-capitalist
path” to liberation theology (Ferguson 1990:93)—which resonated in its notions of “a special dispensation for the poor” with elements of Grenada's majority-Catholic population—and the “small is beautiful” philosophies of environmentalist E.F. Schumacher. The manifesto can be read online at http://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/manifesto, accessed August 22, 2012.

19 Gairy was offered asylum in the US and remained there until the US invasion.

20 According to Watson the party did “very little work among the working class,” which in Grenada meant, largely, estate workers, and “concentrated most of its efforts among the ‘peasants’” (1984:48). But in many ways this organizing remained superficial among small farmers, too, as his analysis also shows.

21 Grenada became a darling of “New Left” and other worldwide progressives and beneficiary of aid from many center-left countries, including Europe's social democratic governments. The list of donors seems astonishing today, as does the audacity of the Reagan government in invading Grenada despite the support it enjoyed. As US hostility toward the tiny country grew Grenada secured 62 million EC dollars in loans from Cuba, the USSR, several Arab countries, the UN, the European Community, Canada, and the USSR during fiscal 1979 and 1980, compared to three million that the Gairy government had managed to secure in its last year (O'Shaughnessy 1984:108; Deere et al. 1990:141; Lewis 1987:27). Such grants-in-aid constituted another kind of dependency, however—one that both Eric Gairy's and subsequent governments also suffered, down to the present. (“It was the availability of foreign grants, concessional and other loans that enabled the regime to provide workers, small farmers and other exploited strata... with some benefits” [Watson 1984:40]). According to one source, funding for the international airport that the PRG began building provided much of the financial “breathing space” the PRG enjoyed. The “availability of aid for the airport... fueled much of the economic growth which took place during the Revolution” (Thompson 1985:150). The slowing of aid and loans, which Watson says financed many of the welfare gains in the rural sector, spurred the sense of looming crisis that engulfed the central committee from 1982 on (1984:35,38,39).

22 The new government nationalized several hotels and nightclubs previously owned by Gairy; it also inherited 30 farms Gairy had expropriated. After the invasion USAID erroneously assumed that these had been seized by the PRG (Ferguson 1990:10).

23 The World Bank criticized PRG plans to build luxury hotels, saying that they conflicted with an avowed intention “to cater less exclusively to high income tourists” (O'Shaughnessy 1984:90). Maurice Bishop told a New Internationalist reporter in 1980 of his worries “about the real possibility that bringing in 200,000 tourists a year can cause the rest of the rural population to abandon the land to work in the tourist sector.” He asserted that this had happened in Barbados, “where they now have to import labour to work in the cane fields” (http://www.newint.org/features/1980/12/01/grenada/, accessed August 22, 2012). Deere et al. suggest that the PRG thought tourism could help inoculate Grenada against price fluctuations in the agricultural sector of the kind that many countries—including Grenada—were then experiencing (1990:141-142).

24 Coffee and spices were ground at another new facility (Brierley 1985:65).

25 Thompson, writing in 1985, signaled concerns that I raise in Chapter 3 about house construction in Grenada and offered insight into Cuba's economic impacts on the region: “Criticism can be raised of Grenada's acceptance of Cuban housing technology under the NJM,” he writes, “since it is based on the use of imported concrete. Cuban concrete is cheap and used throughout the Caribbean by governments of all political stripes because of its price; however, it is cheap because, as an energy-intensive industry, it relies on oil supplies from the Soviet Union at below-world prices... The uncritical use of Soviet or... other technology risks the selection of equipment and techniques which can divert factors of production away from local resources,” Thompson wrote, including development of Grenadian lumber. While such discussion risked “being labeled... utopian,” Thompson said, “any less comprehensive approach to the problems of development in... dependent societies has been proven ineffective” (1985:129-130).

27 Gains made by women under the PRG were substantial, but the orientation of the government often remained traditional, including where work and gender roles were concerned, as the referenced quote suggests. Literacy expert Richard Gibson notes that two pamphlets created for the country’s literacy program tended, for example, to portray women in domestic contexts, men “at work,” in external contexts. The message transmitted: “Women are involved in the home. Men are involved in production” (http://richgibson.com/FREIR.htm, accessed February 13, 2013).

28 Brierley says it was tracts of over 40 acres, left unplanted for more than two years, that came under commission purview (1985a:306).

29 The law carried assumptions about a necessary contribution of national resources to the public good like those in “social function doctrine”—a “second generation” human right enshrined in constitutions of a number of Latin American countries. The idea has received new attention from governments in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela, and could be adopted by more countries as land pressure intensifies in the 21st century (Ankersen and Ruppert 2006:71-72, 118 and passim.)

30 One PRG official told a reporter from the New Internationalist that young people found it hard to scale up their backyard gardening skills to the larger settings, which may suggest that training was needed to foster greater success with the cooperatives, a training PRG leaders may themselves not have possessed, but which might have been supplied by Cuba or another ally: http://www.newint.org/features/1980/12/01/grenada/, accessed August 22, 2012.

31 Meeks says that the tensions between PRG leaders and estate workers were in real ways “a continuation of the 1951 struggle of fair-skinned against black, of urban St. George’s (and the capital) against rural” Grenada (2001:143).

32 Frederic Pryor says that estate workers paid by the day “began to work many fewer hours” under the more forgiving conditions they now encountered (1992:198).


34 The PFU—sometimes the NPFU (for “National”), several people told me, was controlled by PRG party members.

35 See interview, Appendix.

36 This was the conclusion of Claremont Kirton, who organized the annual budget discussions that electrified the country in local assemblies in the early going. Another ranking party member, Bernard Bourne, said in 1984 that “never at one time did we show the people that we had confidence in them to do these things for themselves” (Meeks 2001:161-162).

37 “Popular mobilization and organization were promoted to strengthen the regime's political base,” says Watson. “It was not intended to promote independent. . . structures or institutions. The popular structures could not advance independently because they lacked proletarian leadership and because” the PRG “were bent on sharing power only with the capitalists,” Watson says. The argument according to which the people were not ready for socialism,” often made, was “largely vacuous” (1984:41).

38 One-pot rice dish introduced by Indian plantation workers to the Caribbean employing pigeon peas or black-eyed peas. (http://recipes.caribseek.com/Trinidad_and_Tobago/pelau.shtml, accessed December 11, 2012).
39 The inference is that this refers to the period from the last year of Gairy's tenure to the US invasion.

40 Brierley saw residual effects of this renewed enthusiasm as late as 1995, when that year's Agricultural Census showed landless farmers averaged 20 years younger than medium (1 to < 25 acres) and large (25 + acres) farmers. He interpreted this finding to suggest an unsatisfied land hunger aroused by the PRG not in keeping with views that farming was unattractive to young people. The finding again raises the question whether allotment of land to small farmers by the PRG would have spoken more directly to "the Gairyites" and poor people in the rural sector than collectivization projects, especially since the same study also found that the PRG government had not affected the basic size of small farmer holdings (1985a:: 306 and passim).

41 Pryor says that the PRG plan for January 1984 foresaw "the state farm sector embracing 26 percent of... agricultural land" (1992:469).

42 Reagan announced that the US aim was restoration of government after Bishop's assassination and protection of the US student population at St. George's University, then a medical school. Contingents of soldiers from Barbados, Antigua, Dominica, and the Edward Seaga government in Jamaica—regional governments with right-wing leaders—joined the invasion. One hundred eight countries voted to condemn the US action at the UN including Canada and Great Britain, which was stunned by the US action, taken without consultation or authorization against Grenada, which still had Queen Elizabeth as titular head (Zunes 2003; Martin 2007:124).

43 Meeks (2001) cites an atmosphere of growing crisis, personal exhaustion, and an inevitable drop in foreign aid, as well as an ebbing pace of change in the countryside as reasons for central committee tension. "The agricultural program and the co-op program were at a standstill," writes Watson (1984:51). The partnership with the Grenadian bourgeoisie was reassuring to the IMF and World Bank and helped to reassure investors but bore clear consequences, especially as outside sources dried up and the ability to economically compensate rural workers became more difficult.

44 In a speech to sympathizers in New York, Bishop claimed that the threat Grenada posed lay in the potential success of an alternative model of development. He quoted what he said was a State Department report that said: "Some perceive that what is happening in Grenada can lay the basis for a new socio-economic and political path of development. Grenada is different from Cuba and Nicaragua. . . Grenada is in one sense even worse because the people of Grenada and the government of Grenada speak English and. . . can communicate directly to the people of the United States." He noted the report stated that the Grenadian leadership was Black. "And if we have 95% of predominantly African origin in our country then we can have a dangerous appeal to 30 million black people in the United States. That aspect of the report—clearly," Bishop said, "is one of the more sensible ones." Transcription of Bishop 1983 speech available at: grenadarevolutiononline.com/bishspkhunter.html, accessed August 6, 2012.

45 The contractor was a British firm, Plessy, underwritten by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. Financing was guaranteed by British, Finnish, and Canadian firms and the European Community was a partner; a Miami dredging firm carried out some construction. The World Bank had noted its utility—it would enable Grenada to land and more quickly ship agricultural products (Ferguson 1990:4; O'Shaughnessy 1984:88-89; Steele 2003:389), including to stimulate inter-island trade.

46 The Soviet Union had come to specialize in building equipment for use in various kinds of terrain for poor countries, and had made a gift of 33 of the tractors to Grenada, Elliot Bishop told me in 2008.

47 The USAID acronym suggests that the government organization offers "aid," and—indeed—in the aftermath of natural disasters it does dispense charitable aid to poor countries. But as the "main channel through which the US sends non-military assistance to foreign countries" (McAfee 1991:49) the agency works to foster US policy aims. "Our. . . broadest goal is a long-range political one," USAID deputy administrator Frank Coffin told a US House of Representatives subcommittee in 1964. "It is not development for the sake of sheer development. An important objective is to open up the maximum
opportunity for... private initiative... to insure that foreign private investment, particularly from the United States, is welcomed and well treated” (US Govt. Printing Office 1964: 954-960; http://www.archive.org/stream/hearingsrelating02unit/hearingsrelating02unit_djvu.txt, accessed August 27, 2012.

48 Briefly Grenada became the world’s highest per-capita recipient of US aid; St. Lucia Prime Minister Eugenia Charles complained that a country had to get invaded to obtain the superpower’s help. About a quarter of funds, however, went to repairing invasion damage (Ferguson 1990:21). “The benefits accrued mainly to US contractors,” McAfee writes, to “foreign-owned shipping and manufacturing companies, and a small stratum of Grenada’s elite” (1991:97). Meanwhile, Eric Gairy returned from the US—where he had been granted asylum during the PRG years—and both the GULP and a former opposition Grenada National Party, made up of Chamber of Commerce members, estate owners, and members of the urban middle class, were revived. “The old political forces... reemerged more or less intact,” according to Ferguson (1990:12-14).

49 Indeed, AID Project Number 538-0141-01, initiated in 1987 at a cost of $5 million US, is flatly termed “Grenada Structural Adjustment Program,” http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABC053.pdf, accessed December 4, 2012. More work to uncover and understand the contours of such projects and their effects on small farmer culture and the rural sector are required.

50 “US personnel, including army construction brigades, Peace Corps volunteers, and retired IRS officials, were visible in nearly every town and government office during the aftermath... many were still there in 1988” (McAfee 1991:96).

51 Seeking precedents in Grenada’s colonial history, the report’s preamble said that the “private sector emerged early in Grenada’s history when trading ships from Europe brought articles for sale or barter with the islanders in return for products to be taken back to Europe” (Ferguson 1990:22).

52 A “working group” of Grenadians was selected to participate in the process—a banker, accountant, trade union member, chamber of commerce member, and several others (Shay 1987:206). A brief account by Donald Shay, an American consultant who specialized in “the evaluation of state enterprises and the preparation of plans for marketing companies”—the only AID participant whose account I found—does not say what part they played in the process. The group identified 29 Grenada state enterprises, worth approximately 20 million US dollars (just three were profitable, according to Shay, two of these banks whose profits nearly covered the operation of all the others) for privatization. The amount of money seems almost negligible if their future potential contribution to Grenada is considered—what benefits might such institutions have generated for Grenada these last thirty years, and why was it not for Grenadians to decide about their lasting value? Prime Minister Blaize and his cabinet were given a menu of options about privatizations from which to make final decisions about their dispensation, which ranged from outright sales of some entities; to sales of part ownership to outside interests; to liquidation and sell-offs of some assets.

53 A 1982 World Bank report had endorsed the PRG’s basic strategies, noting that amid a worldwide recession Grenada was “one of the few countries in the Western Hemisphere that continued to experience per capita growth” during the very difficult 1981 period (Brierley 1985b:58cd)

54 The thrust of the program—which emphasized banana production—was commercial monoculture production according to Brierley, who also describes it as a failure: “If varieties of mixed agriculture, appropriate to the Grenadian settings, had been promoted,” he writes, “the GMFC could have avoided the vulnerabilities of monoculture and practiced a more sustainable system of agriculture” (1998:271).


56 Former Permanent Secretary of Finance Lennox Andrews told me in a 2012 interview that businesses were left to collect the revenue on the honor system and simply kept tax monies for
themselves. Revenue didn't reach the government and that the tax severely reduced demand, he said. The new system collapsed after three months.

57 The commission never met with the Grenada 17, the former leaders of the PRG convicted of crimes associated with the overthrow and murder of Maurice Bishop. Combining his investigation of the process with a reading of the commission report, Jamaican anthropologist David Scott came to feel "that a good deal of cynicism went into the process. . . that the case was opened only to be deliberately evaded and thus foreclosed" (Scott 2007:vii).
CHAPTER 5
The GCFA: Repeasantization and Food Sovereignty

Cane can be central to an integrated small farm system where you intercrop and fertilize and have a strong reproductive cycle.

—Joseph Gill
Former extension agent and GCFA official

Overview

In 1984, with the country reeling from the collapse of the People’s Revolutionary Government, amid the sweeping changes ushered in by USAID, a fledgling Grenada Cane Farmer Association (GCFA) began an organizing drive among the country’s poorest farmers in the island’s traditional sugarcane centers. Over the next fifteen years the organization grew to as many as 2,000 people. Its members adapted various agricultural and communal labor practices of Grenada’s small farmer inheritance to create a new basis for intercrop farming of sugarcane for subsistence production and local produce sales, a model that members argue holds continuing promise for establishment of FS in Grenada today. The methods adapted proved flexible and productive, helping to revive a moribund sugarcane sector and bringing new belief in the value of their efforts to many of the country's poorest farmers. The GCFA's creative renewal of older peasant practices mirrors in general outline projects of repeasantization now taking place around the world (Desmarais 2007:20; Edelman 2003:187; Van der Ploeg 2010 1, passim; Da Vià 2012:231).¹ This chapter describes the development of the GCFA, its early organizing efforts, and the way that its farming methods and mission evolved. It details the blow that the GCFA suffered in 1998 when the government seized members’ most productive lands on the island’s south shore for construction of a tourist hotel, curtailing national sugarcane production and sending the
organization into a tailspin. It examines ways that decisions to run the organization as a
profit-making entity, shaped by neoliberal currents of the post-revolutionary period,
impacted both organizational structure and the GCFA’s response to the crisis—including in its relationship with members—how they continued to constrain decision-making in 2012. Among the biggest impediments to a revival of the sugarcane subsector, the investigation finds, are public ignorance about cane farmer methods and national ambivalence about agriculture in general, clear obstacles to the establishment of FS as well.

**Beginnings**

Elliot Bishop was a 34-year-old union worker living in Moscow, sent by Grenada's Commercial and Industrial Workers Union to study trade unionism and political economics, when he learned that Maurice Bishop had been killed. He set out for home immediately, traveling via London. As the invasion commenced his wife burned his PRA uniform. Once back in the country, Bishop lay low. He wondered what he would do with the rest of his life.

Many Grenadians would soon be out of work. Mistrust arose as peoples' activities under the PRG were scrutinized and the nation accommodated the new realities. It was in this prevailing climate of uncertainty that Bishop's friend Joseph Gill—a former extension officer and Agricultural Ministry official under the PRG—approached him with the idea of trying to organize workers in the sugarcane industry, an effort that resulted in establishment of the GCFA.

Plantation sugar production had been in decline for the better part of a century in the Caribbean, a development precipitated by the rise of European sugar beet production in the early nineteenth century and augmented by growing cultivation in
other tropical locales. With its comparatively more diverse export base, Grenada had all but ceased producing sugar on the estates by late in the nineteenth century, as Chapter 3 noted. But production had continued among small farmers (Cumberbatch 1977:3), and sugarcane—according to former GCFA Secretary and General Manager Ferron Lowe—eventually became “the cash crop of the small subsistence farmers who emerged as the main . . . producers with the breakdown of the plantation system” (Lowe 1986:3). According to Brierley, sugarcane had once “been found on most areas of level land around the island's coast” (1974:254). Sugarcane farming “continued on in the coastal areas, and in particular the drier south and east coasts,” including the north and south shore areas that are the focus of this study (Lowe 1986:3). Farmers in both of these areas tended to be among Grenada's poorest farmers and those who supplied the great part of Grenada's local food production. According to Brierley, they were also of more purely Afrodescendant heritage than more export-oriented middle belt farmers (1974:176, 207). In some real measure, then (if all but unnoticed in Grenada) sugarcane farming—particularly on the island's north and south shores—forms the heart of both received traditions in Afro-Grenadian peasant farming and what we might identify as the nation's FS traditions, especially insofar as these involve the quest for food independence. Although it came before the FS idea gained currency, the GCFA offers an experiment in both the potential for local farmers groups to implement FS and the institutional and other limits they may face.

Bishop's grandfather had been “the biggest cane farmer in my village,” Marian, on the south shore, adjacent to Calivigny estate farm lands given to small farmers by Eric Gairy and the Woodlands Sugar Factory, which traditionally purchased cane
farmers’ crops. Bishop sometimes missed school for weeks during sugarcane harvest, collecting cane tops to feed his grandfather’s livestock, “passing juice and bringing water” as well as food and rum to workers in the cane. The same was true of Bishop’s friend Joseph Gill, who had also served as coordinator for the Productive Farmers Union (PFU) under the PRG. It was Gill who formed the idea that he and Bishop should advocate for the industry—which was, he told me in 2008, “in a state of near-collapse”—and for its farmers, who had long needed organizational representation (Brizan 1998: 262). “The cane thing is where we came from,” Bishop told me. “It seemed to me that it may have been better to go back to your roots.” They would address the strenuous labor demands of cane in the way their elders had, with “maroons, the old thing. That made it easier.”

Gill had organized and taken part in many maroons during the revolution as the PFU coordinator for his parish, St. David’s. “We had learned “the importance of organization,” he told me, “especially of farmers harvesting in teams.” Such shared labor would occupy both the social and productive core of GCFA efforts, with Gill’s small farming knowledge supplying the technical basis for a wider extension to small farmers—something that they had lacked historically (Antoine 1990:n.p.).

Initial response in meetings with farmers, “under the mango tree in Marian,” as cane farmer Frankie Lewis recalled it, was positive. “Ninety-five percent of farmers were of advanced age, 50s and 60s,” said Bishop. “But they responded with enthusiasm” to the idea. Young people did, too. “It was surprising to see that a lot of young people took it up,” he said, but there was a certain romanticism in the endeavor in keeping with the times, which saw First World hippies and Caribbean Rastafarians repairing to the land
in what was a rejection of consumerist lifestyles. “You're going back to the land and producing food,” Bishop said.

The leadership was particularly encouraged by increased profits and growing sales in Grenada for rum, based partly in an increased processing capacity at the country's distilleries. At that point the distilleries were importing molasses because local cane growing was largely at a standstill. The Woodlands factory had stopped producing sugar in 1982 because too little cane was being grown to sustain operations (Antoine 1990:5) and because the low price of sugar on the international market made production of what cane was grown uneconomical (Martin 2007: 105). GCFA farmers saw an opportunity to again supply rum's central component in the traditional form of cane syrup. Indeed, supplying the central ingredient in Grenadian rum was and continued to remain the cane farmers' foremost goal—a "no brainer," many felt, since this would address the country’s balance of payments issues and mean that Grenadian sugar once again supplyied the central ingredient in Grenadian rum. Joined by a number of farmers, especially in the Marian area, Gill and Bishop set to work. They were later joined by others including Lowe, who proved a consummate organizer. In further transforming their predecessors’ cane farming practices they transformed one of the ugliest specters of the slave past into a promising grassroots initiative for Grenada's future. The initiative would bring them into the wider struggle of East Caribbean farmers to preserve their small farming heritage as members of the 15,000-farmer Windward Island Farmer Association (WINFA), which the GCFA joined in 1986, with Bishop in time becoming a board member and sometime WINFA chair, and into the earliest stages of LVC's global struggle for FS.
Sparking a Sugarcane Farming Revival

Grenada’s sugar production had been in decline for much of the twentieth century, reaching historic lows in the 1970s. A 1975 government report cited transportation, poor roads, and inadequate drainage as problems that plagued the sector. A third of all crops planted suffered pest damage. There were few credit facilities to help farmers secure loans, and little help for farmers with pest control or in securing fertilizer. The report suggested that the industry was in danger of disappearing and noted “the gloom that appears in finding an alternative crop.” It also noted that farmers had failed to represent themselves as a body. “If the industry is to be revived,” the report said, sugarcane farmers would have to “enter into some form of organized existence” (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 1975:n.p.)

The Grenada Sugar Factory, as the Woodlands mill was also called—in which the government owned the controlling share, and which had become the biggest single source of sales for small farmers' canes—had long paid extremely low prices, which both the authors of the government 1975 report and a 1977 OAS report on Grenadian agriculture cited as unacceptably low. Nonetheless, the OAS report noted that the industry was important enough to the economic life of local communities to warrant resuscitation (1977:13-14). The 1975 government report had offered the commercialization of cane as animal feed as one potential income source. Among possibilities recommended by the OAS was production of high-quality molasses for local consumption and export. Most or all such products in a net food-importing country had local components that would continue to make them attractive, including in a FS and wider agro-industrial context today.
As the GCFA’s Lowe wrote in 1986, “cane. . . is woven into the social fabric of particularly the south and eastern parts of the island. If the industry dies it would mean tearing apart an integral part of the society” (1986:2). Lowe estimated that 600 families were involved in growing for the industry “and more than 5,000 (i.e., 4.6% of the country’s total population) directly dependent on the industry for livelihood” (ibid above).

Cane had in the past enabled small farmers to meet at least part of their cash needs. “Failures of cane coincided with periods of hardship in the cane districts,” according to Lowe. In the places where cane died out, cattle-farming tended to disappear too, he said. He noted that “the most depressed areas of the country. . . fall within the traditional small farmer cane zones. Cane farmers had long been “among. . . the most functionally illiterate and exploited workers, and. . . among the poorest farmers in the country[,] with average incomes no greater than EC$1,500-$3,000 per annum,” according to Lowe (1986:3). Combined with the historical legacy of sugarcane, the image of the cane farmer as among Grenada’s poorest people—and of cane farming as cause of their problems rather than solution—would prove difficult to overcome.

But “May 1984 marked a new beginning,” Lowe wrote, describing the GCFA’s organizing initiative (1986:4). A non-profit NGO, the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), backed the organization financially, assisting it in financing meetings, in setting up a secretariat, and in hiring a secretary and office manager. The GCFA’s activities included registering cane farmers; enumerating the size and growth of the industry; providing farmers with fertilizer; education and training in pest control, cultural practices, and record-keeping; representing farmers’ interests before government and buyers (including obtaining better prices for them); maintaining a board
of directors and area branches; and organizing an annual general meeting (Lowe 1986). The GCFA also made small loans to cane farmers. Other goals, according to a document produced by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), included provision of extension services to farmers along with plowing and transportation, development of better processing facilities, and help in obtaining credit, fertilizer and other inputs (1998:15).

Prior to the GCFA’s advent, several previous attempts to organize cane farmers had become “highly politicized and the farmers soon lost authority over their organization” (Lowe 1986:4). According to Bishop, more prosperous farmers had quickly come to dominate those organizations.8 “This one they saw as real farmers,” Bishop told me. “The board was made up of cane farmers, not Mr. So-and-So. Every little village we went to the farmers were eager to join.”

By 1989, a report to the Commonwealth Fund by Grenadian engineer Peter Antoine noted that the GCFA had achieved real success: “The period from 1984 can be considered a period of revival for the sugarcane farmers. Apart from increasing demand, the introduction of new varieties9 with better yields and above all more remunerative prices secured by the GCFA for supplies to the Grenada Sugar Factory” at Woodlands had encouraged small farmers to expand or take up sugarcane cultivation “with considerable advantage. Yields have increased from an average of 17T (metric tonnes) per acre in the 1970s to over 25T at present [1989] and cane prices have moved from EC$ 50 [US$18.72] per tonne in 1982 to EC$ 75 per tonne in 1986, 90$ in 1987 to $110 [US $41.19] in 1988” (Antoine 1990: 6). From 1984 to the late 1990s the GCFA would continue to negotiate increases in the price per ton of cane for farmers,
eventually reaching EC $120. The GCFA also provided extension services to local small farmers across all phases of their production, and contributed to development of the agricultural sector not just among cane farmers but by bringing new people in, expanding production into places where it had traditionally thrived like the Conference and River Sallee areas in St. Patrick's. “The emergence of small farmers with holdings as low as 1-2 acres, and the replanting of cane in areas that had been given up for cultivation augurs well for this sector of agriculture,” Antoine wrote (1990:6). The Grenada map at the end of this chapter (Figure 2), from Antoine's Commonwealth Fund report, notes areas under sugarcane production as of 1989. At this point the size of the population benefiting directly and indirectly from sugarcane had effectively doubled, according to Lowe, with 1500 people farming sugarcane and some 10,000 people benefiting, roughly 10% of the country’s population (1986: 3). Crucially, the effects were concentrated in areas where many of Grenada's poorest people lived.

The revival that Antoine and Lowe describe was based especially in two features of traditional Grenadian cane farming that the GCFA adapted for a newly emerging generation of cane farmers. Maroons proved a key component of the labor system—the cultural backbone and a considerable part of the excitement around the revival. Revised planting and intercropping techniques, combined with introduction of new crops, helped to place farmers on a better technical and financial footing.

**Maroons and the GCFA Vision of an Advanced Farm System with Cane**

“Maroon in Grenada,” according to Elliot Bishop, “means three things: Prepare the land. Provide food. And harvest.” Just as various forms of intercropping are key to the science and resilience of Grenadian agriculture, the maroon was the labor system used to carry out the most labor-intensive phases of sugarcane farming work. Like the
Saracca and other Grenadian institutions of collective support, the maroons challenge common categorizations of peasants as selfish or loners, a designation a number of farmers seemed aware of and eager to counter. The affection with which cane farmers speak of maroons—“organizing” or “holding” a maroon—makes clear how much they contributed to the pleasure GCFA farmers took in their work, and unity within the organization. “I love that,” Bishop reported. “You drink. There's a lot of food. There's quite a lot of gossip and 'old talk' [banter]. And it gets results! You find that productivity is enhanced.”

Along with maroons, sugarcane farmers' identity centered around sugarcane and its products. GCFA members like Gill and North District Chairman Reginald Buddy believed strongly that this system—refined by them—could be used to raise Grenadian agriculture and the rural sector and to stimulate local production for FS. Cane tied the system together economically and technologically to make small farming work.

Buddy had taken up production in 1986. “My grandmother used to be into cane,” he told me. “We used to leave school on holidays and go and cut cane” in Conference, not far from his own village, River Sallee, he told me. Like the production of many area farmers, his grandmother’s canes had gone to the local Two Rivers rum distillery at River Antoine, where he remembered that she received $150EC (roughly $55 US) for every gallon of juice—a ton yielding roughly 25 gallons—expressed from her canes. “It was hard work,” he told me. “When I first got into it I was scared. When my grandfather planted he used to dig a hole here and a hole here and a hole here, and he used to take two weeks to do a whole acre of cane, just digging holes.” But an agricultural ministry
extension officer opened Buddy’s eyes to the benefits of cropping sugarcane with other
plants. The wider availability of plowing was one of the keys:

When they showed me it's all machine—once you clear the land, you plow,
you furrow with the machine, you ditch the cane plant down in the drain
[furrow] and you cover it—there you could plant any other crop between in
the first year. I did one plot, probably about three-quarters of an acre. I
intercropped it with sweet potato. And there I got the kick, because the
money that I spent to put in the crop I cover it about three times and a half
just harvesting the sweet potato. Then I harvest the cane and I say cane is
an amazing crop! From there I expand.

Buddy saw this ability to quickly offset initial costs as a big part of the potential appeal of
cane farming for prospective young people and other small farmers.

The opportunities presented at various stages of production were emphasized as
part of the system’s strength. Cane could be orchestrated to keep farmers working with
products to eat and sell throughout the year. “The thing with sugarcane is that it kept the
farmer active,” said Bishop—the modified system maximized use and yields. “Most of
them have very small plots,” he said of most small farmers,

an acre, two acres, sometimes less than an acre. What the farmer used to
do, he puts down a plot of cane, then he interplants that with vegetables—
watermelon, sweet potatoes, whatever. He reaps that vegetable crop and
he gets an income. After a period, he may renew a part of his field and do a
similar thing. The cane farmer is more diversified. The nutmeg farmer only
plants nutmeg. Maybe he does other things, but that’s his main crop.

Planting between rows reduced the need to weed and offered the partial shade that
many smaller plants thrive in, especially in the germination and seedling stages
(Mohammed and Ferdinand 1991:5). “If you plant pure stand cane,” as Grenadians call
cane-only plantation, “you have an 18-month wait for a first harvest,” Bishop told me.

“With intercropping, the method could bring cash or contribute to the wider economy
while the farmer eats.”
Bishop, like several farmers I spoke to, distinguished between sugarcane farmers and people who produced just a single crop. The latter were “not farmers,” he asserted, but businessmen, “in it for a quick buck.” In comparison, “the cane farmer was a farmer,” he told me. “He grew cane. He had livestock—cattle, sheep, goats, and sometimes poultry. After you cut the top from the cane” at harvest, “that is the feed for the animals.” (Indeed, Brierley reported in 1974 that “producers of sugar cane. . . have a greater number of cattle and goats than other farmers” [1974: 257]). And a 1991 joint report by the GCFA and Woodlands factory personnel suggested that the decline in Grenada’s livestock industry was connected with the decline of sugarcane farming [1991:4].) Pigs are often fed the juice directly while other animals feed on the stalks, which supply them energy and fiber. Here the metabolic cycle was complete: the plant stimulated livestock growth, the animals’ manure enriched the cane and other plants, and the bagasse, or squeezed cane stalks, made high-quality mulch.¹⁴ Because the cane was harvested during the dry season the stalks were available when other feeds were scarce. Today, various observers noted, Grenada is largely dependent on imported feed. A coordinated rise in the production and sale of tops for animal nutrition could benefit the country’s import-export ratio. In addition to livestock, the cane farmer produced vegetables and fruit for local consumption and sometimes export, including for trafficking to nearby islands.

Brierley traces the cane intercropping practice to the nineteenth century when planters, unable to pay farmers wages, began to give them a third of their canes and allow them to intercrop their sugarcane fields. They also fed their cattle the bagasse, or squeezed cane stalks. He says that the government began to discourage these
practices in the 1960s and that the institution of a minimum wage for agricultural labor undermined the system. Antoine, however, says that estate managers at the River Antoine Estate began intercropping sugarcane with beans and sweet potatoes in the 1920s, an innovation they claimed as their own: "[t]hus a cane field was kept productive in and out of season" (Antoine 1984:18).

Although sweet potatoes were the traditional Grenadian intercrop with sugarcane, other provision crops sometimes planted with them, the GCFA’s Gill had the idea to develop a new mix of cash and subsistence crops to grow with cane, with provision crops moved planted elsewhere. At Mt. Hartman, he began to advise farmers to plant the cane with cash crops like melons. The planting method was altered, too. “We modernized it,” Gill told me. “The land was traditionally planted by a method called 'bank and hole,’” in which holes were dug for the canes and provision was planted on the banks beside them. “Weeding was tough when you intercropped with yams and cassava,” Gill said, because the canes would gain size and narrow the rows. In time, their growth would become constricted by the intercropped plants, and it became hard to move through to weed. With melons or peppers, which you didn’t have to dig for, the task was not as arduous. Similarly, when farmers intercropped in the traditional manner, they planted the rows four feet apart to accommodate the additional crops. But GCFA members convinced farmers to plant their canes closer together, in regular rows, to make the plantation more stable during storms, to intercrop systematically to make weeding systematic, too.15 Meanwhile—despite the narrower rows—losses of cane yield were mitigated, Buddy told me, because “you still get fatter canes” as the canes filled in after the first-year intercrop was harvested.
In fact, when farmers intercropped systematically in the new way they saw better yields—turning the soil around cash crops as they were removed helped to mulch the canes. Fields planted in other crops after cane also brought high yields. Between better cane varieties and planting methods yields were far higher, according to Buddy, with one acre sometimes yielding 35-40 tons of cane, as much as farmers had previously grown on four acres. Canes “proclaim” shoots on their “ratoons” for about five years before yields drop. Each year, if possible, GCFA farmers planted a new cane stand and—every five or so years—pulled up an old one. According to Buddy, it was possible to keep healthy plants producing for as long as 15 years if farmers couldn’t put in new ones—a long period of production for one crop: “You cut, you weed, and you fertilize, and it's there,” he told me.\textsuperscript{16}

The fact that cane was harvested in the dry off-season brought another advantage—income when small farmers tended to be poorest. Sugarcane became small farmers’ “bonus crop.” Bishop’s son Lindon described it as a kind of “backbone”: “You get your money when everybody's broke,” he said.

**Out of Cane: GCFA Success, Food Sovereignty, and New Obstacles**

Integrated production of sugarcane retains the potential to stimulate the local economy and increase food independence. Beyond farmers and their families, cane impacted positively on employment, as cane farmers I talked to took pains to stress. The sale of rums impacted in hotels and restaurants. Milling provided employment for hundreds of people. Distilling requires transportation and distribution, which meant more jobs. And the farmers saw steady cash income from sale of their canes.

“The sugarcane industry is not just sugarcane,” Bishop said of its potential impacts—“or rum. We used to invest a lot in terms of having experts come and speak
about the by-products.” A lot was said about bagasse and the products you can make from it. Many animal feeds contain molasses, a byproduct of the process that creates white sugar.”  

17 And there had long been talk of returning to production of brown “wet” muscovado-style sugar. (Among projects that cane workers were examining in 2008 was resuming production of such sugar, which many Caribbean residents have turned back to because of its health food appeal.) Unfiltered sugarcane juice and syrup have a high nutritional content and are sometimes used as a sweetener by health food advocates. Both public officials and cane farmers had discussed but not followed through with plans to provide it to children in Grenada’s schools.  

18 “I really thought by now we would have had all these things going,” said Bishop, who had seen the products and benefits that sugarcane can yield on a visit to LVC small farmer organization ANAP in Cuba.  

19 Bishop also lamented the under-utilization of the Grenada Sugar Factory—affirmed by factory engineer and longtime industry watcher Michael Kurtin, a member of the Sugar Cane Revival Committee formed in 2008—that could have been producing cardboard and paper from bagasse, sweeteners, other distillates, and animal feeds.  

20 Unlike nutmeg, cocoa, or banana grown for export, sugarcane profited the local economy first, stimulating an array of activities, not least local farm community subsistence.  

Sugarcane also generated foreign exchange—cane juice or molasses didn’t have to be imported from abroad. But although it addressed the balance of trade in favorable ways, it never received anything like the governmental or professional attention that the island’s export staples did. “The government has never taken the possibilities seriously,” Bishop said of sugarcane. “In fact,” Bishop complained in 2008, “it is the other way
around.” Imports of molasses for rum-making had increased. “They have done their best to destroy this industry,” Bishop said.

Bishop’s was not necessarily a paranoid sentiment, as I came to understand. Through the GCFA’s efforts, sugarcane farmers were increasingly organized, having a strong “demonstration effect,” as Joseph Gill noted. In his view, the then-current NNP government desired neither a strong union presence in farming nor the promulgation of the GCFA model, which did not foster the development of commercial agriculture and stood in the way of local tourist development: cane farmers' traditional lands included a great deal of increasingly desirable north and south shore real estate. As early as 1991 the GCFA was holding meetings to identify lands from which cane farmers were being ousted, that were being lost to real estate sales or threatened by development, calling for creation of “a resistant front” of Grenada organizations to protest these developments, as minutes from some of the meetings held then show.21

**GCFA Membership: A Cane Farmer Profile**

*I wouldn’t say the cane farmer is a loner. Maybe he is isolated when it comes to attention from the top. But among themselves cane farmers were very organized and socialized a lot. If a farmer needs some assistance in housing repair, or in land preparation, some guys on the team will come forward.*

—Elliot Bishop

Who were the farmer-members of the GCFA? A survey undertaken by the GCFA in 1992 to ascertain member needs, carried out by agronomist and sociologist Dunstan Campbell, provides the only direct data gathered about the cane farmer cadre. The study shows the status of some of the country’s poorest people in 1992, almost a decade after the collapse of the Grenada revolution and US invasion.22 One hundred
sixty-seven farmers in three of the country’s six parishes (St. David, St. George, and St. Andrew) participated in the survey, 92% of them GCFA members.

The majority of members were over 55. Just 20% were under 35, while 65% were over 45, confirming—according to the author—“that there is a significant large population of middle aged and old farmers growing sugarcane in Grenada” (Campbell 1992:4). Twenty-two percent of respondents were women (Campbell 1992:4).

Ninety percent of those interviewed had only finished primary school. Seven percent had no formal schooling. Only 8%—just seven of the farmers interviewed—reported having a vehicle; one of the vehicles reported was a bicycle (15). An elevated number—69%—said that they owned their homes. Thirty-two percent had no electricity. Fifty-one percent got water outdoors via a pipe to the house or standpipe, and just 33% had a toilet in the house (Campbell 1992:9-12).

The report stated that “[m]ore than 60% of food consumed” by respondents “comes from the farm,” a number that suggests considerable subsistence consumption on the part of many of the country’s poorest people toward the close of the twentieth century. Food that they did purchase, Campbell wrote, tended to be “restricted to energy foods like rice and flour” (Campbell 1992:16-19).

The survey found that sugarcane was yielding 55% of members’ income, food crops 14%. A “cow,” singular, brought 35% of one farmer’s income. Average pay was between 15 and 20 EC dollars a day [US $5.60 and 7.50]. Eighty percent reported annual farm income below $4,000 EC (just under $1500 US) dollars, all of which—for the 10% of the population said to be benefiting from the industry in 1986—suggests the
very thin margins that many were operating on, the considerable loss to the country of sugarcane as source of income as the industry collapsed later.

In answer to a question designed to capture the growth and future promise of sugarcane farming, 13% of respondents said that they were “planting more cane.” A majority listed upgrading and expansion of their farming as among the chief goals (Campbell 1992:41). Fully 90% were working plots in several places; the second plot was 30% less likely to be flat than the first.

“Finding adequate labor” was a problem in all households surveyed, but a surprisingly low 35% reported that they participated in some form of shared labor (Campbell 1992:27-28). (A conversation with Elliot Bishop about this finding suggested that farmers answering did not associate “shared labor” with family labor or with harvest maroons, but took the question to refer to things like “day for day” exchanges, where neighbors took turns helping one another during the course of the year.)

Interestingly, given their poverty and lack of formal education, 48% ranked farming as the “most important profession” ahead of “doctor” (31%) and teacher (8%); politician garnered 2% (Campbell 1992:55-56). As Campbell’s summary notes, sugarcane farmers saw their contribution as vital, believed in a future for cane farming, and saw it as a “viable and respectable option for the youth.” As evidence of this, 75% “said that they would encourage a son to go into farming and 66%... would encourage a daughter to do so” (Campbell 1992:54-55).

One finding that stood out was how little cane farmers valued government extension services, with just 12% finding these reliable, 14% finding them unreliable, and 72% not bothering to respond, possibly indicating little contact with extension in the
first place. After pests and diseases, the biggest problem cane farmers faced was praedial larceny (crop theft), with 14% reporting they struggled with the problem.

**Mt. Hartman and WHAPCO**

The former Mt. Hartman estate is a 230-acre expanse of highly fertile ground on Grenada's south shore, one of the few places in Grenada where mechanized agriculture is possible. It features high quality grasses for grazing and its dry forest is a sanctuary for the Grenada Dove, the national bird, now threatened with extinction. It is also an oasis, with an ancient well and fresh water on site, where traces of Indian settlement sometimes turn up. During the revolution the Cubans dug two new wells there to facilitate agricultural expansion.

In 1987, four years after the revolution imploded—with the economy in bad shape in Grenada—a group of GCFA members including Bishop, Gill, and Lowe took up residence on the abandoned lands at Mt. Hartman, encouraged by the Herbert Blaize government as part of the Model Farms initiative then underway. They wanted to start a cooperative, but Blaize’s government—with prodding from USAID—was pushing people toward the private sector. So the partners had the lands surveyed and started a company—the Wharf Agricultural Products Company, or WHAPCO (Pattullo 1996:43). Along with Gill, Bishop, and Lowe, Everington Smith—a mason—and Francis Alexis, current head of the Grenada Bar Association, were members. In time, despite efforts at Mt. Hartman that attracted over 100 more farmers to the area, they would lose the lands to a planned tourist complex—a hotel and golf course that, despite their removal from the property, have never materialized.

In early March 2008 I toured Mt. Hartman with Smith, Bishop, and Gill. Some of the scenes from Harry Belafonte’s 1957 film *Island in the Sun* were made here. With
its unfolding vistas of near-shore islands and passing yachts there is a stirring beauty about the place. In 1987, however, the land had been grown over—WHAPCO members cleared it. “In three months we plowed up 20 acres,” Bishop told me. In time they cleared 80. They planted cherry trees next to the peninsula’s black sand beach; they are still there.

At Mt. Hartman WHAPCO farmers introduced cantaloupe and other muskmelons, butternut squash, a new hardy okra, yellow-flesh watermelons, red and yellow peppers, lettuce, endive, and escarole to Grenada. They also introduced winter squash, which has since become a staple of Grenadian diets. They reopened another quite ancient well, reportedly dating to the first people, and used it to water crops and livestock, raising cattle, sheep, and goats.

Among the links members made were with the tourist trade. “Sixty per cent of our income comes from the tourist market,” Gill told researcher Polly Pattullo during this period. “We supply yachts and the supermarkets and marketing board. The yachtmen take great pleasure in buying our fruit” (Pattullo 1996:43). The WHAPCO partners also sold produce to their neighbors, to local hotels, and in the nearby capital. And they fed and encouraged the community that grew up around them, many of whom ended up, without formal titles, on land nearby. Attracted by their energy, in fact, 75 to 95 small farmers—about 40 with their families—took up farming on the slopes around them. “We inspired a lot of people,” Gill told me. The partners qualified as a model farm under the provisions of the 1986 Agricultural Rehabilitation and Crop Diversification Project, providing extension services to surrounding farmers as part of their agreement.
At Mt. Hartman GCFA members refined many of the cane farming techniques described in the previous sections of this chapter. Sugarcane became central to their vision of a sustainable agriculture for Grenada. They held regular maroons—planting, felling, and feasting together—to harvest and cement community ties, creating standing work teams for the community. Almost immediately the import of melons from Trinidad ceased, replaced by Mt. Hartman produce. The young farmers were impacting Grenada’s bottom line, making the sort of contribution required for a revival of Grenadian agriculture from the ashes of the New Jewel nightmare, and largely on the invader’s economic terms.

Overrun though it has become, Mt. Hartman remains tranquil and beautiful—nothing has happened there since the community left. “Our farming was friendly to the habitat,” Bishop told me. “We did not farm on the hills where the doves nest.” As we toured the property the three men shook their heads, still shocked that they had lost the place.

George Brizan, who had formed a new political party—the National Democratic Congress (NDC)—and became Agriculture Minister in 1992, promised to get WHAPCO a lease for the property. But the two parties could not work out details. The government was willing to grant a short lease of five or six years, but nothing approaching the 33 or 66 years the men sought. They wanted a long-term arrangement so that they could make long-term plans and, as important, attain the kind of security that would enable them to obtain loans with which to implement them. So the WHAPCO farmers held out for better terms. Later, Bishop worried that maybe they should have accepted Brizan’s offer and re-bargained, possession (it is said) being 9/10 of the law, from a position of
strength further down the road. But banks had refused to deal with WHAPCO because of its insecure tenure (Pattullo 43, 1996). They had reason to be wary.

In 1996 the government changed hands. Although there had been talk that Mt. Hartman was being eyed for a hotel before, during the 1996 campaign NNP candidate Keith Mitchell had run on a platform of reviving Grenadian agriculture and promised to protect farmers' access to the lands. “Opposition is always the very best friend to the farmer!” Bishop told me in June 2010.

In 1997, however, the WHAPCO farmers learned that the new Mitchell government had leased the land—240 acres at Mt. Hartman and all of 80-acre Hog Island, just offshore—for what they viewed as the paltry sum of $325,000 EC dollars (ca. US$121,000) per year. They heard it on the radio with the rest of the country. A “five star” exclusive Ritz Carlton luxury resort and golf course were planned there. Two hundred to 300 people would be employed in the construction, the government and developers announced, 800 permanently employed at the resort (Grenadian Voice 1997:36). Later, the Ritz Carlton chain would issue a cease-and-desist order for use of its name which had—apparently—been borrowed by whoever sold the government on the increasingly tenuous-sounding deal. But in 1997, Prime Minister Keith Mitchell was promising that with the hotel's 225 rooms airlines would see that Grenadian tourism had reached critical mass. Mt. Hartman would be the kind of “destination resort” that would help anchor other tourism growth. “When this project comes [they] will beg us to come to Grenada,” he told reporters (Grenadian Voice 1997:36).

As details leaked out, the deal prompted outrage. An op-editorial by Brizan's National Democratic Party, now out of office, noted that the government had leased
“321 acres of Grenada’s best and flattest land. . . at a price of 2 cents a square foot.” In comparison, “Grenadians who got house spots in the area. . . were charged 60 cents a square foot; private lands in the area are sold at $4-$5 a square foot” (NDC 1997). No feasibility study had been performed, no debate held about use of the lands.

The question of compensation for the farmers arose; Mitchell’s government promised them a settlement. A December 3, 1997 press release from the GCFA complained that “in the process of collecting data from Mt. Hartman farmers to determine the level” of recompense due to them the Prime Minister had “gone ahead without any background information of farmers' claims and accepted a 'compensation cheque' from the so-called developers.” The compensation question would divide the farmers working there, including WHAPCO farmers from the rest. The press release—which shows the rhetorical earmarks of an FS approach to the issue (then an official part of WINFA policy for a year) if no mention of the term itself, demanded that Mt. Hartman “remain under agriculture,” “that agricultural lands be preserved for agricultural purpose,” “that Government should implement a national land policy,” “that more emphasis be put into food security,” “that agriculture be developed hand in hand with tourism,” and that an independent environmental impact assessment of the project be performed. “It is foolish,” the GCFA authors noted, “to destroy a successful project with a white elephant. It is a crime to destroy one's natural resources for personal gains” (GCFA 1997).

The GCFA staged protests against the lease and imminent removal of farmers. Resistance to the government’s move “caused a lot of organizations to get life again,” Bishop told me. In actions that hinted at a potential for future coalition between small
farmers, environmental and other groups, the then-still-extant PFU, Friends of the Earth Grenada, and other organizations joined the fray. But although there was public sympathy, it would wane. The Prime Minister painted the conflict as one between many jobs and a few poor locals—the country against the selfish interests of a small group of farmers. There was a split among the nation’s unions over the hotel project. In former times, several of the country’s big unions had backed cane farmer efforts. But Chester Humphrey, head of the Technical and Allied Workers’ Union and the country’s most vocal and visible union leader, instead backed the resort project, on the premise—according to Bishop—that it would mean union jobs. Humphrey’s position boded poorly for the kind of future alliance needed to create a national campaign for FS.

As parting blow the compensation offer came just before Christmas. A government representative, Bishop says, went around telling farmers that the checks were “waiting to be picked up” and to “forget about the GCFA people.” “That undermined our solidarity,” says Bishop. “Christmas came, everyone was poor, and there was a stampede for checks.”

After they lost Mt. Hartman, many of the small farmers who had worked there quit farming; food production fell. “Killing cane,” Gill told me, was “a huge blow to food production.”

According to public enterprise specialist Venkata Ramanadham, 12,000 metric tons of cane per year were harvested in Grenada in 1997 (1997: 211). A serious slide took place during the next three years, when production by GCFA members ceased at Mt. Hartman. By 2000 the national yield was down to just 2800 tons (Titus 2009:4), a drop that coincided with the remaining farmers’ removal from the area.
The Prime Minister at Mt. Hartman

In the months before December 1997, when the controversy was at its height, the Prime Minister came to Mt. Hartman and encouraged the farmers to leave the area. He also suggested that they take some of the jobs at the planned new golf course. Mitchell told farmers his own father had been a farmer and that cane never got him anything. One farmer courageously pointed out that Mitchell's father had produced a Prime Minister. But Mitchell was unmoved; he opined that he'd rather be a caddy. “That was a real betrayal,” Gill told me. “That was the beginning of the collapse” of the cane industry.

Several of the older farmers had a hard time finding new work. “Some just die,” Smith told me. “It’s a far-reaching thing,” said Bishop of sugarcane farming and its possible disappearance. “It’s not just that you no longer have lands to produce. It’s a culture. You see—the farmer—he gets up in the morning and he goes to his joupa. He does his little from the garden—little provision—he can cook his food there. While his food is cooking he's doing his work on the land. He spends the whole day, you know? And at lunch time he will eat and relax, have a little sleep. And then he goes back and he has livestock—he have about two or three cows. He would milk his cow and he has milk. . . People were encouraged to walk away from it. And it's a mistake.”

Public officials, according to Bishop and Gill, made repeated disparaging comments about cane farming, which GCFA members saw as part of a wider effort to undermine the industry. Gregory Bowen, the NNP’s agricultural minister, had little regard for the farmers’ efforts at Mt. Hartman and, like the Prime Minister, tied cane farming to slavery and hard labor. “He said cane work was backbreaking,” Gill recalled. The criticism struck a chord with many people. Meanwhile, the government talked up
the benefits of a hotel and the jobs it would bring. "Whether it was a conscious effort to degrade the farmer image or no, a lot of people start saying stupid things like 'cane kill Abel' or 'cane is slavery,' negative statements that were coming out about this laborious work," Bishop told me. "'All the cane farmers are old people,' people would say. Those statements didn't help."

As of 2012, no development had taken place at Mt. Hartman. No food had been produced there on one of the island's few flat arable expanses. In its 1997 budget speech, the government had said construction would begin that year. Five years later another paper reported that the deal "which was signed with some Venezuelan nationals. . . failed to materialize." The government was reportedly seeking new partners for the project. Nineteen million EC dollars had been guaranteed to those Venezuelan nationals, the article said, and "[I]t is still not clear how much of the funds were drawn down [withdrawn]. . . since the deal was not laid before the Houses of Parliament" (Grenada Today 2002:15). A lawyer quoted in the same article asserted that the government was in the process of re-acquiring the lands from yet another party.

Whatever the truth of this, on three successive occasions as national elections neared, fresh signs were put up and the roads made more passable, as if to suggest that construction on Mt. Hartman was imminent. At least three entities have been cited as developers. Accusations of fraud and misuse of government monies for the site have been lodged repeatedly. The land sits idle.

In 2010 the government—the government of NDC Prime Minister Tillman Thomas, who defeated Mitchell in 2008—floated the idea of financing a hotel on Mt. Hartman itself. The IMF objected to the idea of additional debt for a country whose
“potential for debt distress”—of default or bankruptcy—was “high.” For Grenada, with a $140 million dollar EC food bill in a region suffering food crisis, it was hard to construct the Mt. Hartman saga as anything but a waste.

**Sale of the Grenada Sugar Factory**

Several years after the announced lease of Mt. Hartman, on March 8, 2001, Mitchell’s NNP government sold the country’s 81.4% share in the Grenada Sugar Factory at Woodlands along with its associated cane lands. The factory, which employed 120 people, went for what Gill, Bishop, and others saw as a scandalously low 4.8 million EC (US $1.9 million) dollars. One hundred and fifty acres of prime agricultural land owned by the government at the Calivigny/Hope Vale estate were sold in the same transaction to estate owner Leroy Neckles, a grower of sugarcane, nutmeg and other crops, already a part-owner of the factory. At the time 100 small farmers were working at Calivigny, 50 to 75 farmers living at Hope Vale. About 35 acres then lay under pure stand cane there, according to Bishop; the rest was leased by farmers who grew cane and other crops. These were traditional cane lands, but sat in the midst of a south shore bursting with housing and tourism development. Neckles promised to keep the factory open and farmers employed. (He contractually agreed to keep the lands in cane, as would be revealed, although he was not compelled to honor this promise.) Without the Mt. Hartman expulsion—with a vital cane farming community still acting as propulsive nucleus for the GCFA, inspiring renewed farming efforts around the country—Bishop felt that the sale of the factory would not have been possible. “Undermine cane and you seriously hamper the activity” in the factory, he said.
Shortly, the factory stopped milling canes to focus solely on distilling, eventually returning to the practice of importing molasses for rum production. “They're not really interested in employment,” Bishop told me.

Was there an unspoken decision by the NNP to get out of sugar? “Sugar has its enemies,” former agricultural ministry and GCFA official Ken Joseph told me. In 2012, a former chairman of the Marketing and National Importing Board told me flatly that the sale of the factory and lands was “a real estate deal.”

“Yes, Cain kill Abel,” said former GCFA treasurer Brave September when we spoke of the Mt. Hartman debacle. “But it was (former prime minister) Keith Mitchell who killed cane.”

**GCFA Leadership and Goals**

As Bishop recalls it, members of the GCFA’s board of directors saw their biggest goals as four-fold. These included helping GCFA farmers to obtain good prices for their crops; lowering their transportation costs; and obtaining access to land for small farmers and agriculture in general. The fourth goal was that farmers would come to own their own mill, said Bishop, who recalled widespread enthusiasm across the GCFA for this idea. Leadership had come to believe that having mills might offer a real basis in self-sufficiency for cane farmers, and conceived a plan to own and maintain two of them. In 1996, they purchased an existing mill at Marian with assistance from The Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS), a Dutch NGO, and began planning to build another on lands granted to them by the then-NDC government (Williams 2003:400) at Poyntzfield near River Antoine. Among other things, the new mill would enable them to squeeze five more gallons of syrup out of every ton of cane (Antoine 1990:2). The GCFA was able to obtain funding for the new mill with a loan from
the Grenada Development Bank and assistance from the Commonwealth Fellowship Program and GCFA members. Construction was completed in 1998.

“The feeling in the GCFA was that the [Grenada Woodlands] sugar factory was ripping off farmers. Better we get into manufacturing ourselves,” Bishop told me in 2010. “But we made errors.” The GCFA faced stiff challenges getting the mill running. The shaft was mounted backward, and quickly broke. After that it was difficult to keep aligned, and often broke down. People who had roles in the mill during the period struggled during interviews to contain their frustration over events of the period, when a great deal was at stake for the organization and its troubles mounted.

At first farmers were paid more than the established rate for their canes. The mills were operated on a share system where the syrup extracted from each farmer's canes was measured: one-third of payment was kept by the GCFA, two thirds paid in cash to the farmer. Farmers also paid a transport charge of 10%, which helped to build Association revenues (Antoine 1990:13). In a practice that had been established by the nutmeg and cocoa associations, farmers also received a “bonus”—actually a deferred payment—at Christmas. But when the Association ran into financial difficulties and had to lower per-ton prices, a perception developed that the board was squeezing farmers, not just canes. Wariness crept into relations between the board and its members.

“The farmers were seeing us now as a factory,” like the Grenada Sugar Factory, Bishop told me. “We should have said, 'It will take some time before we break even.'” Instead the board raised the per-gallon price\(^{36}\) back up to accommodate the complaints. “We were running at a loss but farmers were saying, 'Dem want tief us!,'” Bishop recalled. Board members, in turn, came to feel antagonized, that farmers were only
looking for monetary benefits. Meeting attendance and enthusiasm dwindled. The pennies per ton meant a great deal on both sides, to farmers—one of whom told me “Man cannot make love on empty belly,” when I asked about the dispute—and to the board, which would fall into deep arrears on loan repayments.

The problems arising with the mill recalled early discussion about whether the group should form a union, a cooperative, or register as a business entity, which latter they had done. In the neoliberal period poor people’s organizations have been under pressure to a) provide economically, where possible, for members; b) to provide the kinds of welfare services that governments have abandoned; and c) to make money to support such increased responsibilities and offset lost revenue from traditional benefactors (including NGOs), and from declining contributions and dues-paying from members. In an interview in Santo Domingo in 2008, Vía Campesina Caribe coordinator Juana Ferrer told me that the increasing amount of time her organization spent devoted to the survival of members often prevented it from militating for the systematic change it believed was necessary to improve their lot. Marc Edelman writes of similar tensions in Costa Rican farmer organizations in the same period, where “conflicts over money and political vision constituted a frequent source of tension” and new projects or negotiations with government “often led organizations to focus on serving their existing constituencies rather than on. . . building a. . . movement for fundamental change” (1999:157). Here in Grenada, societal transformation was initially far down the list of GCFA goals—the revolution having just been wiped out—and survival paramount. The GCFA had its basis in accommodation of emerging neoliberal realities. Although the the organization had something of an activist orientation—including through its connections
to WINFA—it was in the main a service organization. Would creating a different kind of entity, operating as something other than a business, have been more useful? With hindsight, Joseph Gill said, “We should have created a cooperative.” His view differed sharply from seven NGO leaders and industry watchers whom I interviewed in 2012 seeking feedback on this chapter—including former Grenada CARDI chief Ken Buckmire—who criticized the failure the GCFA’s failure to take a more businesslike approach regarding the mill and in many of its functions.

Both mills struggled. When HIVOS decided to stop working in the Caribbean toward the end of the decade, funding for the Marian mill ceased. (The withdrawal of HIVOS led to a near-collapse of many of WINFA’s East Caribbean operations.) Increases in the “volume of cane [and] wear and tear on the old [Marian] machine caused mechanical failures and breakdowns for long periods,” Bishop told me.\(^{38}\) When the two mills were closed, farmers had no choice but to take their canes elsewhere. As time wore on some farmers began to lose interest in the GCFA—or grumbled that the relationship had become exploitative. (Only one GCFA officer—the secretary/general manager—had ever drawn a salary.) Farmers started taking their canes back to the Grenada Sugar Factory at Woodlands—now the organization’s direct competition.

The Woodlands mill was sold in 2001; it stopped grinding canes in 2003. In December 2004, after handing out relief checks of approximately 1,300 EC dollars (US $486) to cane farmers—who had been hard-hit by Hurricane Ivan—Agricultural Minister Gregory Bowen, who had previously professed his distaste for sugarcane farming, told them that they “should consider diversifying their operations to include other crops.”\(^{39}\) Bowen’s failure to appreciate the basics of Grenadian sugarcane farming—the diversity
that it makes possible—might be judged as something of a public relations failure of the GCFA, which had not managed to inform the country of how rooted their activities were in a highly productive and agro-diverse Grenadian farming tradition. But Bowen’s comment also betrayed a serious lack of awareness about those traditions on the part of the government’s agricultural minister.

The People’s Basic Food: WINFA and the GCFA

Agriculture in the Windward Islands is undergoing rapid transformation, from a highly diversified... base to a more... specialised production. Rural people in their quest to amass wealth are forsaking communal ties. The evidence is pointing to the destruction of civil societies. The coup-de main,\(^40\) sou sou and other forms of cooperation are fast fading away. As such WINFA supports the notion of FS.

—WINFA Food Security Policy statement

In addition to its activities promoting the development of sugarcane farming, the GCFA worked to improve the lot of small farmers across the island. In an April 2008 email message to me, GCFA General Secretary Elliot Bishop looked beyond the horizons of the GCFA, saying that the organization sought to achieve “sustainable livelihood for the farming community,” to “advance the importance of women's role in food production,” and to foster “agricultural diversification.” As members of the Productive Farmers Union (PFU), some GCFA members had been members of the WINFA, an organization created in 1982 to advocate for East Caribbean farmers, which came to include organizations in all the Windward Islands.\(^41\) In 1986, GCFA members voted to join WINFA, and it was through WINFA that the GCFA became a member of LVC. Today WINFA includes the National Farmers Union of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; the Dominica Farmers Union; Martinique’s Organization of Agricultural Producers; the GCFA, the River Sallee (Grenada) Women’s Collective, and Grenada
Beekeepers’ Association, and St. Lucia’s National Farmers Association, which it helped to establish.

A brochure given to me by organization executives on a 2008 visit to its St. Vincent headquarters describes WINFA’s determination to champion “the cause of farmers and rural communities in the Caribbean. . . through programmes which address. . . food security, gender equity, sustainable development, and sector linkages.”

Its more specific goals included:

- helping to develop local farmer initiatives like the GCFA effort to revive sugarcane;
- developing alternative livelihood for farmers, including through fair trade (FT) and agro-processing;
- building farmers’ awareness of issues, including agriculture-related developments in the WTO, the LOMÉ trade and aid agreement and its aftermath,\(^4.2\) FS, and food security;
- lobbying, and capacity-building for farmers and their organizations; and
- mainstreaming gender issues in all its programs (WINFA 2000).

As a member of LVC, WINFA supports the notion of FS, which begins, by the organization’s own definition, at national level: “each nation has the right to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce the people’s basic food while respecting the productive and cultural diversity” (emphasis mine) of the population. “In this light, WINFA opposes globalization of agricultural food systems which places the control of food in the hands of a few large multinationals.” “Those who work on the land,” the brochure says, “should benefit from the land.” As an extension of its opposition to corporate dominance over food production, WINFA opposed “the patenting of plant and animal genetic material.” Citing women’s central historical role as providers of food, the document says that it also supports “the notion that women’s access to land as the
basis for food production should be guaranteed and that other support systems should be created for the performance of their roles."

In the 1990s, with HIVOS providing much of its funding, WINFA grew to as many as 10,000 farmers. When HIVOS pulled out of the Caribbean, however, much of WINFA’s infrastructure collapsed and—as noted in the case of the GCFA—many of its projects suffered. WINFA began again, opening membership to individual farmers, community groups, and other farm organizations. When an eight-year WTO confrontation between the US and Europe over bananas was resolved in favor of US-headquartered Latin America-based banana companies like Chiquita and Dole, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent—strongly dependent on the banana trade—faced disaster. Bananas are the quintessential small-farmer export in those countries, traditionally providing a third of all jobs and half of export earnings (Myers 2004:2,158). Rescuing the banana trade became the organization’s overriding obsession, to the exclusion—some believed—of wider or more transformational goals for the organization. Hope came through development of an FT model for banana exports that brought partnership with WINFRESH (formerly WIBDECO, the Windward Islands Banana Development and Exporting Company) and trade agreements with several British supermarket chains, a model that is controversial within LVC and among Caribbean LVC organizations, in part because it drew WINFA into a business relationship with those entities. Renegotiations of terms through the WTO in 2007 and 2009 saw banana farmers lose an increasing share of trade preferences previously allotted to them by importing countries.
Among WINFA initiatives were young farmer exchanges with Canadian, Caribbean, and Latin American organizations; regional lobbying and advocacy for land policies that supported small and poor farmers; and small farmer education and training. Through WINFA’s relationship with the Central American Association of Peasant Organizations for Community Development (ASOCODE), a Central American farmer organization that later became La Vía Campesina Centroamericana), members of the GCFA had participated in exchanges with farmers from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica. In Grenada, WINFA had provided funding to establish the River Sallee Women’s Collective described in Chapter 7, with GCFA farmers supplying produce for and helping to sell several products that the collective developed for production.46

When I asked for the GCFA’s definition of FS in 2008 Elliot Bishop offered the following, employing the notion of a basic right to food expressed in WINFA’s 2000 document: “The ability of a country to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce the People’s Basic Food at the household, community, and national levels” (FS Questionnaire 2008). The GCFA, Bishop wrote, was working to apply WINFA’s vision of FS. The organization’s basic complaint about Grenadian government policy was that “the development approach for agriculture is designed for export—not for FS.” “We continue to lobby governments for agricultural land policy, land reform, incentives for farmers, and planning,” Bishop wrote. “We encourage farmers to return to organic farming, and to ‘grow what you eat, eat what you grow,’” as the PRG slogan had it.

“It’s a human right to be self-sufficient in food,” Bishop elaborated. “But that is an idea you have to instill in people.” He noted how that right can run counter to the desire,
instilled in people by advertising, for highly processed high fat content foods. Certainly, this was a perennial, long-term battle for those seeking to assert FS in their countries.

GCFA members kept their own counsel about the FT model. It remained, in many ways, far from their own day-to-day concerns, which was in some ways a problem in itself. The GCFA never saw communications from LVC, for example, unless they came through WINFA’s St. Vincent office, and this—I came to believe—prevented the GCFA from connecting more fully with LVC or its initiatives. But Bishop acknowledged that WINFA’s focus on bananas and FT had come to predominate in that organization, bent as it was on banana farmers’ survival, sometimes to the exclusion of other activities, including the pursuit of local food independence. The other WINFA countries were locked in their own historic patterns, trying to manage within the constraints that those patterns imposed on them. But in many ways—despite all of their struggles, and although the struggles of farmers in the various EC countries are not fully commensurate with their own—I came to feel that the cane farmers’ approach to agriculture, which, more in keeping with WINFA’s own stated FS policy, emphasized development for local consumption and development of the local economy through intercropping and development of organic diversification, had strong advantages over the FT model, that these had been thrown into greater relief by the banana struggle.

**Conclusion: Progressive Organization in a Neoliberal Straitjacket?**

Despite difficulties, the GCFA grew for fifteen years before the organization was hit with the loss of Mt. Hartman, the sale of the sugar factory, and Hurricane Ivan. These events, arguably beyond the organization’s control, nonetheless revealed its strategic vulnerabilities. They demonstrated why the GCFA and sugarcane farmers required government support, and policies that supported agriculture and basic needs.
development over tourism, why—beyond a doubt for this writer—FS “needs governments” to support its basic objectives, including provision and protection of land to small cultivators for farming. When I arrived in Grenada in 2008 the GCFA had laid off its small staff and was in the process of reconstituting as a national farmer organization, creating a new executive committee and amalgamating with the Grenada Association of Beekeepers, Grenada Fair Trade Farmers, and River Sallee Women’s Cooperative (see Chapter 7). The hope was to create a genuine farmer movement.

As it turned out a new farmer umbrella group—the Grenada Federation of Agricultural and Fisheries Organizations (GFAFO)—was already in the works; the GCFA dropped its own organizing initiative to join it. Over time, however, it became apparent that GFAFO was a vehicle for the political aspirations of one farmer—Grenada Senator Keith Clouden—who was strongly affiliated with the then-opposition NDC political party. Among Clouden’s objectives were policies clearly not in keeping with FS or Grenada’s peasant-subsistence legacy, including a push to create a more professionalized minimum-wage cadre of agricultural workers to furnish labor to farmers, described in the next chapter.47 The hurricanes, as the next chapter also shows—would provide the occasion for a push to fully commercialize Grenadian small farming, one that threatened the country’s subsistence farming legacy, especially women, children, and the poorest people.
Figure 5-1. Areas, largely on the north and south shores, identified by Antoine in 1989 as under cane cultivation (marked by Xs).
Figure 5-2. (above, right to left) GCFA principals and founders Joseph Gill and Eliot Bishop at Mt. Hartman in 2008 with partner Everington Smith, under a cherry tree that they planted.

Figure 5-3. Cane farmer and GCFA member Frankie Lewis locking his joupa, located on the edge of traditional cane lands of Calivigny.
Figure 5-4. A cane harvest maroon in Marian in May 2012 (see Appendix)

Figure 5-6. Traditional meal of provision, saltfish souse, and bakes provided for maroon harvesters at a cane harvest maroon in Marian in May 2012 (see Appendix)
Small farmer sugarcane cultivation takes place around the Caribbean (Mohammed and Ferdinand 1991: 6-7), including Jamaica, where various intercrop combinations have been investigated (see Thomas 1981), and in Cuba (Rivacoba and Morin 2002). It also happens India (http://www.iisr.nic.in/download/publications/successstory2-english.pdf, accessed February 2, 2013), and South Africa http://www.kzndae.gov.za/Portals/0/Agri-Updates/INTERCROPPING%20OF%20SUGARCANE.pdf, accessed February 2, 2013. But the approach in Grenada was unique in the manner in which it was initiated as a grassroots effort by cane farmers themselves.

Lowe, who worked full time in the position from 1985-1990, is today an adviser to Grenada’s Agricultural Ministry. Despite his repeated professions of willingness to talk, efforts to interview him across four trips to Grenada proved unavailing.

According to agronomist Ken Buckmire at least some sugarcane was grown by almost every small farmer in Grenada, whether they lived in the “cane belts” or the country’s “breadbasket” (middle belt). Sugarcane, he said, was traditionally the first crop farmers put in when they began to work new plots. Small plots still dot the country.

Farmers in the middle belt where cocoa predominated as well as growers of export crops generally tended to be of Indian or part-Indian descent, descendants of indentured laborers who arrived between 1857 and 1884 (Steele 2003:187-188). Although the GCFA attempted to organize in other parts of the country, it was poverty in the traditional cane belts that the leadership initially sought to address. Antagonism based around such racial and ethnic differences is referenced in Martin Felix’s short history of the Grenada Labor movement: http://www.bigdrumnation.org/notes/grenadalabormovement.htm, accessed December 11, 2012.

Gairy had acquired some shares in the factory for the government, according to several observers I spoke to. But the PRG acquired a majority stake—85%—and placed a worker on the board of directors. With the stake it also acquired Hope Vale and Calivigny lands that were under cane. The PRG also raised the price paid to farmers per ton of cane (first one, then two EC dollars [2.67 = 1 US] per ton).

Farmers and GCFA officials called into question whether the rums could be rightly called Grenadian if (along with the aging process) the syrup, which gives rums their flavor, did not come from the island. Molasses imparts a different flavor to rum, those farmers insisted.

The feed is produced by two basic methods: feeding cane tops to animals, or chopping cane tops and nodes and mixing them with molasses and urea, which helps animals to metabolize the fodder, and sometimes also with protein supplements (http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/s8850e/S8850E10.htm, accessed December 11, 2012)

A cane association—Cane Growers Limited—run by estate owners who leased lands to small farmers, had (also) previously existed. The GCFA consisted solely of small farmers.

There are dozens of varieties of sugarcane ranging from kinds best suited to eating raw to those that yield high quantities of juice and/or which grow best in various conditions, as well as canes adapted for production of distillates like ethanol.

One area for further inquiry is the impact that the Model Farms program and an IMF-aided agricultural diversification project begun in 1986 (Brierley 2003:38) had on what was grown and sold, both for local consumption and export.”

Such small farmer refinements in sugarcane production and production of other crops—undoubtedly taking place in other countries—are worth investigating in pursuit of a regional vision of FS by LVC Caribe. They suggest the need for a regional research facility for grassroots organizations and like-minded researchers.
The common variety was 63118, “a good bearer” according to Buddy, introduced in the 1980s, that he continues to use. His grandmother had planted the “Barbados cane,” a variety that several people recalled older farmers using. This likely refers to a breed introduced from the British West Indies Sugarcane Breeding Station in the 1950s:

The best time to plant sugarcane, farmers told me, was around June. They would harvest a year later.

Bagasse cools and adds nutrients to farmer's fields, retains water but also admits it readily, inhibits weeds, is inexpensive and—with its high sugar content—breaks down quickly over time. It is often mixed with lime (http://www.gardenguides.com/2208-mulch-guide-sugarcane-bagasse.html, accessed December 11, 2012.) Washed dairy manure, meanwhile, is perhaps the “single-best soil-builder at farmers' disposal, and can be used as topdressing or for soil improvement”; its low nutrient numbers make it safe for wide use (2011 plantea.com/manure.htm, accessed November 3, 2012). According to sugarcane farmer Frankie Lewis, the availability of a fertilizer called Barbados 50, introduced in the 1950s, a mix of “potash, sulfur of ammonia, and salt” that farmers combined with their hands, had caused many farmers to stop composting, replacing pen manure to a great degree on the island. Stimulating the renewed use of animal manures and livestock production was and remains at the core of GCFA hopes for revival of Grenada's small farm sector. Buddy often urged young families to obtain a cow (“If they're going to have babies they should have a cow!”) and fattened his own on cane tops. Stimulating local production of milk, cheese, eggs, butter, and yoghurt—largely wiped out as local products, especially by the import of long shelf-life (UHT) milk, much of it from France—loomed among the possibilities, along with production of other kinds of animals

According to Bishop, this innovation was Gill's, too, and grew out of what he had learned at Mirabeau and observed in his cane farmer work under the PRG.

Intercropping sugarcane also kept soil healthy, according to Buddy. “Crops look for nutrients," he said. "And they leave others. Sugarcane likes nitrogen, but it leaves potash. You would need nitrogen if you didn't intercrop. With intercropping you maximize production but also rejuvenate the soil. When you go to another crop it's very healthy." Buddy’s comment can be profitably compared with recent research by Brazilian farmers, who have discovered that they can keep canes productive for 12-15 years by plowing cane trash (leaves) back into the soil (Osava 2011)

According to Elliot Bishop, production of table sugar was not considered, although some members called for an initiative to produce it.

In Grenada school children had in former times been given cane juice before choir practice in the belief that it made their voices sweeter, according to former River Sallee school headmaster Elizardo Charles. In 2012, the school food program had a budget of 2,500,000 EC dollars (grbudget_statement_2012.pdf, Annex VI).

The Asociacion Nacional de Productores Pequenos, or National Association of Small Farmers.

“Sugarcane is a plant with exceptional characteristics, capable of synthesizing soluble carbohydrates and fibrous material at a higher rate than other commercial crops,” write Rafael Suárez Rivacoba and Rafael B. Morín about sugarcane’s possibilities. These abilities open up “practically an infinite number of uses for its hundreds of by-products, which in many cases are of greater... value and economic importance than sugar itself” (2002:247). Cuba has made considerable strides with intercropping sugarcane, moving away from the intensive monocrop production that dominated the first phases of its 1959 revolution. In many cases, intercropping has involvedreviving small farmer techniques, some dating to the early nineteenth century. Among “short” crops traditionally intercropped
with sugarcane in Cuba are common beans, tomatoes, peanuts, and soybeans (Casanova, Hernández, and Quintero 2001:145-146). Ethanol is another possibility, according to chemist and plant engineer Michael Kurtin.

21 Participants identified displacement of 25 farmers from lands at Beausejour and of 14 cane farmers and two herders at the settlement known as Golf Course, losses of lands there amounting to 40 acres. They also noted that lands at both Mt. Hartman and Levera (see Chapter 7) were threatened (GCFA 1991). The minutes call for an alliance with eleven other women's, environmental, and farmer organizations to protest increasing expulsions of farmers and lands lost to development.

22 Grenada was then in an economic recession, initiating a structural adjustment in which 20% of government employees lost jobs, and struggling to replace nutmeg sales lost to former Soviet states after the USSR's breakup (Brierley 2003:38).

23 Possibly a legacy of efforts during the Grenada Revolution, literacy remains near-universal in Grenada despite the fact that 64% of citizens did not have formal education certification even in 2002 (Dottin undated [2007/8]:49).

24 In that year the New York-based Committee For Human Rights in Grenada issued a press release protesting post-invasion conditions in the country. With removal of price controls the cost of food and other essentials had skyrocketed, the committee said. Many people had been fired without notice, redress, or compensation. Unemployment was over 50%. Land and rent prices were climbing. Medical and dental care once free to all were no longer available. Use of drugs had risen. The Grenadian dollar had lost value. And occupying troops—directed by US military officers, the committee alleged—were abusing Grenadians (1987:1-8).

25 According to Bishop and cane farmer, Frank Lewis, previous owner S.A. Francis had held share-cropping arrangements with local farmers, who gave him one-third of their crop (as described by Brierley). Gairy had seized the land from Francis and sent local farmers to work it. A few farmers were still working at Mt. Hartman when the WHAPCO people, encouraged by the Blaize government, arrived.

26 The film helped to popularize Caribbean tourism after the Cuban revolution closed off travel to that island (Brierley 1974:16).

27 Here as well as on the Plains of Chambord near River Sallee (described in Chapter 7), farmers cultivated what were in many ways common lands, working out various ways to determine how much acreage each got. These arrangements merit additional scrutiny.

28 The farming was far less threatening than the planned golf course, according to one expert. “It cannot be over-emphasized that the ecosystem of Mount Hartman is a very fragile co-existence of plants and animals with which the residents have been able to integrate themselves harmoniously,” said Dr. Winston Thomas, head of policy and research for Friends of the Earth, Grenada (Bascombe 1997). Imposition of a golf course was arguably inappropriate not only to the environment but to the agricultural needs of the small island. Golf courses require considerable pesticide and fertilizer use with attendant run-off and other problems, and require large volumes of water (http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/golf042604.cfm, accessed February 13, 2013).


30 Not all views of this story coincide. According to a 2012 interview with GCFA North Coast Chairman Reginald Buddy, an NNP supporter, at least some demonstrations to protect Mt. Hartman took place while the NDC was in power. “I remember clearly—I made several bus trips from here to support
the farmers in the initiative to keep the land under the watch of Mr. Brizan," Buddy said. "It is unfair to say that it is just one period that it happened—it started with the NDC government under the watch of Mr. Brizan. The NNP just carried on with what they perceived was a worthy project. It's both parties were at fault in getting rid of the farmers." Buddy insisted. Buddy defended the need for tourism facilities in Grenada, insisting that they can boost agriculture. And he noted that Mt. Hartman farmers took the offered compensation from the NNP government.

A joupa, or ajoupa is a small hut or lean-to traditionally built with thatched roof and mud walls, now often containing a galvanized roof. According to Martin they may be located in backyards or on lands where they are used as shelter during rainy weather, and in the hottest part of the day, often for the farmer to nap or prepare lunch (2007:3).

The incoming NDC government lent credence to Gill and Bishop's charges when it agreed to investigate the sale after the fall 2008 election, according to the two men and Reginald Buddy, who attended meetings between cane farmers and the government. Nothing has come of this promise. In 2012, former MNIB board chairman Byron Campbell asserted flatly in an interview that "the main purpose for selling [the factory] was land speculation." Bishop and Gill calculated the worth of the factory to be something on the order of 30 million EC dollars (US $11 million).

During the nineteenth century Grenada had as many as 100 local sugar mills (Antoine 1990:4), some of whose ruins still dot the landscape. Having mills close to their grounds was important to farmers since it meant they lost as little sap as possible from canes. Strategic placement of the second mill on the north shore, GCFA officials hoped, could help to further stimulate cane production on the island.

The Hague, Belgium-based Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation.

Farmers were paid by ton weight for their canes at the sugar factory and for syrup rendered from their canes at Pointzfield. At Grenada's other large remaining facility they are paid for juice extracted.

The poverty of many farm organizations was brought home to me forcibly in 2008 when I attended the first-ever Congress of the National Articulation, organized by LVC-member CONAMUCA near Santo Domingo. One person cried in a speech and elicited thunderous applause when she offered thanks to CONAMUCA for use of the organization's lone truck in ferrying, on an incredibly complex schedule, various organization members and leaders around the country to organizing meetings.

Difficulty in meeting maintenance and overhead costs forced the GCFA to close the Marian mill in 1999.

In 2010 the 25 organizations of the Grenada Federation of Farming and Fisheries Organizations petitioned for admission to WINFA.

Developed in 1976, the Lomé Convention was designed to establish a new framework for economic relations between the former colonial European countries and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states they had previously held as colonies and with whom, in the period after many gained independence, Europe had retained preferential trade ties. Although in many cases the convention abolished such relationships, the accord was in part designed to ease the blow to the former colonial development programs.
countries that this would create. Under the agreement Europe had continued to buy Caribbean bananas instead of the cheaper bananas being grown in Central America. In 1995, the United States asked the WTO to determine whether the convention violated its rules. In 1996, the WTO ruled in favor of the US, bringing an end to subsidies that had benefited ACP countries. The US pressed its case, insisting that all preferential trade agreements between the EU and ACP be abolished. The WTO again ruled in the US's favor. Finally, the EU negotiated with the US through WTO to reach an agreement, retaining some limited forms of preferential ties and aid to ACP countries.

43 WIBDECO is owned by the Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent governments (Boote 2003, 123).

44 For more information see the FAO's primer on the trade:


46 Elliot Bishop, email to the author August 2, 2012.

47 The group's 2008 application to join WINFA, which would have brought 25 Grenada farmer organizations into LVC but under the leadership of several known to support commercialization of farming in the country including Fitzroy James (see Chapter 6), was never entertained by WINFA.
CHAPTER 6
CONTEMPORARY GRENADA: ISLAND VULNERABILITY AND AGRICULTURE

Overview

Chapter 6 highlights rural and agricultural affairs in contemporary Grenada, with an eye to the lessons that these offer for FS, starting in 2008 when I first began this study. At that time the island was still recovering from two devastating 2004 and 2005 hurricanes and contending with that year’s global oil and food price shocks—portending the global recession that soon followed. The chapter begins by examining measures of Grenadian poverty, highlighting the impacts of the hurricanes on Grenadians, the long-term environmental and social effects of the storms on housing patterns and the landscape. The pull of tourism and tourist culture on the island is considered along with the environmental and social impacts of recent tourist projects, which compete for scarce land with agriculture in a cycle of dependency that mimics the traditional plantation-economic character of its economy. The challenges in obtaining a clear view of the rural sector in a context where statistics about subsistence farming have never been kept and no agricultural census performed since 1995 are evaluated, with special emphasis on what these challenges mean for women, whose roles in houseyard gardening form a core part of Grenada’s inheritance and a necessary component of any FS strategy in Grenada. Among questions that the chapter seeks to answer are: what is the role of the state in Grenada in the current period, and what is the shape of its influence over farmers? An interview with the director of Grenada’s Marketing and National Import Board reveals the shifting emphases of state policies on small farm production. The chapter concludes by considering the implications of policy changes.
introduced by a newly elected government in 2008, its actions toward the GCFA, and their consequences for FS.

A Prick in the Atlas

The ability to grow food has never been a problem in Grenada, where talk of agriculture conjures visions of abundance from islanders themselves, some of a mythical character. Many offer variations on a story about how a farmer, casually discarding a toothpick by the roadside, shortly returns to find that a tree has grown up in its place. As early as the Victorian era, Grenada was famous for its high yields, with novelist Anthony Trollope declaring it the “headquarters of the world for fruits” (Grenada Handbook 1946:95). It is said to produce more spices per square kilometer than any other country; it is also surrounded by abundant fishing grounds (Steele 2003:3,7). Such abundance and the perennial success of its small farmers raises questions about why so many people in this island “prick in the atlas” as James Ferguson calls it (1997:293)—home to 107,000 people (NSAP 2012:28)—should be so poor today. The answer is that they have rarely received real help from government for their efforts.

Grenada was ranked 66th of 177 countries in the UN Development Program’s 2005 human development index before 2004’s Hurricane Ivan struck the island. But this relative ranking is in some ways misleading, as UN researchers themselves caution. The country displays “a wide disparity of living standards, and areas of extreme poverty,” as IFAD’s Rural Poverty Report on Grenada states, with poverty and development measures masking how hard life is for the worst-off, as an interview with Grenada Temporary Permanent Secretary of Finance Isaac Bhagwan also affirmed.¹ Official 2008 estimates put Grenada’s poverty rate at 38%, with over half of the country consuming at nutritional levels below the country’s established vulnerability line (KAIRI
A detailed 2008 poverty report, follow-up on one conducted a decade earlier, found that although the country had made strides in addressing the most acute hunger through welfare measures, "there was no major improvement in the poverty situation in the country" (NSAP 2012:29).

Unemployment statistics inadequately frame the issue of work in a place with a large subsistence economy. Still, official unemployment in Grenada was high—estimated at 25% in 2008 (Kairi 2009:xvi) and destined to rise 10% during the four years of this study, with some officials privately telling me that the rate was much higher. The situation called into question why the country did not place more emphasis on agriculture, especially on measures that would create a local economy and address basic needs. Despite a three decade-long attempt to develop a globally competitive economy following the 1984 US invasion—especially through tourism and a failed offshore banking initiative—the country has managed to create little paying work for its citizens, especially those in rural areas. Unemployment was “particularly high among young people and people” in the countryside, the IFAD poverty report stated, observing that Grenada had failed to draw young people into agriculture. The report said that 65% of the poor and 80% of the non-poor engage in agriculture and agriculture-related activities, suggesting that addressing the challenges faced by the agricultural sector is critical especially to betterment of conditions for the poor. Notably, the report also observed that “[y]oung people see agriculture as an unsatisfactory employment option unless they have control over family lands.” Few conversations about the future of Grenadian or Caribbean agriculture go far without someone noting the reluctance of young people to take up farming, which is often equated in the public mind with slavery.
The IFAD statement raises an important question, therefore, about whether the lack of appeal that experts and others ascribe to agriculture might be addressed if land were easier to come by, if the historic denial of land to the Caribbean poor were addressed comprehensively, and if it were possible to make a living from agriculture, all things FS might mean.

“Given the level of estimated vulnerability about half the population of Grenada would be hurting in the current crisis,” Grenada's 2008 national poverty report suggested (Kairi 2009:150). A report by Grenada's IICA office for the previous year noted that cost of living increases had pushed more rural dwellers into subsistence production on unsuitable land—unfortunate when so much good land went unused—and others to fishing, hunting, and charcoal production using forest trees (2007:11). By 2012, amid growing economic desperation, there would be considerably more evidence that hard times—including high food prices—were pushing more Grenadians back to farming.

Ivan Terrible, Emily Unbearable

“Fifty years with no hurricane, then two in one year,” Alma Roberts remarked as we stood in her houseyard garden one morning in March 2008. With a sweep of her hand the River Sallee farmer and market vendor indicated how 2004’s Hurricane Ivan had laid waste to much of the landscape between her tightly planted hillside garden and the sea, which now shimmering peacefully before us in the morning sunlight.

Ivan was the most violent tropical storm to hit the region in 100 years. It left 80-90% of Grenada’s housing stock damaged or ruined, up to 60% of people displaced from their homes (Glencorse et al. 2005:1-2; Lee 2005; Barnes and Riverstone 2008:1). Much of the country’s livestock as well as its wildlife perished (Grenada Ministry of
Agriculture 2009:22). The storm flattened trees through wide swaths of the country, including 80% of the country's forests and mangroves.\(^6\) Fifty percent of Grenada's beaches were damaged (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:26). Most or all of the country's 72 watersheds were harmed, with much topsoil consequently lost to runoff (World Bank 2005:3, 27; Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 2009:34; ARD 2007:49). Rural communities, writes biotechnologist Malachy Dottin, show “high dependency on common property environmental resources.” A sizable portion of Grenada's agricultural production, as mentioned, takes place on mountain slopes where traditional export crops like nutmeg, banana, and a very high-quality cocoa\(^7\) are intercropped. The blow to the forest was a blow to nutritional consumption as well as to livelihood.

As often, the poorest households were hardest hit, with 95% of people suffering damage to their dwellings (Wiltshire and Bourne 2005:6), traditional wood frame houses suffering most (Martin 2007:86). “Many of the assets of the poor are embedded in their shelter, food and tools,” a UN post-storm gender impact study noted. Restoring livelihoods would consequently be harder for the poor.

Where food would come from became an immediate issue once Ivan had passed—Grenada is strongly dependent on imports and had little in reserve. Nearly all of Grenada's standing crops were lost. According to Daniel Lewis, a ministry official, every agricultural subsector “reported damages in excess of 80%” (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 2009:60). In 2004 the island had been the world’s second-biggest supplier of nutmeg, with half of all farmers harvesting the seeds from which nutmeg and mace derive.\(^8\) Between 70 and 85% of the island’s nutmeg trees—more than half a million trees—were lost (World Bank 2005:27; OECS 2005:29). Roughly 9% of Grenada’s
population are nutmeg farmers, sociologist Claude Douglas had written in 2004, “and about 35,000 persons or one-third of Grenada’s population depend on nutmeg for their economic survival” (2004: 27). The shallow-rooted trees take five to seven years to establish, and Grenada Cooperative Nutmeg Association (GCNA) records showed that it had taken 21 years to return to pre-hurricane production levels after 1955's Hurricane Janet (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:26).9 A year after Ivan, average production had dropped from 2,000 pounds to 100 pounds per farmer. The loss was a particular blow to elderly tree-owners, who have long looked on nutmeg income as a kind of retirement insurance. It was an especial blow to women, who rely on nutmeg income when their partners pass away and are employed in the country's nutmeg “pools” where nutmegs are sorted (Kambon et al. 2005:ix). With many palm trees damaged, local coconut oil was also completely shut down, which would raise dependence on imported cooking oil.10 All of the country’s banana crop was lost, and 60% of cocoa trees destroyed (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:3).11 The national soil laboratory was demolished, and all of the government's agricultural installations damaged (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 2009:22). The storm severely damaged the GCFA's sugarcane mills (Titus 2009:4), as noted, bringing organization activity to a halt. Food prices jumped and with crops gone hunger loomed (Lee 2005; World Bank 2005:3).

Shell-shocked Grenadians demonstrated considerable resilience, calling on their traditions in response. They held maroons to rebuild houses; neighbors cooked and shared traditional one-pot meals outdoors (Kambon et al. 2005:vii). Grenada received considerable aid—totaling US$150 million—from Cuba, Venezuela, and the US, including the offer of 100 new houses from Venezuela. USAID led all contributors,
offering US$40.3 million in grant funds with mixed consequences for farming, some of these described in the following pages.

But Grenada was not prepared for another hurricane. Hurricane Emily struck ten months later, just as the island was stumbling to its feet, especially damaging the northern part of the island (Martin 2007:119). Where Ivan had been relatively dry Emily brought rain and floods, washing out roads and inflicting new damage on watersheds (World Bank 2005:2-3). Emily destroyed almost all of the new crops—including cash crops like cucumbers, melons, peppers, tomatoes, string beans, okra, spring onions, and pumpkins—that farmers had hoped might begin to revive their fortunes. Four-fifths of the new banana crop was lost (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:25).

The second storm was more than some people could bear, bringing heart attacks, suicides—people told me—and renewed depression. “Imagine storm take food you’re gonna eat, place you’re gonna stay,” River Sallee farmers Bernadette Roberts told me. “Then Emily come and take every effort you made!” Some members of Grenada’s aging farmer cadre called it quits. Encouraged by the government, many stopped growing bananas,\(^\text{12}\) which had too often proved vulnerable to storms.

The abandonment of agriculture, part of a long-running saga, increased pressure on the capital, as well as on the nearby south shore, where most tourist venues are located and where many people—especially women—now sought work. The island’s ubiquitous red minibuses pour into St. George’s from all points of the compass each morning carrying people to jobs or to seek work, “even when transport takes half your salary,” as Robert’s daughter Lindy told me.\(^\text{13}\) According to a UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) report issued after Hurricane Ivan,
Grenada’s proportion of woman-headed households is among the highest in the OECS at 48% and Grenadian women were “uniquely vulnerable” to the disaster (Kambon et al. 2005:iv). It noted that the level of displacement of women from farming “was high and. . . expected to increase. The situation of women in agriculture needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency,” it said (2005:ix). In fact, as I will show here, the measures taken—which all but ignored both their cultural role in agriculture and unique needs—threatened to make rural women’s lot considerably worse.

Produce shortages caused by the hurricanes created demand for more imported food in Grenada, where dependence on foreign food had been rising for decades. One question about this dependence that had long been asked by farmers—which I heard repeated often—was what might happen if oil prices rose or, worse, remained at high levels, as had been predicted globally for some time. Transportation costs, especially to remote locales like Grenada, could put the cost of food beyond reach. “What if the ship doesn't come?” my River Sallee host Reginald Buddy asked, referring to the almost daily arrivals of food by freighter from New York, Miami, and Trinidad, where most of the country’s imported food comes from (FINTRAC 1997:10). “What if you can't afford the food that's on it? In the meantime,” he said, “all of your farmers have quit or gone out of business.” Farmers weren't the only ones to see the threat of energy costs to the island and food prices. As “difficult. . . as the present fiscal situation is,” a 2005 IMF report about Grenada’s post-Ivan economy warned, it was “easy to envisage circumstances that would make it. . . more so.” The same report suggested that “a further rise in global oil prices” posed “a great risk” to Grenada (IMF 2005).
Under such circumstances, the message to Grenada might have been to move to begin to address its own food needs. “I always see these hard times as opportunities,” Joseph Gill told me. A 1945 hurricane, Janet, had in fact become the occasion for development of the local banana industry, which served as shade crop for the extensive replanting of island cocoa plants. An improved strain of cocoa was also introduced at the time (Brierley 1974:12). These were not necessarily FS measures, but they helped to lift the economy and diversify planting. The question was whether a new government, which seemed likely with elections looming in August 2008, would embrace this need or could overcome the many constraints on its ability to do so.

**Building Boom Impacts Agriculture and Environment**

Ivan and Emily spurred a building boom. Stimulated by a wave of factors—storm destruction, financial speculation, replacement of wooden homes, and returning emigrants—there was a boom across the Caribbean (Wilkinson 2007). With a great deal of Grenada's national housing stock damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes, “much of the rural labor force” (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:27) found work for a time on construction projects. The boom, short-lived though it proved to be, impacted agriculture in many ways, with strong consequences for the environment and the organization of rural living.17

Most new dwellings were cement block. “Such houses. . . stand in stark contrast to traditional West Indian cottages,” Barnes and Riverstone noted, “or the shacks of impoverished Grenadians” (2008:13). They took up more space on lots they filled, which sometimes happened to be on agricultural land. The more luxurious homes signaled a continuing move away not just from traditional housing styles but from the subsistence
culture and agriculture that once surrounded them, especially houseyard farming and small plot cultivation.

Bigger houses had been springing up in the countryside for several decades, in fact, facilitated by loosened restrictions that made it easier for foreigners to buy land. The relaxing of such restrictions—a feature of neoliberal policies and structural adjustment—impacted agriculture. “[T]oday once productive estates in Grenada have been subdivided and sold by the original owners for the construction of houses” by returning emigrants, “upwardly mobile locals, and . . . foreigners,” writes David Omowale Franklyn, noting that this has affected food production as well as consumption: “Fields of cocoa, nutmeg, and banana are being cleared to make way for residential estates—for residents with a preference for imported food and ambivalence towards local staples” (2007:73). Some of the houses were going up on land that GCFA members thought should be zoned for sugarcane production—the north shore house I lived in during my second 2008 visit sat on such land, as did lands around the GCFA’s mill at Poyntzfield. “Because of the absence of a land policy, we lost a lot of good agricultural land to housing development,” Bhagwan told me in 2012.18 Grenada needed agricultural and development zoning, a point of emphasis of GCFA officials, members of the Agricultural Ministry, and people like GRENCODA’s Judy Williams (Martin 2007:56-57), likely necessary to any program of FS in many countries.19

One benefit of the storm was that a good many Grenadians saw their housing upgraded. But the sand and gravel to pour concrete block and pads for them had to come from somewhere. Environmental activist and NGO leader Tyrone Buckmire told me in 2008 that Carriacou was estimated to be losing an estimated three feet of land
around its circumference annually because of illegal sand mining and the erosion that resulted from it. In the Caribbean, beaches were being mined and shipped, sometimes from one country to another, to build houses, tourist facilities, and even skyscrapers (Coto 2008). Not only sand, but the micro-organisms in sand and the wider food chain are affected. In Grenada sand mining was contributing to the decline of four turtle species, including the leatherback turtle (Martin 2007:229). 20 “[I]llegal and legal removal of sand...has left many once beautiful beaches threatened,” Martin writes, contributing “to the destabilisation of the coast and...marine environment” (2007:56). The mining of beaches, rocks, and gravel has up- and downstream impacts on farmers and fishermen as well as those who use the beaches. And it makes farmland, which often lies within sight of beaches in Grenada, vulnerable to salinization, loss of groundwater, and flooding—the kind of degradation of the landscape that might or might not be connected to the island’s consumer-driven metabolic cycle, or the housing boom, down the road.

A Labor Shortage and 35% Unemployment

I arrived in Grenada on a Sunday. The streets of St. George’s, home to 33,000 people, stood deserted; in GCFA General Secretary Elliot Bishop's car we crossed it in minutes. As we headed into the mountains from the capital toward the north coast we came upon a crew of men perched over an earthworks at the road's edge, without protection from traffic, working on Grenada's day of rest. To a man they all bore Asian features.

Grenada had recently experienced an influx of mainland Chinese workers. They had initially come to construct a new National Stadium for Grenada, rapidly replacing the one destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in time for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. Some had stayed behind to work in construction, on buildings and on roads in the tiny country—all
work that Grenada's farmers and landless rural dwellers eagerly prized. There had been
a surge of Chinese workers into the East Caribbean—to Trinidad and Tobago,
Barbados, Antigua, and Grenada—and there was tension over their insertion in the
island economies.\textsuperscript{21} The larger pool of labor that they helped to create was, unions
complained, driving down wages. In a nation of 100,000 like Grenada, where 25% of
workers are unionized\textsuperscript{22} and paying work scarce, the influx of such workers aroused
bitterness. One newspaper spoke of “a protracted fight by [Caribbean] trade unions
against what they see as a systematic invasion of lower-paid Chinese labourers. The
entry of these new workers was accompanied by insinuations,” including from public
officials, the report said, “that Caribbean workers were not as willing or productive.”

The charge that Grenadians were lazy or unwilling to work had been lodged in
the past. It had been used to justify the introduction of East Indian and other indentured
labor in the islands after emancipation (Brizan 1998:193). “It is alleged that the
productivity of. . . Caribbean workers is low. What they are failing to say is that the
Caribbean workers will not work. . . on poverty wages,” said Achal Moorjani, president
of the Barbados Association of Contractors (Wilkinson 2007). The charge of laziness
was lodged against both agricultural workers and small farmers, these groups lumped
together in many minds but in fact groups with quite different class and historical
characteristics. The need to obtain greater production from Grenadian workers was a
regular refrain of people like the director of the nation's Marketing and National
Importing Board (MNIB), Fitzroy James, who is interviewed later in this chapter.
Nowhere was the attitude and its historic nature more evident than in the story
recounted by a former Chamber of Commerce official over dinner to me one Sunday in St. George’s:

A peasant plants a nutmeg tree then goes to sleep beneath it. As he sleeps the tree grows. Nutmegs appear and ripen. When a nutmeg falls from the tree, it hits him on the head and wakes him; he takes it off to sell it. Then he goes back to sleep.\textsuperscript{23}

Such views reflect a tendency, as K.O. Laurence wrote in 2010, “to see subsistence farming as mere indolence,”\textsuperscript{24} a view that persists in Grenada, internalized by many people there. It is inferred regarding subsistence producers throughout Brierley’s 1974 study of Grenada farmers and was asserted to me by better-off Grenadians, including a Carriacou agricultural official who—on hearing I was interested in small farmers—flatly told me that “these people don’t want to work.”

The charge that poor people needed to work harder was also accepted by many small farmers. But as farmer and former agricultural official Joseph Gill (who had his own problems finding workers) said of the Chinese workers: “How can I compete against a man who sleeps in company-provided housing, has no rent or bills to pay or family to support?” The Chinese laborers’ personal commitments might in fact be extensive. But their low overheads were part of their economic advantage to capital, and over poor Grenadians.\textsuperscript{25}

Except at La Sagesse on Grenada’s south shore where the Republic of China’s agricultural station was located, I never saw Asian workers in Grenada’s fields. Most were destined for semi-skilled jobs in construction and on highways. But some of the country’s wealthier landowners had entertained the idea of importing Haitian and Guyanese labor into Grenada for agricultural work. The business leader who told me the story of the sleeping nutmeg farmer confessed that he would gladly import more
foreign labor, specifically agricultural labor from Haiti and Guyana, “if we could figure out how to get them to leave again.” This was because—he said—Grenada suffered from a labor shortage.

Conventional economists and employers often talk without blinking about labor shortages in countries where unemployment is rife. Sometimes this means a need for employees with rare, sought-after professional training. But what they usually mean is a shortage of low-wage labor of the kind that assures profits in ranges that investors insist on, which can make them competitive in global markets.

Poor farmers also complained about being short-handed at planting and harvest, as well as about obtaining dependable labor. At various points in their planting and harvest cycles they needed more hands for their work. This problem was described as a labor shortage or “lack of labor”—as transmitted in reports in post-independence Grenada going back as far as 1977 (Cumberbatch 1977:3). To view the problem this way tends to shape it around the frame of national economics, even if such a view is so widespread as to go unquestioned. But such a view also raises the question of the potential value of class-based analysis for agriculture and in planning any campaign of FS, including the tensions between laborers (many or most of whom were in their position because of their landlessness) and farmers, a key to understanding conditions in the countryside—likely in many parts of the Caribbean.

Labor shortages had been identified as a problem in Grenada from emancipation onwards. “After the abolition of slavery,” the authors of a UWI textbook on governance in the Anglo-Caribbean write, “a new problem arose, i.e., labour scarcity. This problem was partially solved by the importation of... labour predominantly from Africa and Asia”
(Mendes et al. 2001:147). This manner of encapsulating a long and painful history of dispossession and the problems that went with it obscures more than it exposes. It adopts the planters’ point of view, and invites Caribbean students of their own history to adopt it, too.

Talk of shortages today points up the ongoing failure to escape plantation economic dominance in the rural sector, which preserves the need for unskilled labor (and the dispossession that remains central to the system) rather than offering poor laborers access to the mix of skills and decision-making that would come with being landed farmers, integrated in a successful small farmer economy and culture in pursuit of FS. Despite the fact that it was agricultural workers—through rural agitation in the 1950s and early 1960s—who had once posed the greatest historical challenge mounted to the system (see Chapter 4), they had ceased to act as a class or to be seen as such by those who might have been their natural allies, including small farmers and other Grenadian progressives.

The dominant construction of “labor” in national economic terms tended to cause small farmers to see the problem from the same point of view that the ruling class did. When I asked one prominent labor leader if small farmers couldn’t organize with such workers I was told, “Well, presumably they would organize themselves.” She did not see them as a natural ally or constituency of small farmers. This was ironic, considering how poor some small farmers were, how they needed access to land, too. (In fact, GCFA officials, looking more widely, did call for comprehensive land reform.) But this didn’t change the fact that at certain points of the year farmers needed help. Their frustration in obtaining it under the almost impossible terms that the current economic climate
posed even caused a certain resentment among farmers toward those mostly landless people whom they sometimes hired, and I heard comments about their laziness or unwillingness to work, or to work hard. And what they said was in some ways true. Agricultural laborers were likely the country’s poorest workers, averaging EC$62 (ca. $23US) for a six-hour day. According to a 2007 report their economic conditions had “deteriorated . . . since the hurricanes” (ARD 2007:67).26 Many people were reluctant to work long hard hours for a wage that failed to cover their minimum living requirements. The system didn’t work, especially not for farmers or landless laborers.

That there was a labor shortage was the position of various government officials I spoke to and the leader of the Grenada Federation of Agricultural and Fisheries Organizations (GFAFO), the umbrella farmer organization established in 2008 in Grenada (Agricultural Report 2008:36), a prospective member of WINFA and therefore LVC. In 2010, I heard GFAFO’s chairman, Senator Keith Clouden on a television program,27 a farmer himself, saying that if a new minimum-wage agricultural work program then being initiated didn’t work the country would need to bring in labor from other countries. This raised the prospect of a spreading regional class system in which people of the poorest countries occupied—ever more firmly—the lowest tiers. (“If that happens it’s all over” for organizing in Grenada, one labor leader told me.)

The complaint of farmers I interviewed at a lack of “help” did not at first translate for me in class terms, especially since it often came couched in complaints about the decline of collective labor practices like maroons, a subject I tried to pursue in interviews. It was only when I went to St. Vincent in July 2008 that the divide between agricultural workers and small and medium farmers or its potential for further articulation
became apparent. There I met several WINFA farmers who employed agricultural labor and was confronted with the ultimately unsurprising fact that LVC organizations might not always represent the very poorest people, that some members might be hiring other landless target members, seeking to exploit them rather than operating in solidarity with them.\textsuperscript{28} Such class divisions exist around the world. And LVC, of course, addresses the problems of the landless, makes obtaining secure access to land, along with supporting reforms, a priority in pursuit of FS. In Brazil and in the Dominican Republic, as I had myself seen, the organization has found the most fertile ground for recruiting \textit{among} landless people. But clearly, such class differences would pose a challenge to LVC organizations on the ground in uniting farmers and landless laborers in FS campaigns.

\textbf{Grenadian Politics and Outside Influences on It}

In Grenada as throughout the region there was jockeying for influence between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC)—as well as neighboring Venezuela, in implicit competition with the US.\textsuperscript{29} This affected agriculture in various ways. In 2005 Grenada abruptly announced that it would cease to officially recognize Taiwan, into whose sphere of influence Grenada had been drawn after the 1983 US invasion, and instead recognize the People's Republic.\textsuperscript{30} According to a report prepared for the US State Department, the then-NNP government of Grenada “could not pass up the US$250 million dangled in front of it by the PRC. . . to adopt the one China policy,” which insists there is just one China, the PRC. Taiwan had over time established a fine Caribbean agricultural research station on the island's south shore, supplying local farmers with seeds, plants, extension advice, and sometimes equipment.\textsuperscript{31} (“We cried,” Joseph Gill told me, “when the Taiwanese left.”)}
In 2008, the Keith Mitchell-led right-wing populist NNP government had been in power for 12 years and had come to be the object of anger among many farmers I spoke with, including a number who originally voted for the party, which ran for office with promises of aid to the rural sector. It spent the last years of its tenure mired in accusations of financial scandal, with Mitchell's autocratic style earning comparisons to first Grenada Prime Minister Eric Gairy (Douglas 2010:57), including in charges of corruption leveled at him as well as of the growing violence of the police force toward the populace. In 2001 the Special Services paramilitary branch of Grenada police severely beat Nutmeg Association members during a strike in which the workers demanded a rise in their below-poverty-level wages. Mitchell held the Minister of Security portfolio; there was no doubt that he had authorized the use of force (Douglas 2004:28). The violence by the Special Forces Unit, established after the 1983 US invasion of the country (Ferguson 1990:44), hinted broadly at the kind of force that could be mustered to counter demands for change in Grenada.

In the run-up to 2008's July elections the NNP's primary opposition, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which included rehabilitated former members of the 80s-era People's Revolutionary Government (PRG), played up its greater presumptive efficiency and propriety rather than any defiance of the country's neoliberal straits.

Apart from a rhetoric often laced with Bible references, each party—formed after the invasion—was a creature of the neoliberal period in which it had been formed, including in the tangle of contradictions in which the country found itself. The NNP had eagerly accepted Cuba's help after Hurricane Ivan even as the country bowed to the debt-and loan-driven demands of the IMF and wider logic of neoliberalism—this offered,
among other things, an opportunity to suggest independence from US dictates. Under the NNP Grenada (like much of the island Caribbean) had in 2007 joined Venezuela’s PetroCaribe energy alliance,\textsuperscript{35} availing of the cheap gasoline prices offered to members, and establishing observer status in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA).\textsuperscript{36}

While policy differences between the parties sometimes seemed narrow, the “two sides” (as discourse portrayed them) were bitterly antagonistic to one another. The hurricane recovery process had been repeatedly slowed as party members fought over spoils or engaged in procedural wrangles (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:5). Often in the tiny country, enmity between party leaders threatened to engulf their poor followers in what were territorial rather than ideological battles. As in Jamaica, Grenada’s politics were increasingly characterized by big-spending campaigns that included mass rallies, free concerts, and giveaways of things like t-shirts and bandannas.\textsuperscript{37} The issues that haunted Grenada—the land question, the legacy of the 1983 US invasion, the powerful limitations on Grenadian sovereignty imposed by IMF and WTO strictures, or the precedence that tourism maintained over agriculture—remained unaddressed. Grenada needed a farmer movement that ignored the narrow contexts in which mainstream political debate was carried out, that addressed the pressing need for work and food import dependence in Grenada, that could bring comprehensive agricultural reform and a push for FS to Grenada. None of these were, at present, on the docket.

**The Nature of Tourism**

Tourism is Grenada’s biggest revenue-earning sector (New Today 2012b) and its biggest source of foreign exchange. In the minds of many farmers it exists in explicit competition with agriculture for land and government attention. Tourism provides 25% of the country’s GDP, 9% of revenue, and 15% of employment (Martin 2007:247). Its
development carries numerous attractions for officials. Big initial outlays stimulate the economy and the construction industry benefits. The effects, starting with better-paying jobs than those in agriculture and a wash of money through the economy (if short-lived), are widely seen and felt. The fine buildings and wealthy visitors that tourist venues attract are markers of a kind of modern development. They even engender pride among those who cannot afford their attractions—menial resort jobs may generate more respect than is received by farmers. Gleaming tourist projects may have more allure than the hard work, link by link, of outfitting the country with a prosperous local economy. And politicians—happy to show their polish—may find more gratification in working with international business figures than with poor farmers.

But tourism carries high risks, risks that even institutions like the IMF and World Bank warn of. It has negative effects from the perspective of basic needs development, the wider development on which FS must rest. Many of these were noted by members of the People’s Revolutionary Government and researchers going back to the 1970s.\textsuperscript{38} Tourist ventures require considerable space, often in beautiful settings from which poor locals are barred, a particularly insulting denial in countries with histories of slavery. Tourism competes with agriculture for land (Pattullo 2004:42-43, passim), including in places—as I saw on Grenada’s north and south shores—where various extractive practices have long contributed to subsistence food maintenance. The outlays and continuing costs required to maintain the “ecological bubble” of sanitized comfort that draws tourists to a poor country in the first place—that make them feel safe there—are sizable. This results in tourist areas receiving infrastructure and a security presence that other parts of poor countries don’t, raising questions of fairness in resource allocation
The Caribbean had in recent years been forced to come to grips with the continual renovation and reinvention of facilities that its now “mature” industry requires to compete for ever-more demanding customers, and the tourism industry—which had made the region a vacation destination—was growing more slowly in the Caribbean than elsewhere (Myers 2008:15). A study published while I was in Grenada found that of twelve regions examined the Caribbean was most dependent on travel and tourism, where it accounted for 13% of employment (Grenadian Voice 2008). Tourism, in other words, was a kind of dependency that left Grenada vulnerable—with parallels to plantation agriculture—to the ups and downs of the world economy. Ironically, the World Travel and Tourism Council warned in 2008 “that the Caribbean must focus on long-term development” to remain competitive as a tourist destination, suggesting that—in viciously cyclical style—emphasis on tourism was hurting tourism (Myers 2008:15).

In Grenada over the past decade most of the large tourism projects the government entered had become clouded by accusations of misdealing; in some cases local politicians had been taken in by international con men (Douglas 2010:17). In both of the chief cases cited in this dissertation affecting agriculture—at Mt. Hartman and at Levera on the north shore (see Chapter 7)—local farmers had been displaced to make way for tourism. In each case agriculture for local production was affected, with lack of secure tenure proving a key factor in their removal. Political opposition had failed to stop both projects.

Grenada had recently built a US $35 million 300-meter cruise ship pier and terminal in St. George’s. Like every major investment this affected the rural sector, not just economically—with the enormous outlay going to tourism rather than agriculture or
projects of economic betterment—but culturally. A large shopping mall lay at the pier’s end, and with its fast food emporia, a “Subway” and pizzeria, quickly became the most popular gathering place for Grenada’s teenagers. Pattullo shows how tourism’s effects go beyond economic impacts to changes in consumption patterns and growing materialism. “The poor now see that there is no one out there seeking out their interests, therefore they become mercenary too,” she quotes a Grenada airport official saying. The official regrets the way local people are forced to hustle among tourists and “make a talk for food.” “When people move to tourist areas” for work, community worker Joseph Antoine tells Pattullo, “there is a break-up of community and family. People begin to turn away from traditional foods. Tourism demotivates,” he told her. “Only a small percentage benefit. Unless tourism is tied to aspirations of political development, anything else leaves people deficient” (2005:106-107).

The High Cost of Food Imports: Crisis and Opportunities Ignored

“Look at all the bread still on the shelf!” whispered a customer in one of River Sallee’s two small shops. A sense of worry about food prices prevailed among people I talked to during the week of the 2008 Saracca, the town’s annual thanksgiving and harvest festival. The price of bread had just risen again—according to my hosts, it had doubled in the previous year. Prices had begun to shoot up in the third quarter of 2007, when the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food went up 5%. During the same period the cost of fuel and electricity, which affected everything from food transportation to the cost of propane for cooking, had gone up 6.7% (Barnacle 2008a:47). The 2008 Agriculture Review bluntly termed this a period of “food crisis,” saying that it had “exposed the island’s vulnerability to food insecurity in . . . vivid fashion” (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 2009:63).
At emergency 2008 CARICOM meetings talk centered on further lowering barriers to imported food—the opposite of an FS focus on protecting crops and developing local production, a stark illustration of differences between commercial “food security” approaches and FS. There was also talk of ramping up enormous agricultural projects: the problem was big—the response should be big, too. The most eye-catching proposal involved a Caribbean-wide effort to turn Guyana’s interior into one vast farmland for the region (Prensa Latina 2008), a move that could strongly harm region-wide subsistence production if carried through. But getting the combined member countries behind such an effort—in a political climate where big public initiatives are frowned upon—remained a tall order for an often toothless CARICOM. The crisis left an opening for the development of local and grassroots campaigns for FS if countries or grassroots organizations like LVC could seize it.

A 2008 World Bank report to the OECS, meanwhile, had reportedly advised that member countries “cut down on. . . small agro holdings and build a larger service sector,” a recommendation that former Grenada Prime Minister George Brizan called “garbage” (Barnacle 2008:12). Getting out of agriculture had also been the 2005 recommendation for Grenada and other Caribbean economies made by researchers Kendall and Petracco of the Caribbean Development Bank, in pursuit of what they described as a food security strategy. Vulnerability to storms was a reason to abandon agriculture, the authors argued, and to let first-world suppliers take care of their needs (Pemberton 2005:20). Although such recommendations were not consistent with traditional development policy or with the path to “development” of the First World
countries, they were consistent with food policy recommendations now being made by the neoliberal multi-lateral institutions to poor countries (McMichael 2009:151).

A UNICEF report on surging prices and their effects on Grenada, on the other hand, pointed to declining local and subsistence production as a contributor to higher prices, singling out long-term declines in small-scale production: “A shortage of agricultural produce resulted from reduction in traditional backyard gardening and domestic supply,” it said, and “triggered higher prices through excess demand.” These developments were combining with changing consumption patterns and higher levels of imports to augment the crisis, the report stated (Scott-Joseph 2009:8).44

The present crisis was fanned by several other trends, including the 1994 commitment the government had made in ratifying the WTO agreement to reduce protection of Grenadian agriculture, which gave poor countries ten years to end the “distortions of . . . government intervention and support for the agriculture sector,” as Grenadian IICA officials framed the matter—that is, through distinctly First World eyes (1997:23). The measures required, inter alia, reduction of all tariffs by 24%; reduction in support to agriculture by 13% by 2004; and reductions in value of export subsidies by 21% (1997:20), leaving Grenada less room for maneuver in protecting or boosting selected crops in the wake of the storms.

Despite this, the crisis might have served as a prompt for Grenada to prioritize its own historically neglected food needs over tourism or exports, to make a push for FS—which crisis, finally, would? “Let us organize and feed ourselves,” the ART’s Ferguson told me in 2008. “Then we can decide what we need to export.”
Agriculture Today

Agriculture in 2008 accounted for a third of official employment, with construction and tourism the other main contributors. But agriculture’s share of Grenada’s gross domestic product (GDP) had been dropping, to just 9% in 2003 from as much as 26% in 1977 (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:27); by 2008 it was down to just 6% (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 2009:6). A great deal of the country's predicament—perhaps that of many poor countries—could be viewed from the perspective of these numbers. It was extremely difficult to make corporate or export-oriented agriculture pay for poor countries or poor farmers. The country and its elites had been disciplined to see the problem from a commercial perspective—how to make agriculture make money, especially to pay Grenada’s massive foreign debt? This pushed agriculture ever further from its first purpose, feeding people. It was the rationale behind a perennial push for commercial “diversification” in a country where traditional small farm production was extremely diverse, as already shown. Poor countries had a responsibility to first ensure they could feed their citizens—this “basic needs” concept lay at the heart of FS. But a commitment to commercialization and the pursuit of international markets would continue to guide policy after August 2008, when a government more dedicated to the betterment of the agricultural sector entered power.

Despite declines in agriculture's contribution to GDP, the volume of 2008 agricultural exports was higher than at any time since 1996. The domestic market, it was reported, had returned to pre-Ivan levels, and “the country is. . . able to feed itself,” according to the director of the country’s Marketing and National Import Board (MNIB), Fitzroy James (Barnacle 2008b). The notion that the country was feeding itself was curious when food imports had been rising for decades; when all but 10% of chicken,
Grenada’s leading meat source was now imported (Food & Farm Newsletter, 2007:4; Informer 2008:4); and when public officials could speak of seasonal hunger even in places where subsistence culture remained strongest, like River Sallee (see Chapter 7). In fact, although Grenada was clearly capable of far more food independence, it was simply not true.

Assessment of agriculture was generally clouded by the fact that few statistics were kept. “If you asked them they could not tell you how many farmers there are,” the GCFA’s Bishop said of officials in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries.49 No agricultural census had been carried out between 1995 and 2008, the period in power of the then-current Keith Mitchell-led NNP government. The 1995 census had complained of the agricultural ministry’s lack of hard data or qualified personnel or resources with which to collect or analyze them, as did World Bank and other documents I encountered (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 1996:3; World Bank 2005:27; ARD 2007).50 Statistics about production for local internal consumption had for the most part never been kept.51 In 1974 Curtis McIntosh and T. O. Osuji wrote that “[s]tatistics on the production and consumption of agricultural products in Grenada are generally unavailable. When available, they are suspect.” The limited data, the authors wrote, “emphasise the preoccupation with export crops and neglect. . . livestock. . . and crops for local consumption” (1974:100). National economies don’t measure subsistence production, and Grenada had remained strongly subsistence-based. “Small farmers have not been recognized,” former Permanent Minister of Finance, Industry, and Planning Lennox Andrews told me in a 2012 interview. “There is no record of their contribution.” This absence was powerful evidence of the lack of state support for
Grenada’s farmers across 180 years, of the revolution in official thinking needed to institute FS.

Clearly there was recovery in 2008 from the hurricane-battered production levels of 2005-2006. But despite claims of renewed self-sufficiency almost everyone—the press, farmers, opponents and supporters of the government—took it for granted that Grenadian agriculture was in bad shape. During a late March radio program described in one newspaper, a poultry farmer declared the agricultural sector “almost dead.” “I stood on the pier some time ago,” he said, “and saw truckloads of carrots being imported into Grenada. These are things we can produce. We are a rural and agricultural country, but our government does nothing for agriculture” (Grenada Today 2008).

At least nominally—whatever other criticisms might be leveled at their policies—both the NNP government and 2008 NDC government that followed continued to encourage subsistence production in the degree that public officials sometimes invoked the “Eat what you grow, grow what you eat” slogan popularized by the socialist 1979-1983 PRG government—locally seen as a kind of Grenadian FS declaration—and encouraged local gardening.52 While this might amount to little more than lip service, with a push for commercialization the larger emphasis, it constituted recognition that Grenada needed to grow its own food.

Farm Size, Land Use, and Tenure Patterns

The shape, size, and distribution of land along with its uses in Grenada are fraught with contradictions for agriculture and FS. The evidence shows a dwindling and fragmented amount of land in small farmers’ hands amid a landscape of spreading suburban-style home construction where agricultural land is not protected, and an
accompanying loss of many of the country’s best lands to tourism. But—worse—it shows a great deal of Grenadian land unused or under-utilized amid high unemployment; amid reluctance to take up farming (Martin 2007:3; ARD 2007:26); amid rising imported food prices; and amid produce gluts during some parts of the year. Apart from the accelerating loss of land due to home construction, none of these conditions are new.

At 38,000 acres, Grenada is smaller than “many private ranches and corporate farms in the United States” (McAfee 1991:99). Its tiny size relative to population, the sloping nature of the land, the lack of industrialization or mineral wealth to exploit or to base other economic activity on combine to make what land there is particularly precious, its careful use critical. The 1995 Agricultural Census found that 75% of arable land was already under agriculture, with permanent crops—mostly fruit trees—holding the lion’s share (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 1996:23-24). But acreage classified as “agricultural land” had declined from 71% of the country’s land surface to 41% from 1961 to 1995, according to Martin (2007:3), suggesting that there was still less remaining room for error in determining the best use for what land remained.

A 1992 study found that the average Grenadian smallholding consisted of 2.72 parcels or fragments and averaged roughly five acres; this had barely changed since a 1982 study by the same researcher (Brierley 2003:40). Following the pattern established before the end of slavery described in Chapter 3, the first parcel—that author said—typically included the family dwelling and houseyard garden and contained the greatest variety of crops, including food trees (banana, cashew, coconut, breadfruit and breadnut, citrus, mango, avocado and golden apple among these). As in Jamaica,
poultry and small livestock are often raised in houseyards, too, as in and around Jamaica’s Martha Brae (Besson 2002:197). A second parcel, often tended by male family members, tended to contain export crops, often fruit trees—many times with bananas grown to shade immature cocoa and nutmeg plants, with the bananas (a source of nutrition) later phased out. Subsequent parcels tended to be found at higher elevations and often also held cocoa and nutmeg, with nutmeg most ubiquitous (Brierley 2003:46-49). The author writes that “more than three-quarters of farms in both surveys consisted of two, three, or four... parcels” (2003:41). The fragmented nature of Grenadian smallholdings is typical of many places in the Caribbean, according to Brierley, and owes partly to the terrain, which is mountainous in many island countries. It is also due to historical patterns in which estates retained the best land and former slaves were left to occupy or purchase marginal land in small quantities when and where they could, as has been discussed.

A land utilization survey undertaken by the Agency for Reconstruction and Development (ARD) after Hurricane Ivan found that almost 3/4 of Grenada farms were less than five acres, with more than half of farmers working a half acre or less (2007:37). This suggests a high number of precarious small and subsistence farmers in need of policies that would boost their landholdings, subsistence, and subsistence-and-cash-crop production, and extension and other programs devoted to their needs.

Writing in 2008, Barnes and Riverstone noted that Grenada did not have a cohesive policy for protection or administration of land (2008:14). The authors quoted GRENCODA’s Judy Williams as saying that the government remained Grenada’s biggest landowner. In theory this meant that the government—or any new
administration—remained in a position to address Grenada’s agricultural problems, including carrying out a program of comprehensive land reform and framing some real redistributive role in pursuit of food independence and small farmer livelihood. This was affirmed in 2012 by IICA’s Cosmos Joseph, who informed me that the government held some 560 acres on four former estates around the country. With the loss of farmers’ customary lands in or around national parklands at Levera and Mt. Hartman and the growth of housing in the countryside, there was little doubt that the amount of land planted as well as land available for agriculture was diminishing, or that production for local consumption was not affected by the changes. Williams linked a decrease in land used for agriculture with growing poverty generally (Barnes and Riverstone 2008:14).

A good deal of the land at the north and south shore sites—and at another site, Chambord—had been squatted on or informally held by farmers. Squatting forms part of the narrative of Grenadian and regional history, tied especially to attempts to prevent emancipated former slaves from obtaining land. As I have underlined, continuing dispossession was a key to the maintenance of the plantation economies after slavery—and to the lack of organic development of the emerging Caribbean countries. It is partly because of such historic dispossession, however, that squatting has been tolerated, engaged in without shame by many farmers. The negative connotations that accompany the word’s use do not so strongly inhere in countries where the historic dispossession of so many so strongly informs the landscape. Indeed, Besson—who has investigated its role in Jamaican communities—identifies squatting as part of a process of peasantization, including among Jamaica’s maroons, free villagers, and other people (2002:15). But although many people have an established de facto or “extra-legal”
tenure over places where their homes lie that goes unchallenged, the lands they farm may remain vulnerable to official expropriation—as experiences at Mt. Hartman and Calivigny, described here, show.

A 2005 USAID report about Grenada’s land situation minimizes squatting as an issue, noting that much of such activity in the country takes place on government-held land. “The simple fact that between 85 percent and 90 percent” of overall land in Grenada is privately held, the report says, “and that most of the squatting occurs in Crown Land. . . suggests that, quantitatively, it is not a major problem” (Gomez 2005:3). But squatting clearly is a problem where food and small farmers are concerned. In 1987, in an address to WINFA, Elliot Bishop and Joseph Gill connected squatting and the wider problem of historical dispossession as concerns for an emerging post-emancipation peasantry and a continuing problem of insecure tenure for Grenadian and regional farmers (1987). A number of farmers whom I interviewed had been thrown off of, removed from, or threatened with removal from lands they worked, and an even greater number worked land that was insecurely held—squatted on or loaned to them. This continued to be the case both with customary sugarcane lands at Calivigny and other places on the south shore where farmers were being harassed or expelled, and at Chambord, where 100 or more farmers were squatting—and, as Chapter 7 describes.

Since it was the poorest people who had long produced most of Grenada’s food supply (while better-off people dominated exports), the insecurity of tenure that underlay such production was perhaps inevitable. As previously noted, “[d]ry lands round the coasts” in this study’s geographic areas of focus were often cultivated on the shifting
principle (1946:10). The fact that producers of local food have continually—almost inevitably—been the most vulnerable, both in the past and today, must be reckoned as a strong reason for Grenada's food dependence, one that has officially gone all but unrecognized. The odds are good that the descendants of many such people condemned to grow on the shifting principle in former times make up many of the landless poor today, including people of whom it is so often noted—perhaps too conveniently—that they “are not interested” in agriculture or are—worse—lazy.56 This suggests the kind of wholesale reorientation of policies and resource allocation that are necessary to the establishment of FS. In Grenada, as in much of the Caribbean, it must mean addressing the historical dispossession of the great mass of the poor.

According to the 1995 Agricultural Census, the average age of landless farmers was “about 20 years younger” than that of “medium” farmers. Farmers with less than an acre of land averaged 14 years younger than “large and medium” farmers (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 1996:35). This might have been a strong reason to get land into those younger farmers’ hands. (“Land therefore may be a constraining factor preventing younger individuals from engaging in agriculture,” says the census cautiously, “and contributing to the high average age” [1996:35]). Taken with IFAD’s common-sense observation, noted earlier in this chapter, that young people are reluctant to enter farming without secure access to land—with the long history of tenure insecurity suffered by the poorest people—the endlessly repeated notion that poor people don’t want to farm looks like an easy excuse not to engage in real land reform, to place long-denied access to the means with which to successfully enter agriculture, in their hands. At the very least, there seemed to be good reason to test this thesis. It just didn’t involve
anyone getting rich. Although statistics regarding farmers were scarce and sometimes contradictory, they revealed a good deal both about the neglect of farming in Grenada and—often—about who was being neglected. Often, this tended to mean women and young people.

**Small Farmers: Demographics and Subsistence Farming**

_The typical farmer in Grenada tends to be an older female cultivating a small plot of land for subsistence purposes._

—International Fund for Agricultural Development Report, 2000

The counting of farmers is an exercise with consequences for governments, aid agencies, and not least farmers. Assessing such statistics requires the adoption of multiple perspectives by the researcher. Questions of landholding and landlessness, subsistence and commercial production as well as gender tend to mingle in such assessments of who is and is not a farmer. For example, while George Brizan could write that there were just under 20,000 “peasant proprietors” in Grenada in 1950 (1998:251-252) out of a population of 77,000 people, a 1995 IFAD report on gender and age issues in Grenadian farming reports that in 1961—ten years later—67,100 Grenadians were farmers, all but a handful of whom would necessarily have been “small.”57 The question of who was and who was not a farmer assumes importance for the PRG period, as well. That government maintained that 8,000 Grenadians were farmers, employing the definition that “they sold their produce” (EPICA 1982:78).

By 1995—the same IFAD report maintains—the number of farmers had decreased to 43,400 from the 67,100 reported in 1961,58 a figure that would have included close to half of the people in a country where—in 2008—I was still being told that “almost everyone is a farmer.” The 1995 IFAD figures differ markedly from the 1995
agricultural census by Grenada’s Ministry of Agriculture, which recorded 11,807 farmers (1996:37). To offer a few more examples of such disparities: a long-term overview of Grenadian agriculture by the IICA Grenada office in 1997 said that the number of farmers had fallen from 12,600 in 1970 to an estimated 6,000 in 1990 (1997:4). Yet in 2008 the government’s Agriculture Review, working from extension office records, reported that there were 10,000 “full and part time” farmers (2009:8).

The point is not to question the accuracy of such counting, but to emphasize some of the tensions that inform it. The number of “farmers” is, as the foregoing hints, partly a question of how the term is defined. Since the numbers help to determine both policy and resource allocation the question is also political, especially for FS and subsistence farming. Among crucial issues are whether the statistics consider the role of other family members (as the lower figures above may not) or only enumerate single heads of a “farming unit,” whether they record those who farm full-time, for commercial, subsistence, or cash-and-subsistence purposes, the basis on which many farm families operate. As critical as any other question is whether women (married, widowed, single, or sole heads of households) are recorded or seen as farmers and whether houseyard production is seen as farming. How we define farmer goes to the question of how much respect and policy support smaller and non-commercial farmers are accorded—including from extension services—and whether current policies encourage or dissuade them from farming. Ultimately, some of those questions were critical, not just for small farmers but for the whole country: Does Grenada or its government want more Grenadians to enter farming? (Despite the payment of lip service to this idea, current policy in many ways suggests otherwise.) What do the government and Grenadians
themselves assume that they should do with their lives in a country with no mineral resources and a rich but threatened agricultural tradition to which much of its culture is historically tied? In a period where the limitations on the growth of other economic sectors are starkly apparent? Should Grenadians only provide for their basic needs through a cash economy?

**Farmers' Ages**

As in other countries, the question of farmers’ ages in Grenada is a perennial preoccupation of planners, who worry about the increasingly advanced average age of farmers surveyed and at the lack of younger people entering farming. But hand-wringing about an aging farmer cadre may ignore both sectorial problems and cultural strengths, especially where subsistence is concerned. In 2008 farmers’ mean age was said to be 55—five years older than a 1995 study had suggested and a possible cause for alarm (Agricultural Census 1996:35; ARD 2007:37). But the definition of farmer again carries importance for discussion of farmers’ ages, including whether landless farmers are counted—the average age of landless farmers, as noted earlier, was 20 years younger than for medium farmers in in the same census (Agricultural Census 1996:35). The average age of women farmers, meanwhile, was six years older than that of men (Agricultural Census 1996:35).

Although landholding patterns are different, the finding that women farmers tend to be older conforms with findings by Deere and León for Latin America that the mean age of women farmers was “in almost all cases” older than men (2003:940). The authors attribute this to the fact that women must often wait to inherit land from their husbands if they come by it at all. The age disparity may also owe to the fact that researchers (census takers and society itself) are more inclined to see men as
farmers—that women’s farming labor may be invisible to officials unless they have become “own-account” farmers via inheritance. (“Women's agricultural work tends to be . . . considered simply as 'help' to the husband,” write Deere and Leon, again in a Latin American context, “or as secondary” to their role “in providing domestic labor” [2003:930].)

The undercounting of women—or failure to honor or reward their labor, the more crucial underlying issues—could take place in Grenada for other reasons. Growing cash or export crops is likely to carry more value for canvassers than growing for domestic or local consumption. Women themselves may discount their farming activity, especially if their agricultural labor serves subsistence purposes and their partners, on the other hand, make money from their labors. Although women play strong roles in traditional Grenadian agriculture there is still reason to believe that both statistics and perception downplay their roles.

On the other hand—whether or not they are counted—it is also likely that women enter farming later and remained in farming longer, given the emerging patterns of recent decades in which more women increasingly entered the official work force, as well as women's greater longevity.62 Retired women who keep houseyards may again go unremarked as farmers, as may those who cultivate small “seasoning gardens” (as some Grenadians call them), which tend to hold tomatoes, onions, chives, and peppers, and may be kept by working women who thus keep the basic elements of many “creole-style” meals on hand.

**Women, “Tiny Farms,” and Subsistence**

According to the 1995 census 33% of Grenadian farmers were women (Grenada Ministry of Agriculture 1996:37); the foregoing discussion suggests that their number
may be higher. The number of households headed by women—45%—could also suggest that women farmers remain undercounted, along with the fact that—in a six-to-one ratio over men—women tended to be engaged in subsistence farming, as the 1995 IFAD report also notes.

Although they have clearly undergone a transformation, as Brierley reported in 1991 houseyards—the traditional “nucleus of [Grenadian] small-farming operations” (2003:54)—remained the core of many families’ production in River Sallee in 2008, when I lived there for three months (see Chapter 7). Houseyards, where women traditionally performed the leading roles, remained almost entirely neglected, as in Brierley’s time, as a subject of policy discussion, as was any discussion about subsistence.63 Since a far more varied production took place in houseyards than on farmers’ other lands, Grenadian women were the traditional keepers of much of the critical knowledge about the kind of farming that is most relevant to food security and sovereignty in Grenada. As Pulsipher records for neighboring Montserrat, houseyards were also a unique and privileged sphere of various aspects of women’s culture—“matrilocal and matrifocal”—that included components of child-rearing and education, courting, and upbringing of young women—all of which were endangered with loss due to their decline (1993:50-64). Janet Momsen notes that houseyards make it possible for women to “both fulfill their productive imperative and achieve economic autonomy,” often also maintaining other jobs (Momsen 1993:8).64 The decline of houseyards was therefore likely affecting women in general disproportionately—along with those who benefited nutritionally and culturally from their labors—as would agricultural policies that denied them help or prioritized other production.
One 1995 statistic helps to underline the interrelationship between women, houseyards, and subsistence: 40% of all food grown, according to that year’s agricultural census, was not grown for sale (IFAD 1995). Although dated, the 40% figure offers a starting point for investigation of subsistence production in Grenada. But—further—the 40% figure was derived from farmers surveyed; 4,482 “tiny farms,” as the census characterized them, were not counted because of their small size (they were below the study’s 1/8th acre “cut-off”). These uncounted sites of production were, however, precisely those where small farmers most likely grew for subsistence (1996:41). A very large proportion of production in Grenada, therefore—a number above 40%—was until recently devoted to subsistence production, traditionally centered in houseyards where women played a predominant role. These observations lead to one of the chief conclusions of this study: subsistence production, so central to Grenadian farming, history, and its people’s needs, must be placed back at the center of policy-making, made a first priority for government efforts in agriculture, and further developed in pursuit of FS. A “right to subsistence” must be part of any FS campaign.

**The Marketing and National Importing Board and Farmers**

The MNIB is Grenada’s state-owned agricultural trading organization, officially part of the Finance Ministry, an entity that was deeply controversial among people I interviewed. According to CARDI, MNIB “trades an estimated 80% of the national [commercially sold] . . . fruits and vegetables” (2008 Report:4), so that many farm families were dependent on sales to the organization for part of their livelihoods. MNIB purchased fruit and produce from Grenada’s farmers at stores in St. George’s and Sauteurs on the island’s north coast as well as marketing them overseas. It also imported rice and flour, whose costs (with milk and bread) were controlled by the
government (FINTRAC 1997:16). MNIB also sold products from Grenada’s various cottage industries, from cassava and plantain chips to nuts, sauces, soaps, and hand products. Over 35 years the MNIB’s mission and aims had changed several times, as noted in Chapter 4. Under the PRG, as noted, the organization had been charged with buying at least some produce from all farmers, something many farmers I spoke with—former Prime Minister George Brizan, GCFA officials, and extension officials included—thought it should still be doing.

MNIB was a fascinating omnibus institution. It was also something of a Rorschach Test of attitudes to agriculture in Grenada. Farmers I spoke to on the north and south shores complained that MNIB was “competing with farmers,” “operating like a little business,” “only helping the big farmers,” and “paying farmers as little as they can.” “They buy from special people. They don’t buy from all farmers,” a River Sallee farmer told me. Many farmers had had their produce turned down by the organization, part or all of their deliveries rejected: “They take 200 pounds of golden apple. When you go for your money they say they accept 100 pounds.” Having produce rejected could be a bitter experience for farmers, who might be dependent on such sales to pay a child’s school fees or buy medicine (expenses often cited in my interviews) with the earnings. Others felt that the MNIB had forgotten its mandate: “They looking to where they can make money—selling flour and sugar, roti65. . . sandwich. They should sell plants and fertilizer,” said one farmer. Some complained that the MNIB had become a source of competition for them in selling produce to hotels and resorts.

But in fact the organization had long sought to make money, including under the PRG. It was definitely in competition with farmers insofar as it imported produce they
grew like sweet potatoes (provisionary subsistence product), a fact disapproved of by officials of several agencies I spoke to which triggered a sense of betrayal among some farmers.

The board had been founded, Director Fitzroy James told me, by a 1973 act of parliament as a government marketing agency, with a mandate to identify new agricultural products for export—to “diversify” the export sector and provide an institutional framework for their growth and sale. According to James, the mainly root crops (“provision”) that long formed the basis of the Grenadian diet had until then been sold along with other staples “in helter-skelter fashion,” with farmers simply selling their surplus production—“You would go to market, sit down and peddle your goods.” But the new organization struggled, possibly because subsistence production was so widespread. Export production remained minimal and the organization operated at a loss.

When the PRG took over in 1979, James said, MNIB was re-conceived as an organization that would “drive production and help to manage the cost of living” by creating home-grown products that Grenadians needed (measures of import substitution) and “by controlling the prices of products that people used most.” It became a trading organization, importing and distributing basic food stuffs the profits from which—it was hoped—could be used to develop the agricultural sector and create rural employment. An effort to sell “non-traditional” fruits was developed, but flourished only briefly. This led governments that followed to downplay the export emphasis to “try to supply and expand the domestic market,” with the MNIB’s grocery stores working “to meet the needs of local customers,” James said. Here the implicit potential for
competition with farmers emerges more fully, and the ways that a push to accommodate “consumers” and expanding consumerism comes into conflict with the need of poor farmers for fair prices for their produce.

This is a truncated version of a complex story. But we should note the different kinds of demands being addressed, even under the PRG: seeking to meet an international market and develop a local commercial one in the early 1980s, while also helping to control consumer costs by limiting import prices; to greater emphasis on stimulating (“supply and expand”) internal consumer demand in which, among other activities, subsistence staples are marketed for farmers.

As it sought to increase profit, MNIB was also a natural focus for an emphasis on identifying niche markets and competition—at the expense of production of staple foods that remained central to many diets and FS or wider food independence. The notion of a culture of subsistence or promotion of a national subsistence, inherent in the historical efforts of small farmers, was likely to run counter to such schemes. It is also not hard to see why small farmers thought that MNIB should be committed to just such ends.

As MNIB entered into the dynamic of an increasingly liberalized global market—pursuant to the 1994 WTO agreement, for example—it became necessary to pressure suppliers (farmers) to obtain good prices for buyers and customers, to whom James was promising “better and cheaper produce,” whether in its stores or to importers; and to meet various requirements of quality and size of export products, including phyto-sanitary measures that the new regulations required. Picking up or sorting the meager output from some small producer's houseyard is not efficient from such a point of view. From here, however—in a climate where government agencies faced growing pressure
to “pay for themselves”—it was not hard to see how such efforts led to ever more straightforward profit-seeking by MNIB, by the Grenadian government, with a real cost to small farmers, and the increasing press for lower prices that local farmers complained to me about.

The same pressures that influenced MNIB’s actions tended to foster, or play into, a kind of consumer caste system, where fancier new supermarkets (Grenada has several small chains) directed their efforts toward wealthier and returning-immigrant Grenadians or tourists, and MNIB was pushed into an ambiguous role as a low or middle-tier grocery, which couldn’t offer the breadth of products supermarkets could. Spot and seasonal shortages of produce at the MNIB’s Sauteurs and St. George’s facilities were viewed as a problem by customers used to the fully stocked shelves in supermarkets. “You go and there’s nothing there,” said my landlady at La Taste, on the north shore, a Trinidadian native who owned a house in Grenada and spent part of each year there. This was my initial middle-class reaction, too: that the empty shelves signaled dysfunction, when often they just reflected seasonal availability. But these views also suggest what MNIB and any government were up against: a culture of consumerism against which the pursuit of FS would be judged, especially by the country’s middle and upper classes, who might comprise an increasingly thin stratum of the electorate but held disproportionate economic clout. MNIB was trying to meet middle-class expectations as well as bowing to global pressures, cultivating and being conditioned by them at the same time.

It was not surprising, then, that the emphases by MNIB toward small farmers, and inevitably by the Agricultural Ministry, should come to be placed on “modernization,”
“commercialization,” and “competitiveness.” Improving agriculture for James—his writings and interviews suggested—was a matter of adopting these goals, including better record-keeping by farmers and uniformity in agricultural practices. “To compete regionally,” James said of Grenadian farming, “it is necessary for Grenada's... industry to revolutionize its level of technology, achieve quantum leaps in quality, strengthen its management capacity, reduce costs and institute measures to transform...small producers into strong vibrant highly efficient economic units” (Food and Farm Newsletter 2007:2). This was the language of the brave new world of global farming, with all its concomitant pressures, a kind of discipline being demanded of farmers—a boilerplate rhetoric employed to demand it—that James was himself rehearsing and putting into play. Often such rhetoric cowed farmers, as I myself had witnessed, and as officials I talked to about it confirmed. There was no mention of protecting home-grown products or guaranteeing prices or sales to farmers. It was assumed by officials I spoke to like James, former permanent finance minister Lennox Andrews, Campbell, or IICA’s Cosmos Joseph, each in his own way sympathetic to farmers, that these were not possible. The end-goals of agriculture—food and nutrition—moved further down the list of priorities. And food security assumed a place in this pecking order as a kind of charitable endeavor: after satisfying the demand that agriculture first be used for profit, how do we take care of the losers?

**Fitzroy James on Food Security and Small Farmers**

James’s ideas about Grenadian agriculture were important because of his considerable power. For a time, in fact, he would become head of GAFAFO, the new farmer umbrella group, which had applied for WINFA membership and—through it—would thus have become an LVC organization. When I interviewed James in 2008,
MNIB was looking forward to the advent of a new government and the policy changes that would come with it. When I asked what changes he would like to make his answers bore a stamp of authority and imminent possibility: they focused on questions of efficiency and competitiveness. James surprised me, however, when he said that many of the farmers MNIB dealt with were “like children,” “wanting handouts,” and stuck in relationships of dependency with the board, unable to deliver high quality produce consistently. He would prefer that the government “not put resources in backyard farming,” he told me (the somewhat deprecating word often used for houseyards), but concentrate on training and developing a professional cadre of farmers for whom markets would be more or less guaranteed, assuming they met certain market standards of product size and quality.

James nodded as I described what I felt were key features of the fight for FS, which he tended to equate with food security and had defined as “access to food at an affordable price” in a previous interview (Barnacle 2008d:4-5). He pointed out what he saw as the difficulties in establishing such conditions: “It is good to tell people to ‘eat local,’ but what are you going to target? Which of the [imported] items that people really eat can you substitute for?”

Although at the time of our interview I was still struggling to derive a basic idea of what FS might consist of in the Grenada, it was my assumption that an unwillingness to help “backyard farmers” was not in keeping with FS. If houseyard farming and provision were Grenada’s agricultural heritage, the basis of subsistence production, then failure to promote them—in broad terms—was inimical to that heritage and FS, including its community orientation. If the decline in houseyard gardening was linked to rising prices
(Scott-Joseph 2009:8), such a policy would court greater hunger or poverty. I was strongly biased toward poor and subsistence farmers. But it was notable that even the more successful north and south shore small farmers I spoke to (along with former Prime Minister George Brizan, in my interview with him) disagreed with James's stance about not helping smaller farmers—partly out of a sense of fairness, partly because they thought that buying even the smallest growers' produce could stimulate the local economy. But more than this—as Chapter 7 shows—a great deal of production begins in “backyards,” and farmers often produce in serious quantities in them.

As MNIB director James ran an import and export board with evolving, historically overlapping objectives. Increasingly, his concern was developing commercial agriculture along profitable lines. But he was not a crusading free marketeer. Like a number of professionals I interviewed in Grenada he was playing with the hand that Grenada had been dealt. James supported government efforts to create protected agricultural zones—yam, tannia, dasheen, and sweet potato were products he mentioned that might be grown—in the name of food security. He favored “value added activity” that would create new products from Grenadian produce and reduce import dependency. He was interested in attempts to standardize island-wide use of pen manure as fertilizer and was knowledgeable about Cuban farming.

Frustration with MNIB—which extended to nearly every farmer I spoke to—stemmed from the fact that it was so obviously an institution that could but did not aid them, that could but did not bridge the gap between their subsistence production and supplying the local economy or exports, helping them to meet their pressing cash needs. These twin goals, I would come to believe, should be developed as explicit
policy in pursuit of FS in Grenada. Without abandoning trade or niche or other markets that Grenadian farmers had long excelled in meeting, the MNIB could protect local farmers from aspects of the global economy that left them most vulnerable collectively rather than expose each individually. Grenada and the MNIB, I came to believe early on, were half-way in and half-way out, between a system designed to help protect farmers, to help them gain income, and one increasingly pushed to turn a profit—if necessary, at their expense.

**Post-Hurricane Policy Making**

Although I would not learn about it until 2010—and although many Grenadians remained completely unaware—after Hurricane Ivan the sitting NNP government, based on an agricultural policy report prepared by unnamed outside sources, made a policy decision to push toward complete commercialization of agriculture in Grenada. It adopted the recommendations in a report prepared for the Agency for Reconstruction Development (ARD) that the government privatize many Agriculture Ministry functions; prioritize aid to farmers who held the most promise as commercial farmers; and create a cadre of minimum wage workers to supply labor in the agricultural sector. In adopting the report it also placed its stamp of approval on the authors’ recommendation that remaining government lands be “quickly privatized” for large-scale plantation production.

No small farmer, extension agent, or public official mentioned this change in direction to me over the course of four visits to Grenada from 2008 to 2012; most, I was able to verify, did not know about it. The lack of awareness on the part of so many people about the changes, I came to believe, reflected both the undemocratic character of decision-making about agriculture in Grenada and the extent to which it was driven
by interests outside the country. Among the recommendations of the 76-page ARD document from the point of view of this project and FS were five central goals:

- the “introduction of a commercial perspective throughout the agricultural sector” in Grenada (2007:7).

- A “delinking” of the Agricultural Ministry “from all activities that can . . . be supplied by the private sector” (2007:7).

- Distribution of its limited resources to farmers with the greatest commercial promise (2007:25).

- Privatization of remaining government lands “as agricultural estates rather than as sub-divided smallholder lots” (2007:44).

- Development of a government-run “Contract Labour Service” through a strategy of better training for agricultural workers, higher minimum wages at a high-enough effective rate “to persuade labour back to the land” and increased benefits for such workers (2007:67-69).

Evidence of the adoption of the report as policy is confirmed by a 2008 OAS report:

“The government in Grenada has . . . agreed to implement a new agricultural policy based upon submissions made by the Canadian funded Agency for Reconstruction and Development Inc. in March, 2007” (54).  

Because I did not uncover the ARD document until 2010, I only absorbed in retrospect the degree to which most of the policy decisions and much of the rhetoric that I heard from both parties in government followed its contours. Its implementation and adoption, admittedly, took place in a manner that may have been more surreptitious than secret. Strongly publicizing measures like the “rapid privatisation” of remaining estate lands might have led to a public outcry. Although its authors saw the policy as a strong break from existing practices, it was more consonant with previous policy than they understood, preserving the essential plantation character of Grenada’s economy, further articulating the class system in the rural sector, and perpetuating the continued
denial of land and resources to small farmers. Harms or potential impacts on women farmers, traditionally more devoted to subsistence production, were nowhere discussed.

In retrospect, it was clear to me that the language that Fitzroy James employed in print and in our interview—and would employ in public interventions I witnessed or read about—was in keeping with the new policy and the rhetoric of neoliberal structural adjustment in the countryside. The degree to which the report both disregarded and parted from proven long-standing practices in the countryside—and from the cooperative practices and practices of sharing of local farmers, including cane farmers in the GCFA—was striking; its authors, clearly, had little knowledge of Grenada’s small farming inheritance. Disorganization and distress had prevailed in the rural sector after the hurricanes. To the extent that the proposed changes sought to take advantage of the opportunity this presented for reorganization—and for a push to commercialization—the adoption of the policy can legitimately be described as an instance of “disaster capitalism.”74

There was little question in my mind that a push for commercialization without subsistence protections, prioritization of larger and more commercially promising farmers, continued emphasis on plantation exports over small farming, and sale of estate lands for continued plantation production rather than their distribution all ran counter to FS objectives. But the degree to which the very comprehensive new policy ran counter to other Grenada government policies and commitments deserved investigation. Certainly local organizations looking to challenge the policy would want to do so. Policy provisions of the country’s assistance agreement with the FAO, for example—buttressed by the organization’s “right to food” campaign—place emphasis
on local, mixed small farmer production. In noting that it “is part of government policy to encourage. . . establishment of a sufficient acreage of vegetables and fruit to meet local and regional demand,” the FAO document observes that, in the wake of the hurricanes, “most farmers. . . are interested to establish mixed farms with vegetables and fruits (short term) and nutmegs and cocoa trees (medium- and long-term) to spread their entrepreneurial risk” (2006:7). Such careful language, while avoiding mention of subsistence, nonetheless suggests something like the long-established model(s) of peasant farming in Grenada. Obviously, these were far short of the kind of protections that might have been supplied through adoption of real FS protections for small farmers or Grenadian citizens. But in exchange for continued technical and other assistance and policy advice from the UN organization, the Grenadian government had agreed to increase food security “to the extent possible. . . through increased domestic production” and to promote “the widest possible utilization of local products for domestic consumption” (2006:5). Whether these objectives could be attained through a policy of complete commercialization was doubtful. ⁷⁵ But as too often in Grenada’s history, any direct meeting of Grenadians’ basic food needs was pushed way down the list of report objectives.

**GCFA Cheers 2008 Elections**

GCFA members grew hopeful after the NNP lost the 2008 elections, when new NDC Agriculture Minister Dennis Lett expressed willingness to help the organization get the Pointzfield mill running again. Prime Ministerial candidate Tillman Thomas and the NDC had spoken repeatedly during the campaign about deploying agriculture to feed Grenadians (Roberts 2008:11). His party’s manifesto carried a number of elements that might have accompanied—at least on first glance—an FS campaign. It promised to
“improve the quality of life for our impoverished rural communities,” to start an “eat local” campaign and a “program of incentives to achieve greater self-sufficiency in vegetables, root crops, fish, poultry, pork, lamb, beef, honey and fruit.” It vowed to establish a 
“farming Systems Extension Service,” implicitly promising a more nuanced approach to large and smaller-scale, local and export-based farming. Promisingly, the NDC said it would “completely reorganize” MNIB “to adequately market all farmers' produce.” The manifesto promised that the NDC would develop a land use policy and merge the inefficient nutmeg and cocoa associations; create a local fruit and fruit juice program for schools; and promote agro-processing with a new plant in St. Andrew's parish. 

The NDC also said it would “work towards increased private sector involvement” in agriculture (which suggested some further push toward commercialization), and create “appropriate incentives to attract young persons” into the field. The NDC aimed to make Grenada more attractive to foreign investment and to move the private sector to the fore economically. Although it mentioned the need for greater “self-sufficiency” where food was concerned, the manifesto made no mention of Grenada's small farming traditions, their value, or preservation (NDC 2008:27-28).

“Efforts are under way. . . to revive the country's sugar cane industry,” The Grenada Advocate reported (Titus 2009:4) after GCFA officials met with Lett. A “Sugarcane Resuscitation Committee” had been established, and plans were to be drawn up by cane officials and the government to carry such a plan out. The GCFA had proposed establishment of several new mills and called on the government to return lands taken from cane farmers “for tourism development which did not occur,” an obvious allusion to Mt. Hartman. “Our argument is that there is a role for sugar cane in
the resuscitation of agriculture,” Elliot Bishop told the Advocate. “Government is talking food security, sustainable farming. Sugar cane is the best crop you can use for that approach. There are two distilleries in the country and most of the raw materials are imported. So you are talking about a lot of foreign exchange going out of the country.”

Bishop used the interview to look beyond sugarcane to establishment of a wide vision for revival of Grenadian agriculture. “What we would like to see is a well-planned land distribution programme where plots of land will be given out to farmers,” the paper quoted Bishop saying, “not solely for sugar cane because we are talking about the resuscitation of agriculture generally.” The cane farmers had also asked the government to instruct the Grenadian Development Bank to forgive an outstanding loan for the Pointzfield Mill, and Lett had promised to look into this (Titus 2009:4). An editorial in the same paper lauded the promise of such efforts to revive cane, noting the cane farmers were demanding investigation of the sale of the sugar factory for four million $EC— “much lower than it [was] valued” (Grenada Advocate 2009:8).

The new government, Bishop told me, was undertaking an inventory of lands. “You have farmers and you have lands,” he told me. He also told me that the new agricultural officials had conceded that they needed popular organizations “to push them” toward needed changes. Privately, they had expressed hope that farmers would “get more organized.” There was talk of occupying Mt. Hartman.

None of the above-described hoped-for developments in agriculture were to take place. If committed to greater transparency than its predecessor, the new government would prove as wedded to the commercialization of agriculture and small farming as the preceded it. How or why it balked in helping the GCFA was still not clear in 2012—
whether there some policy about-face took place in the chambers of the new government or it never planned to. One explanation was that a cash-strapped government had run out of money for new initiatives by 2010 (former Permanent Secretary of Finance Lennox Andrews interview, June 2010). But a commitment to the GCFA was a commitment to a kind of traditional cash-and-subsistence agriculture, and meant nurturing an organization of the poorest farmers. Small cane plots were set up on the north and south shores with plant material from the Agricultural Ministry. But in a withering drought, nothing came of either crop. This proved to be the extent of the new government’s aid to cane farmers; in 2012 the farmers who planted them were still demanding to be repaid for their labor by the government. One clear signal of the direction of government policy: the “Lands” portfolio had been given not to the Agricultural Ministry but to the Ministry of Tourism. “The tourism interests are winning,” Elliot Bishop told me in 2010, sorely disappointed. In 2012 I learned from several well-placed sources that a new hospital was planned on the sugarcane lands given to farmers by former Prime Minister Eric Gairy at Calivigny, in the heart of what was quickly becoming the center of wealth and privilege on the island.

**Conclusion**

The foregoing review shows a Grenadian economy based firmly in the continuing dispossession of Grenadians—especially food producers—with recent governments doubling down on plantation export strategies for any hoped-for future “development” in Grenada. The aftermath of the hurricanes brought an increasing imposition of Western consumerism and middle-class models on Grenadians, one that marked the rural landscape and threatened their future ability to act to create FS, as it threatened the pristine environment that island tourism is based on. Tourism and recent tourism
initiatives stand as direct competitors with farmers and farming in Grenada, not just for land but for the energy and attention of officials, changes in party and a professed desire to aid the rural sector notwithstanding. Despite living in a period when its failures were increasingly manifest, politicians and public officials—including some of progressive sentiment—had all but conceded defeat to the neoliberal models imposed on Grenada, suggesting that the kind of change required to enact FS was unlikely to be delivered through mainstream political activity. Clearly, post-hurricane developments in Grenada posed many new impediments to small farmers and subsistence agriculture and suggested the need for a rural movement for FS.

1 Comparisons across several measures suggest that the country is clustered among a tier of the third-poorest Caribbean-basin countries after Haiti and Suriname (the very poorest), and Jamaica (second poorest), with poverty paralleling that in Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines—countries with poverty rates of between 30% and 40%. This parallel was affirmed in a 2012 interview with temporary Permanent Secretary of Finance Isaac Bhagwan (see above), who has helped carry out two studies of Grenadian poverty. Statistics are continually updated.

2 “Vulnerability,” writes anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith, “is fundamentally a political ecological concept” linking “the relationship people have with their environment to the social forces and institutions that surround them” (2004:10). Such a focus helps to move people and their basic needs to the center of analyses increasingly dominated by economic rhetoric, across many disciplines. Indigence indicates possession of too little money to obtain an adequate daily diet—ironic in a fertile country with considerable unused land, and the region's most diverse and successful small farmer culture. Vulnerability in the context indicates risk of falling below the established poverty line. Among notable measures of need in Grenada in 2008: 36% of people still used pit latrines; 10% lacked electricity; and 62% of household heads had no more than a primary education: http://www.gov.gd/egov/docs/reports/Grenada_CPA_Vol_1_Main_Report_Submitted.pdf, accessed October 25, 2012.

3 Under the then-ruling NNP, Grenada sought to establish itself as an offshore banking center. According to Grenada sociologist Claude Douglas “no rules were established to regulate” the activity and it quickly became, according to another source, “one of the most corrupt international financial centres in the history of offshore” http://www.shelteroffshore.com/index.php/offshore/more/grenada-offshore-banking-industry, accessed December 1, 2012. Grenada was blacklisted by the Paris-based Financial Task Force for failing to stem money laundering (Douglas 2010:40).

4 According to Brierley’s 1974 small farmer study, family land comprised about 10% of land held by small farmers. “[T]here was a tendency... to ignore the existence of family land,” he wrote, “because it was either non-productive, a reminder of an unsettled family dispute,” or quite small in relation to other holdings (1974:91). River Sallee’s Reginald Buddy corroborated this anecdotally in 2008 when he told me that family land wasn’t being used for agriculture, but for housing construction, sometimes to attract tourist visitors. But the family land idea remains important, both as an alternative structure that
emphasizes collective rather than individual well-being, and one that places landholding power in the hands of women, who tend to have far less access to land.


6  Many of Grenada’s mangroves were filled in beginning in the 1700s but the country still holds more than 500 acres of the plants. These ecosystems, teeming with plants and aquatic life, have assumed new importance as their role in maintaining coastal stability, reefs, nutrition, and livelihood becomes better recognized (Martin 2007:151). In areas like Grenada’s south shore, they are threatened by development. According to environmental activist Tyrone Buckmire, whom I interviewed in 2008 and 2012, regional mangroves are the hatcheries for as much as 70% of East Caribbean commercial fish. Rising sea levels, result of climate change, pose a threat to mangroves worldwide, and they are strongly affected by effluent fresh water after increasingly violent tropical storms (http://www.eoearth.org/article/Mangrove_ecology?topic=49514, accessed November 18, 2012).


8  Mace, the lacy wax carapace of the nutmeg seed, is grated into baked goods, imparting a strong aromatic flavor (Vanderhoof 2004:146,148). Nutmeg oil has hundreds of industrial applications, almost all carried out in the First World after export, stark example of unequal trade (http://mypages.spiceisle.com/minorspices/, accessed November 30, 2012; Douglas 2004:52). The nutmeg industry suffered a powerful blow when world nutmeg prices collapsed in 1991, the a result of IMF-led deregulation of the Indonesian economy (NSAP 2012:28).

9  Soon cocoa would come to replace it as Grenada’s number one export. The industry—which observers like former Prime Minister George Brizan believed held great potential for Grenada—was notoriously disordered (Douglas 2004: passim). By 2010 the industry would be in free fall due to (among many issues) disorganization, nepotism, financial incompetence, and the spread of nutmeg wilt disease.

10  In the past coconut milk and oil have played a strong role in Grenadian cooking (Vanderhoof 2004:209).

11  Cocoa has a similar lesser traditional role as a “pension crop” (ARD 2007:17).

12  Bananas were intercropped with various edible plants for local consumption as well as with cocoa and nutmeg. Grenada began exporting them in the 1930s and exports boosted in the 1950s, when the Geest company became sole marketing agent for Grenada. They began to decline as export in the 1990s and production all but ceased by 1997 as a result of bans due to low quality (Martin 2007:15). Bananas remain important as a plant nutritionally, including as element of provision.

13  The economic decline stimulated “substantial urban-rural drift, manifested in the many tenements” that have sprung up around the capital (NSAP 2012:53).


15  Five companies controlled 85% of food imports into Grenada (FINTRAC 1997:10). Florida wholesalers are estimated to account for one-half to two-thirds of US food exports to the Caribbean in general. The degree to which the firms control island food policy or its wider politics wants investigation http://www.cbato.fas.usda.gov/cfm_summary.htm, accessed December 1, 2012.
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17 Ministry of Finance sources show construction peaking at almost 16% of GDP in 2005 after the hurricanes, falling to 8% in 2008, 5% in 2011 (NSAP 2012:39).

18 The homes were being built—and hurricane damage repaired—with loans at high rates of interest of as much as 12.5%, justified in part by the fact that few Grenadians held insurance or titles to collateralize loans. Land and house sales were listed by realtors in a foreign currency—US dollars—which Bhagwan noted “takes it out of the reach of a lot of people.” The boom was, as Agency for Rural Transformation General Secretary Sandra Ferguson looked back on it in a 2012 interview, a “debt-driven boom,” which compounded people’s economic woes in the recession that followed. “[I]n the vast majority of cases,” according to a USAID report on the country’s land tenure situation, “it would be difficult. . . if not impossible to obtain reliable evidence of legal title” (Gomez 2005:4).


20 Resulting turbidity affects fish and other aquatic organisms, while animals from field mice to crabs to microorganisms they depend on lose habitat with sand and dune loss. The substrate may become damaged as it suffers growing exposure. The course of rivers and streams is altered by dune and river mining and bridges and roads can be undermined as water finds new patterns of movement. http://coastalcare.org/sections/inform/sand-mining, accessed November 7, 2012.

21 There were also reports that the companies were abusing Chinese workers, and that some of them had been brought to the region against their will—or “shanghaied.” http://www.caribbean360.com/index.php?news=12244&output_type=txt#axzz2DnowDJoDcite, accessed December 21, 2012.


23 James Ferguson affirmed the importance of this theme to prevailing discourse (and the importance of the trees to the national economy) in Grenada when he wrote that, “Popular folklore states an entire family can live from the proceeds of a single nutmeg tree simply by picking up and selling the fruit which drops from it” (1997:234). The idea that small farmers might not have to toil the clock round to gain a living clearly annoys some upper-class Grenadians, begging larger questions about Western attitudes to work. The rhythms of small farmers’ work day in a hot climate may not lend themselves to clock-punching discipline.


25 Millions of peasants have recently been driven off of their own traditional lands, often by corrupt Communist Party officials, as China embraced industrial capitalism. The wave of change that had washed over China—triggered in part by the movement of US and European manufacturing to that country—was creating a new great wave of Chinese emigrants, www.atimes.com/atimes/China/ID17Ad03.html, accessed November 18, 2012.

26 Setting rates to attract agricultural labor was complicated by the fact that the government road maintenance program, which drew from the same pool of persons, paid EC$45 ($16US) for a three-hour day (ARD 2007:87).

27 You Decide with Brian Pitt, Channel 6, June 18, 2010.
I was treated to an impromptu labor protest when a Black Carib worker on a hillside in the north of St. Vincent began to shout across the valley through which I was traveled with a WINFA official—whose lands they were—in a high song-like, agonized voice. The official explained that he had recently informed the man that he might have to let him and the two women he worked with go because funding under the government program he used to pay them was ending.

This competition extends to Trinidad and Tobago, since that country produces oil. Venezuela's cheap sales, some say, undermine solidarity and integration between Caribbean basin partners.


A report on the country's plant genetic resources expresses concern that although both Chinas have introduced various hardy and prolific fruit, tomato, and carrot varieties a number of indigenous plant genetic resources have been replaced by them (Dottin 2008:4.1,4.3). Control over such introductions, in line with a wider FS-based policy, is critical.

The NNP had been helped to power by the US, eager to forestall a return to power by Gairy or the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (named for the assassinated former prime minister) after the 1983 invasion of the country (Martin 2007:175). It received funding from The Council for National Policy, a right wing US group that included notorious Baptist minister Jerry Falwell, beer magnate Joseph Coors, and Jesse Helms as well as from the US government (Ferguson 1990:48; Martin 2007:175). In 1999 the NNP won roughly 62% of votes and all 15 parliamentary seats in Grenada's national elections; in 2003 it was returned to power with an eight-to-seven seat majority (Martin 2007:175).

In May 2010 former Grenada Attorney General and Bar Association president Jimmy Bristol said that the country had been “a roller coaster of impropriety under the NNP” (New Today 2010).

The NDC incorporated some former members of the NJM in 2002 “in hopes of presenting an effective challenge to the NNP government” (Martin 2007:171). A number of these same members would be ejected in 2012, having fallen out with the Prime Minister over his refusal to join ALBA or to establish a gambling casino in St. George's. http://www.grenadabroadcast.com/content/view/2818/1/, accessed January 15, 2012.

ALBA is a regional economic alliance that one admirer describes as an “alternative regional development strategy,” which emphasizes trade and barter over US dollar-denominated trade, “public rather than private ownership, domestic rather than export orientation” and “social rather than profit motivation.” Signatories share an explicit goal of promoting FS for members. Under ALBA's auspices Venezuela and Cuba trade oil for doctors and medical expertise and have joint soy, rice, poultry and dairy projects (Hart-Landsberg 2009:5).

To Grenadian author Jacob Ross the country seemed “split down the middle,” with a “suggestion of intimidation, violence and tribalisation” that reminded him of Jamaica in the 1970s (Enisuoh 2008).

Brierley noted in 1974 that a 1966 economic survey had recommended tourism investment, suggesting that it would boost agriculture. But indications were “that any increase in production of food crops has been minimal, and that...hoteliers have relied on imported produce to serve their guests, a practice which has only helped to widen the trade gap.” “Evidence of a faltering tourist development is already apparent in parts of the Caribbean,” he wrote (1974:19).
Global warming was generating a new kind of “disaster tourism” as melting ice made far-north and south navigation easier. Princess Cruises was pulling two ships from the Caribbean to accommodate Iceland, Norwegian fjord, and British Isles itineraries. The number of Caribbean cruises was expected to fall in 2009 (Spice Isle Review 2008).


Polly Pattullo recounts some of the problems with the ships: They are highly polluting and contribute to global warming, thus harming the ocean environment, including reefs and fisheries around islands. They stock little or no local produce. In one case, Pattullo noted that barges filled with Venezuelan produce, including bananas, were restocking ships in St. Lucia, whose main export is bananas (1996:162). Nor do they bring on-board jobs, since home ports lie elsewhere. Countries invest millions deepening ports and creating amenities to lure ships, neglecting areas like agriculture (Pattullo 1996:161-184); efforts to tax cruise liners on entry to island ports have failed due to regional in-fighting. Short-lived though their visits are, often lasting just a few hours, cruise ships carry most of Grenada's tourist “visitors,” three times (333,000 in 2010) as many as come by air.


The cost of bread and rice are controlled by the Grenadian government, as are gas, diesel, and kerosene.

The report suggested that focus on agriculture development might “not be a desirable option” for countries like Grenada whose “comparative advantage” lay in tourism, and that import dependence—a function of long emphasis on export agriculture—is not problematic if matched by income growth. Food security strategy, it advocates, should be based in development of adequate food reserves (Pemberton 2005:20).

The report notes that higher food prices can push people away from protein- and nutrient-rich foods to cheaper staples, leading to undernutrition and low birth weight babies (Scott-Joseph 2009:19). It says rising prices bring rises in everything from infant and maternal mortality to illiteracy and drop-out rates. Child labor increases as families struggle to make up adult earners’ lost buying power, pushing younger members into the workforce. Financial pressure increases domestic abuse; HIV and AIDS rise. An ailing economy flattens tax revenues, limiting governments’ ability to respond (Scott-Joseph 2009:4).

Kendall and Petracco affirm this in the previously noted 2003 study, citing a continual, often dramatic decline in income from agriculture across the region. They also note the paucity of data available about regional domestic agriculture (3).

According to Reed “crop diversification” initiatives, urged by the World Bank and other multilateral agencies on poor countries with offers of funding aid, were underway beginning in the 1990s (1996:17). Grenada received a loan for diversification as early as 1985, which strengthens the case for the island as laboratory for neoliberal efforts:
http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/mainpagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P007176, accessed October 25, 2012. The goal of this global “nontraditional agricultural export (NTAE) imperative,” as one writer calls it, was to articulate small farmers with overseas markets (Wiley 1999:77). “Nontraditional” crops is one term employed for export produce developed through such initiatives. On the ground in countries like Grenada, diversification has come to signify a perennial and sometimes desperate search for something new to sell which makes hustlers out of farmers and poor country governments even as the knowledge of how to feed themselves lies at farmers’ fingertips. One official told me about attending meetings in a WINFA country where local officials wracked their brains to uncover new crops to export: “As far as they are concerned diversification is just another single crop,” he said. As LVC leader Renwick Rose said of a European Union-funded diversification
project in St. Vincent, farmers were never consulted “whether they wish to diversify, in what manner, at what pace,” or “what their requirements are” (2010).

48 Exports included melons, limes, lettuce, pumpkin, pigeon (or gungo) peas, sweet corn, avocados, cucumber, cabbage, tomatoes, and shallots. Fruit crops include mangoes, papaws (papaya), soursop, mammy (mamey) apples, sugar apples, star apples, and carambola (star) fruit, 70% of these—according to the MNIB—going to the US and Europe (http://www.travelgrenada.com/mnib.htm, accessed February 13, 2013).

49 “Lack of up to date and accessible information” about the sector “inhibits policy formulation and optimal use of limited resources,” says the post-Hurricane policy report on agriculture carried out by the Agency for Reconstruction and Development (ARD 2007:6).

50 According to the same ARD report, there was one extension officer for every 1,000 farmers and the government possessed a single plow (2007:17).

51 Sugarcane is one exception because sugar was used internally for rum production. But sugarcane farmers’ additional domestic production has also gone unrecorded.

52 Some protectionist sentiment persisted. In 2008, then-Prime Minister Keith Mitchell argued against removal of the Common External Tariff protecting some agricultural products by CARICOM, but the measure was effected despite his vote (Spice Isle Review 2008a).


55 “Nevertheless, squatting might become a significant problem because of government tolerance, public acceptance, and even ‘dignifying’ actions by the authorities,” the report says (Gomez 2005:3).

56 “The reliance on imports is being driving by a culture that has developed over the years where persons have a preference for imported foods,” said a press release by the 2008 NDC government. But the continual loss of land for agriculture by the poorest farmers undermined the sometimes-convenient argument that the problem was all a matter of tastes.

57 Brizan worked from Grenada’s colonial Blue Books, which show a growth of almost 20% in the peasant population between 1939 and 1949—Grenada’s peasant population was still growing in the middle of last century. But 96% of them owned just 28% of cultivable land (1998:252). The 1960 population was 90,000 people (UN World Population Prospects 2006:248).

58 These numbers are drawn from a IFAD background report, issued in 2000, for a rural poverty alleviation project. Although the methodology is not available, the text pays particular attention to women and subsistence farmers and to farming. http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/challenges/youth/g_6_3_4.htm, accessed December 2, 2012.

59 Neither the methodology nor “concepts and definitions” section of the census notes how farmers were counted. While the census counted 16,756 farms it only counted 11,807 farmers (1996:6,8,37). It is possible that the latter is the number of persons who completed the project’s long-form survey, or that some “farms” were parcels the study failed to connect with farmers or farm families who held several.

60 A long-delayed agricultural census was being carried out in 2012.


Among the only references I found anywhere was in a 2001 WTO trade policy review that noted, in passing, that the country “has a large subsistence sector” (2007:5).

A host of activities take place there under the watchful eye and supervision of mature women, including courtship of their daughters and childcare by their male friends (1993:50-65). Traditional Caribbean villages cannot simply be assumed to reflect dominant Western cultural or suburban practices, nor should development “solutions” alter these without long discussion among society members affected.

Unleavened Indian wheat bread popular in the region.

Cocoa, nutmeg, and banana producers already had marketing organizations.

St. Vincent and Dominica had similar projects at the time, according to James. Comparison with the St. Vincent and Dominica experiences could also be highly informative.

Mangoes, golden apples (also known as “June” and “Jew” plum), and breadfruit were identified for export, according to James. But instead of developing new stock growers scavenged stock from existing trees which were reduced by the heavy harvests which resulted in a drop in yields, disease and—he said—long-term decline.

As often here, it is worth noting that this is in a country of 107,000 people, more or less the size of a small town.

Phytosanitary measures govern the health of plants grown and sold including avoidance of pests and disease. Protecting plants may force growers into monoculture production, as I found with WINFA bananas in St. Vincent. And meeting such standards, I glimpsed in Grenada, can be a powerful way to discipline farmers to enter the wider epistemic field of commercial farming. In October 2012, five boats laden with produce from Grenada were turned away by Tobago customs officers because their produce did not meet such standards, the first they had heard about them after “week after week and year after year” of such work. http://www.spicegrenada.com/index.php/new-today3/new-today-2012/may-2012/367-new-today-nov-2012/week-ending-nov-3rd-2012/1837-grenadian-traffickers-unable-to-offload-goods , accessed November 10, 2012 (no longer available).


“To date,” the ARD document says, “the Ministry has been non-discriminatory in relation to the commercial status of each producer. But it should now prioritize enterprises with commercial viability” (2007:25). In cocoa and nutmeg the report advocates “special attention” for “larger farmers 10 acres and over” (45). It suggests helping promising farmers to commercialize production by supplying “support mostly in cooperation with community led organisations” (26), which raises the prospect of GROs receiving funding to effect changes in the structure of Grenadian agriculture that undermine food security and FS, and which—most importantly—have not been agreed by the Grenadian people. The study laments the lack of trust between the then-current government and community organizations and recommends a greater foreign NGO presence to administer commercialization programs (57).
http://www.ccst-caribbean.org/downloads/Agricultural%20sector%20capabilities%20final%20proofed%20250308.pdf, accessed November 21, 2012. A 2007 WTO trade policy report says that the government has “agreed” to the policy paper: G190GRD_e.doc – SICE, accessed November 21, 2012. The policy direction was indirectly acknowledged by former GCFA official Ferron Lowe in a 2010 television interview where he spoke of “the push to commercialization.”

“Disaster capitalism,” a tendency of capital interests to take advantage of wars and other catastrophic events to further neoliberal economic principles is arguably another kind of primitive accumulation. Naomi Klein’s 2007 *The Shock Doctrine*, which documents various instances, also borrows from the “shock doctrine” ideas of neoliberal doyen Milton Friedman, that economies needed to be shocked into conforming to such principles through rapid dismantling of welfare state protections, with a certain degree of necessary suffering by their populations to discipline them in the ways of the new global economy.

The ARD document gestures toward food security in a single comment, acknowledging Grenada’s commitment to the Millennium Development targets of the 1996 World Food Summit (2007:6).
CHAPTER 7
RIVER SALLEE: SMALL FARMER CULTURE AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOUNDATIONS

Nation is the community that is brought into being (and held together) in... acts of creative collaboration undertaken by individuals on the basis of their ties of blood and/or other real or imagined bonds.

—Caldwell Taylor
Nation Food and Nationhood

Overview

Chapter 7 makes clear the vital but threatened hold of small farmer culture on the north shore of Grenada, the continuing relationship between subsistence food production and many poor Grenadians’ well-being.1 It investigates the area in and around the village of River Sallee in St. Patricks, Grenada’s poorest parish, a place “surrounded by plantations” (Besson 2002:170) where small farmer production nonetheless came to hold strong sway. It seeks to determine what inherited small farming and cultural practices in the village—held to be one of Grenada’s most progressive—mean for the establishment of FS today. The chapter introduces Reginald Buddy and Bernadette Roberts, a farming couple who took up sugarcane farming in the early 1990s, helping to spur a revival of cane-growing in the area. In the 1990s cane-growing brought them to the GCFA and WINFA, connecting them to other farmers and a wider global struggle. The chapter considers local foodways, including local subsistence extraction, and the threat to these—and FS—as the natural base is altered and access to wilderness spaces is diminished. The contested nearby Plains of Chambord, where Buddy and Roberts are common property landholders, is one of the few large spaces in Grenada given to local food production, an arrangement that holds promise as a model for assertion of FS throughout Grenada. Chapter 7 also describes the Saracca,2 an annual River Sallee harvest celebration based in West African customs, and considers
the role of the feast and its ceremonies in building community and nation—connecting participants to a wider diaspora and struggle, not just in its folkloric but its widest material dimensions. This chapter’s findings are provisional. But it is clear that post-slavery culture has made an imprint on River Sallee, one not easily ignored by its inhabitants. In addition to producing people, the village is a site for the reproduction of ideas, highly suggestive for future development, including for the assertion of FS.

**Situating River Sallee**

Part of River Sallee (from the French *Rive Sallé* for the salt river that flows near the town) was once the setting for a plantation called the River Sallee Estate, which according to Martin dated to the mid-1700s. On a hillside overlooking some of Grenada’s most fertile expanses, the town in 2007 held roughly 3,000 people. A River Antoine Estate lay to the south, the La Taste and Chambord (“Chambaud”) Estates to the north, with sugarcane grown on all four. A huge waterwheel, powered by the river, once ground cane here (Martin 2007:210). Land for the town was taken as part of a second phase of the land settlement scheme, described in Chapter 3, initiated at the end of the nineteenth century. The 290-acre River Sallee estate was appropriated by the Grenada government in 1939 “and plots sold to rural residents” (Martin 2007:210), my River Sallee host Bernadette Roberts’ great grandmother among the purchasers.

In 1831 a hurricane damaged provision grounds of the La Taste estate just outside what is present-day River Sallee. Anger about the resulting lack of land for their own food growing led to a slowdown by enslaved workers, what Marshall describes as a “form of industrial action”—perhaps Grenada’s first—and forced the plantation manager to procure additional land for them (1991:216-217). Here in 1848, a decade after emancipation, Grenadian agricultural workers also staged what may have been
Grenada’s first strike: when St. Patrick’s planters tried to get them to accept lower wages, several hundred of them stormed a magistrates’ meeting and attacked police. In the following decades, Martin notes, African workers imported in post-slavery immigration schemes from Sierra Leone, St. Helena, and the Kroo Coast settled in River Sallee after serving out their indenture. This “contributed to the strong retention of African cultural expressions” in the area, “including Shango and Obeah” (Martin 2007:142). Eric Gairy’s career was launched here in 1950 when workers were evicted from an estate that had exchanged hands and he succeeded in gaining compensation for them (Franklyn 1999:48).

The settlement became more prominent during “Gairy Time.” “Everyone in the area would have been joining” Gairy’s General Manual and Mental Workers Union, former River Sallee school headmaster Elizardo Charles told me. “They held demonstration after demonstration,” Charles said, burning down buildings on several nearby estates. According to Roberts the neighboring Mount Rose Estate (where her grandmother and step-father worked), Plains Estate (where her mother worked for a time), and Poyntzfield Estate were appropriated and parceled out under Gairy’s Land for the Landless program. Much of the cultural dynamism that River Sallee embodies derives from this foundation in rural agitation, according to Charles and politician Dorothy Payne-Banfield, a former leader of Gairy’s Grenada United Labour Party, whom I interviewed in 2010. River Sallee came to be known as one of Grenada’s most progressive villages, Payne-Banfield told me—“the spirit of freedom was strong there.”

In addition to sugarcane, local production once included cotton, coconut (with a copra factory at River Antoine and growing at nearby Levera), and limes, according to
Reginald Buddy, who told me that the town once held a creamery too. Although space is increasingly limited, livestock-keeping and herding remain, especially along the seaside bluffs at the town’s edge and beside the lower north-going beach road out of town.

From its brightly colored houses overlooking the north coast (under which you might still spot residents washing beside standpipes in the morning) to its nearby beaches, River Sallee resembles many pretty villages in the Caribbean, down to its poverty, patterns of migration, and emerging problems with drugs and gangs. On the day of my first 2008 visit a group of men stood talking in the Catholic cemetery opposite Buddy and Roberts’s house amid its tombs twined with pink vines. Goats grazed in the grounds of the River Sallee School, one of Grenada’s first such public institutions, where the Saracca—the village’s annual harvest festival—would shortly take place. Nearby stood River Sallee’s “highly successful” credit union, (Martin 2007:210), known to be sympathetic in providing loans to farmers. A short way off lay the meandering salt river and its famous boiling springs, which feed the river from potholes in the sulfurous rocks around them. Melted candle wax can be spied beside these pots where Shango Baptist practitioners—militant mainstays of Eric Gairy’s rural success (Franklyn 1999:41) whose dancing is a feature of Saraccas—still hold services and baptize participants.6

Come on a bright March day in a year with no long drought—spend a day hitting the high spots, including nearby Levera, the beach—and you will find River Sallee very pleasant. But when I told Buddy early on that it was difficult to imagine that life could be too hard here, he said “Oh, it's hard. It's hard.”7 St. Patrick’s, the parish in which River
Sallee is found, is Grenada’s poorest, with a 56.7% poverty rate in 2007-2008 (Kairi Consultants 2009:xix). Here the highest percentage of women in Grenada—60%—go without prenatal care (Wiltshire and Bourne 2005:28). In an unpublished study carried out for GRENCODA in 2007, Buddy and village officials concluded that 15% of the population went hungry during some part of the year, a finding that some local middle-class people with homes outside of town that I spoke with struggled to accept. “No one goes hungry in Grenada,” a former teacher who had returned after many years in New York City told me. There might be problems with malnutrition, she and several people I spoke to insisted, but no one here went without food—if they did they must be lazy. In truth the notion that people should go hungry in a place like River Sallee would seem more jarring and contradictory to me as time wore on.

As elsewhere in Grenada larger houses had long been going up outside town, many built by returning emigrants who had toiled in Britain or Canada before retiring or returning home. These more luxurious homes and the people who live in them, including the house where I rented an apartment outside River Sallee in 2008, exist in uncertain relationship to the village and have contributed to a fraying relationship between the farm community and the surrounding land. “They are not part of the village,” Buddy told me in 2010, as we discussed the disruption of traditional life that came with the insertion of these “JCBs” (people who have “just come back”) in the countryside. “They have their own club,” Buddy told me, speaking metaphorically, “and they don’t invite us.”

**Houseyard and Provision Ground**

Despite the suburban-style housing filling rural spaces, Besson’s “trichotomy” of “yard, [provision] ground, and mountain” (2002:196) persists in River Sallee as in
Jamaica’s Martha Brae. The houseyard (or “kitchen garden”) is still often the nucleus of many people’s growing, even as some farmers are reduced—by the loss of surrounding land or poverty—to working in the yard alone, and may have ceased to grow provision altogether. Brierley was noting a decline in houseyard production in 1984, confirmed by senior agricultural officers and senior Agricultural Ministry extension officers. “They stated unequivocally that kitchen gardens were being worked less extensively and intensively than had been the case during the PRG regime, and certainly considerably less... than during their childhood days in the 1940s and 1950s. Their explanations... included factors such as the increased dietary preference for imported food” and the replacement of food plants with ornamental shrubs and flowers. As reported, Brierley saw the decline of houseyards as likely to adversely affect domestic food production (1991:53-54).

Roberts and Buddy’s half-acre houseyard was every bit the working farm, the center of their production operations. Here over the years the family had grown sweet peppers, yams, cabbage, okra, watermelon, beans, lettuces, cantaloupe, cucumber, and various spices commercially and for their own consumption; various kinds of fruit trees shaded the ground. Here Roberts kept six or seven sows and several dozen pigs in various stages of maturation, which the couple butchered for local sale along with chickens and rabbits.

Buddy told me that 400 to 450 families were farming in River Sallee. At a rough estimate this might mean two-thirds of the town engaged in growing, according to him. In drier coastal areas like River Sallee, according to Brierley, common traditional staples included pigeon peas, corn, cassava, and sweet potatoes (1974:169). Peas and corn,
agronomist and former Grenada CARDI head Ken Buckmire told me, were traditionally interplanted with sugarcane.¹² Edible produce on a list I compiled in and around River Sallee in 2008, informally and in interviews with several dozen area farmers, included a range of fruit trees and fruit (coconut, breadfruit, pimento, papaya, citrus, sweetsop, golden apple, mango, cherry, avocado, plantain and banana, star fruit, pineapple, water- and other melons); sugarcane and corn; root and tuberous root crops (beets, carrots, cocoyam, tannia, callaloo, dasheen, Irish and sweet potatoes, cassava, yams, squash, christophene, melongene [eggplant], and pumpkin); okra and pigeon peas; vegetables, including leafy ones (tomatoes, onions, capsicum, celery, scallions, peppers, bhodi beans, bok choy, cabbage, and lettuces, cucumber, cauliflower, and broccoli); and a variety of herbs, spices, and exotics (sorrel, peppermint, oregano, and thyme as well as “Shadow Benny” or “Chadon Beni” [Eryngium Foetidum]¹³) and “cive” (chive), often sold bundled with thyme and shadow benny in local markets. All these might be grown for household or extended family use, shared with family, friends, neighbors, and “people who ask,” as more than one farmer put it, or (hopefully) sale to the MNIB, and sometimes—even as the Grenada market for things like provision is crowded by products from St. Vincent—be trafficked to Trinidad or Carriacou. Outside of some gardens, produce is sold from tables or farm stands; you might get juice or prepared food there as well.

The preceding does not constitute a scientific survey. But this array of produce suggests that the finding of the 1995 Agricultural Census that four-fifths of farms were growing more than 40 kinds of temporary and permanent crops remains may remain accurate (1996:31). Almost all of the produce on the above list can be found in Besson’s
description of offerings grown in Jamaica houseyards, again suggesting that there is a common regional basis in small farming that can be used for organizing by LVC for FS. The list suggests a continuing strong degree of agricultural diversity in the area, one that may be diminished by further efforts at commercialization (especially exclusively at commercialization) and which could be diversified further, emphasizing nutrition and agroecological methods—on the other hand—by efforts to stimulate houseyard production for FS.

**I’m Too Diverse: Reginald Buddy and Small Farming**

“I'm born in the field,” Reginald Buddy told me proudly when I first met him in 2008, “and I'm still in the field.” But this statement of connection to farming and the land belied the fact that the 56-year-old Buddy had worked in many fields, including Trinidad's oil fields, in construction, as a landscaper, and as a disc jockey, that he had been tabbed as lead man for various NGO initiatives in River Sallee and was widely traveled, having led LVC farmer delegations and shared his agricultural expertise in several countries. His was a strong example of the kind of “occupational multiplicity” that is sometimes sighted as a necessary feature of life for Caribbean small farmers (Besson 2002:214-215), and of a certain resilient adaptability that seemed a trait of many farmers that I interviewed.

Although he grew a significant variety of fruits and vegetables, Buddy’s favorite crops were yams, sweet potatoes, cane, and pigeon peas. Like many Grenada farmers he had struggled to grow bananas, mainstay of WINFA farmers on other nearby islands. “Bananas want too much attention,” he told me. “I'm too diverse. Sweet potato, pigeon pea—with these I have no worries.” (In fact, these were Grenada's two most important staple crops, with importation of both threatening Grenadian growers.) Other crops also
flourished in Buddy’s care: “Celery, cane, and corn—they don’t say no to me.” Buddy also delighted in keeping livestock, with he and Roberts sometimes salting the meat of the animals they raised to preserve it, one of a number of simple methods of preserving food through time-honored microprocessing techniques—along with canning meat and vegetables—that I also came to believe could serve as cornerstones for the assertion of local and community food independence in pursuit of FS. It was through WINFA that Buddy had become more aware of the importance of animal rearing, in seminars that both he and Roberts attended. He said that he wished he had “gotten wise” to this aspect of farming 20 years before.

Buddy often referred to his “lands” in the plural. He and Roberts had one four-acre piece on a bluff overlooking the ocean that they sometimes called “The Ranch,” where Buddy kept his joupa; here they also kept cattle. They also held land in nearby contested Chambord (see below), and in the interior of St. Patricks, where they grew cocoa and nutmeg in mixed cropping with mangoes, fig, plantain, and bloggo, but they had not returned to this latter land since the 2004 hurricanes. They had 17 acres total in 2008, an estimated 95% of it under cultivation. They had come by their lands in the way many Caribbean farmers do—by emigrating, working, saving, and returning home to buy them.

Like many farmers I met in Grenada and St. Vincent, Buddy had also travelled for the GCFA, as WINFA and LVC members—to Cuba twice, to Honduras and Barbados as well as Trinidad, and in more recent times as a roving ambassador for the organization. He and Roberts had also hosted several Cuban farmers on a two-month Grenada stay. “I have learned a lot,” he said of those exchanges, “and I have taught a
lot.” Some of the best lessons were about how to maximize the use of space for growing—learned from Cuba’s inner-city organoponicos (organic gardens)—that he applied in his houseyard. The travel had contributed to Buddy and Roberts’s material success. In Honduras on one WINFA trip a farmer gave Buddy a sweet potato vine that he smuggled back to Grenada in a wet paper towel. This vine “bear a lot,” he told me; in time it yielded the biggest sweet potato recorded in Grenada—a whopping thirteen-and-a-half pounds, 16 inches in length. Dubbed “the Reggie potato,” it had been registered by the agricultural ministry and adopted by many Grenadian farmers.18 “Since then I'm the potato man,” he told me, “I never stop.” He had been doing well that spring when I first met him, getting some eight-pounders because rainfall had been good and “the moisture was there in the soil” at the right time to boost their growth. At that time in 2008, Buddy had a satisfactory arrangement with the MNIB, delivering six to seven hundred pounds of sweet potatoes through the height of a twelve-week harvest for Tuesday and Thursday pickup. In Buddy's view having the MNIB pick up the family’s produce was better than having Roberts take it to market (where most vendors are women) given the expenditure of her time.19 (From what I gathered, Roberts agreed with the analysis, but would have liked to participate in the market.) Although she might get 50% more per pound of produce in the market than MNIB paid, hauling produce back and forth was costly, and there was no guarantee that she would sell all of it.

It was Buddy who first told me that during the revolution the MNIB had been committed to buying every farmers' production. He still thought that the organization should buy from every farmer. “MNIB needs to purchase not only the first grade, but number two and three grades as well,” he told me early on, before I had absorbed the
anxiety farmers felt about the organization. To motivate production, in Buddy’s opinion, farmers need steady outlets for their produce and quick payment. “MNIB has not been 100% behind the farmers,” Buddy told me cautiously when I first met him. Later, when we discussed the fact that MNIB was importing crops like sweet potatoes he became openly critical, and regretted the lack of solidarity between MNIB and growers: “Where is the bond between the marketing board and farmers?” he wondered.

Buddy had taken up sugarcane production in 1986, as reported in Chapter 5. He had also encouraged a number of River Sallee farmers (eleven, by his count) to do so, and to join the GCFA. He remained enthusiastic about sugarcane and its possibilities, including about the maroons that made harvest and other shared work possible, expressing regret that cooperative practices like it were in decline. “Everybody’s about money now,” Buddy told me. In addition to maroons, farmers in River Sallee had once used what they called “partner turns” in which ten or twelve farmers took turns helping one another in sequence, working in pairs, to take care of various tasks that required more hands during Grenada’s two growing seasons, but it had been ten years, he told me, since these had been a regular feature of life there.

I knew that Buddy continued to believe that maroons could be the best way to confront small farmers’ labor problems. Although there were various ways to address the issue, many people—as it turned out—saw it this way. That included two River Sallee extension officers whom I spoke to. One even thought that the Agricultural Ministry and extension services should be in charge of organizing and scheduling them, as had been the case during the PRG period, and expressed a willingness to do this in his area. Clearly, this was one way—along with pointing extension services more
directly at the needs of subsistence and cash-and-subsistence farmers—that the Grenada government could contribute to FS.

**Bernadette Roberts: Now Everything You Buy**

It was the morning of the Saracca—River Sallee's thanksgiving holiday—and we were in Buddy and Bernadette Roberts's kitchen. Since Saracca tends to coincide with windy March weather, kite flying is a feature of the holiday—the air was filled with handmade kites, most made from twigs and plastic bags. There were bicycle races underway, too, with cyclists flying down the hilly narrow local streets at breakneck speed. Buddy had headed up the road “to hack out a few potatoes.” After mucking out the pig pens—which required doing, holiday or not—Roberts had slaughtered ten chickens to stew and was harvesting the eggs that lay half-formed inside them—blue, white, and grey ovoids of varying sizes that she said we would eat. As she worked, Roberts told me she had grown up here and in neighboring Mt. Rose, just above River Sallee, with six brothers. The eldest, Bernadette had taken care of her brothers while her mother worked. She finished school at 15 and at 21 went to the US Virgin Islands to do domestic work, missing the revolution entirely. She met Buddy “right around here. We all of us grew up together—used to go to the same church.”

Aware that recovery from the hurricanes was far from complete, I asked how local people's spirits were. “It's well up!” she told me. Although it was a hard time for cane farmers, “We never give up,” she said. “We always believe in cane.” I didn't know it then but Roberts had for years kept her own cane piece, with all of the proceeds earmarked for one purpose: “That's what I work and send them to school,” she would tell me later. “Give all my children an education.”
Amid her other activities that morning Roberts was making me “local bakes,” which she would serve with bonito steaks purchased fresh from a truck that came through that morning, announcing passage with the blowing of a conch shell. The bakes, a popular Caribbean biscuit that is often fried, elsewhere called “fry bakes” ("floats" in Trinidad) are one of the region's favorite comfort foods. Roberts's contained saltfish, dasheen leaves, and minced scallion, and were served with cocoa tea.

The cooking—and my expressions of interest in cooking and local food—got us to talking about the decline of local foodways. “Now everything you buy,” Roberts told me, echoing Buddy (“Everybody's about money now”). Still, her comments showed that the turn to a more cash-based economy remained recent enough to merit comment. And in fact, Roberts’ answers to my questions showed that she bought very little food now. Rice, flour, oil—these imported items were the household's only regular food purchases. Nor, in hard times, was the door likely to close on subsistence production, I would come to see. A great deal of what people ate in River Sallee came from friends, neighbors, barter exchange, one's own production, and foraged food, as well as from trips to the Grenville or Sauteurs open-air markets.

“We eat a lot of local food,” Roberts told me. When I asked what she had made lately she mentioned beet and sorrel juice, “green peas soup,” and rice and peas. “I make a lot of juice,” she said, “and freeze it. Once the fruit is back in season, you use it up.” (Juice machines receive strong work-outs in many Caribbean kitchens.) A burlap sack of flour had just been purchased, quite possibly to make my breakfast. Roberts complained that the flour was expensive. It came from the US and had the logo of US
midwest industrial agricultural giant Archer Daniels Midland ("supermarket to the world") stamped on its side.

Like many Grenadians Buddy and Roberts do some of their cooking outside, over a wood fire that sits beneath a small overhang beside their house. (The indoor kitchen contains a propane-fueled stove.) For the rest of that morning of the Saracca we divided our time between the outdoor kitchen, where various dishes were frying or on the boil, and the small factory belonging to the River Sallee Women’s Cooperative—of which Roberts is Vice President—that adjoins the house, where the cooperative’s three products are processed, cooked, and vacuum-sealed in jars. (Like the GCFA, the collective had joined WINFA, thus also becoming part of the Vía Campesina.) The Spice Collective, as members of the group also call it, produces three products—a wet seasoning like the Spanish *adobo*, used for fish or meat; a “local season”; and a hot pepper sauce.

Like Buddy, Roberts had traveled considerably as a member of the Cane Farmers Association, to WINFA and LVC events. These travels had prompted creation of the co-op. “I went to French Martinique, to Dominica, St. Lucia twice. We meet a lot of women in the organization, learn about pig farming, how to manage your business, how to organize. That’s how we formed the Women’s Collective,” she continued. “We say, okay, we’ll get into the seasoning business.” With a loan from GRENCODA they had purchased two blenders, a refrigerator, and a stove. “But here comes Ivan, mash up the building,” Roberts says. “We had to rebuild.”

The cooperative was begun to create work for local women. “Most of us from River Sallee have to go in town to get jobs,” she said, taking the white-knuckle early
morning drive across the island to St. George’s for work if they can find it, careening around the wet mountain curves in one of Grenada’s jam-packed minibuses, paying $2 EC dollars (about 75 US cents) each way, a cost steep enough to dissuade some people from attempting it. They wanted to find ways to prevent people “having to leave,” Roberts and Buddy told me this more than once. (I also heard this theme sounded by Vía Campesina members in the Dominican Republic). The factory, it was hoped, could help keep eight River Sallee women near their children and families, and possibly keep them from having to emigrate. An accomplished cook, Roberts was official taster for Riversaw Products, as the line was called. Each time they manufactured a new batch of sauces the women scoured the island for sales.

But such projects had limits for income-generation. Many such sauces had come on the market in Grenada. I had seen them in the DR, Jamaica, and Barbados. (There had recently been an explosion of such sauces in the US.) In the MNIB’s grocery stores there were a number of kinds, suggesting that the market might be saturated. Googling the words “micro loan” and “hot sauce” drew 41,800 results in 2012, and suggested that such production might be a kind of fad that was sweeping the NGO community.24

Roberts had also participated in another income-generation project, sponsored by the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA), begun in 2004. Each participant was given a chicken coop, 25 birds, and six bags of feed—enough to bring the birds to maturity. Each participant was later required to give back 10 chicks or $150 EC, a requirement with which Roberts soon complied; at one time her stock had grown to 1,500 birds. According to GRENCODA General Secretary Judy Williams, interviewed in 2012, the project was a success—twenty women were still producing chickens. A
similar project existed for pigs, in which two piglets from the first litter (or farrow) were given to the next farmer on a waiting list. It wasn't hard to imagine how such projects, mixed with or based in subsistence production, could become features of a Grenadian push for FS. They were notable because although they required an initial investment they were based in reciprocity, what might be termed an economics of natural increase, in which participants created a healthy environment for reproduction to take place and then shared the results. Not everyone would succeed, but you made a commitment to others by taking part.

The Saracca

The saracca nation turns on reciprocity and food is its highest sacrament. The food—especially the items extracted from the belly of the earth—yams, sweet potatoes, manioc (cassava/yucca) propitiate a veritable congregation of gods and ancestor spirits. Okra and corn (maize) are not hauled out of the living earth but they . . . find themselves in the upper tier of ritual significance, surpassed only by yam, the most sacred item in the foodways of the saracca world.

—Caldwell Taylor

*Nation Food and Nationhood*

As Taylor’s description above makes clear, the connections between traditional agriculture and other cultural practices are inextricable in Grenada, and both must be understood as foundational to FS. In River Sallee the Saracca, which culminates annually on the first Friday after Easter and celebrates the local harvest after dry season, helps to demonstrate such connections.25 Taylor describes the Saracca as an “African work” in Grenada, derived from the Arabic “sadaqa,” denoting a Muslim practice of donating food to needy people toward the end of Ramadan. In Grenada it is typically “given” in a yard or open field, with food “served on banana leaves laid out on the ground the eating. . . usually accompanied with singing, drumming and dancing”—
similar practices are followed in the Georgia Sea Islands and Brazil (Diouf 1998:65). While River Sallee holds an annual Saracca, they may also be “called” and take place at other times, including as part of Shango practice (Martin 2007:232). Other Grenada villages, including nearby Hermitage and La Poterie, have held regular Saraccas too. Sociologist Claude Douglas says that the Saracca was once widespread in Grenada, and that “[t]he collective effort. . . required to organize the ceremony. . . established a network of enduring. . . relationships” (2003:85). “On the day of the Saracca,” Douglas says, “a number of rituals are performed. The blood of the slaughtered animals must be drained.” Sometimes a priest blesses the animals.

Rum is sprinkled on the ground for the spirits where the food is collectively prepared. Each participating family sends a tray of food and rum to the venue of the Saraca. The food is placed in rows on banana leaves for the village’s children to eat. Before eating their hands were washed by adult participants. This act of hand-washing added a personal touch to the feast. At the end of the Saraca, the Nation Dance commences. (Douglas 2003:86)

The leftover food, Douglas notes, is taken to the Nation Dance, which lasts until dawn, rising and falling in intensity, and includes both drumming and singing.

According to Ann-Marie Edwards, Grenada’s Acting Senior Community Development Officer for St. Patricks, St. Andrew, and St. Marks, the Saracca was revived as an annual event in 2000 by the Liva (patois for “river”) Sallee Organization for Development which she helped to found. But if the origins of the celebration are difficult to pinpoint, it goes a good way back. According to Buddy, the Saracca had been practiced “from slavery time.” “I take it from me mother, she take it from she mother,” Edwards told me, giving an idea of how the Saracca is handed down, also of its ongoing reinvention. She said the event had long been connected to the local Catholic church, which received a portion of farmer harvests (“yam and potato at Christmas, corn and

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peas in May”) to help fund its activities. Leftovers from these offerings were used to make a feast, she said, and to give thanks for a good year. The event was called by a crier, usually a woman, who traveled around neighboring communities to “bawl out” the Saracca, blowing a conch shell and singing that everyone should “go with Sallee.”

The Nation Dance, which Paul Gilroy calls “a dance of black modernity,” is an exercise in Black nationalism. In River Sallee, according to Roberts and Buddy’s daughter Lindy Roberts, its purpose is unifying—it serves to “bring everyone together.” According to another analyst, it signals participants’ membership in the “far-reaching, wide-ranging confraternity” of African peoples (Taylor:2001:1). In Paule Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), set on Carriacou, participation in the dance is a key to the protagonist's reconciliation with her African heritage. The dance was traditionally opened with a hoe, spade, and fork, according to Edwards. Participants would ceremonially kick a mound of soil that had been gathered by participants, and throw corn and peas—“That means you’re ready to plant.” The day before the Saracca the community had performed the Tillingo, a kind of game, as Lindy Roberts described it, in which several hundred villagers took part, lining both sides of the street, partnering and forming arches with their hands for participants to pass under, singing as they progress (“Tillingo mama, Tillingo/Woy woy Tillingo”). The game carries participants to the place where the dance will be held, in this case the River Sallee community center.29 Dancing is performed to traditional rhythms and movement, a cultural possession of the residents and people throughout the diaspora, that Edwards told me her organization was working to pass on, especially to community children. According to Buddy many of the same rhythms are used in Carriacou (which has its own quite different Saracca).
The drummers form a River Sallee fraternity (other groups may also come from nearby Tivoli and La Poterie) and are accomplished in various rhythms, all said to be African in origin.

As the afternoon wears on a large group of revelers and commentators gather in the outdoor kitchen behind Buddy and Roberts's house, many drinking white rum, sharing in and commenting on the preparations. When the moment comes to carry the tray of food that Roberts has prepared to the field of the River Sallee school for the event, Roberts covers it in a lace cloth—Buddy is tipsy enough that he must ask a friend to carry it. The children sit down to eat first, and the food is spread out beneath them on banana leaves. In an affecting gesture—as I watched in 2008—their parents place the first fingerfulls of food into their mouths with their bare hands.

The holiday is a lot of work for those who provide food. And there is real expense in feeding and providing rum to so many people. Buddy and Roberts always try “to use a little bit of everything” that they grow, Buddy says, in implicit celebration of the agricultural diversity that underlies their farming inheritance. In 2008 this included chicken, mutton, pork, and beef; cou-cou (coocoo); rice and peas; and provision—yam, bloggo, fig. In many ways the tray was a testament, therefore, to their subsistence production, the FS that Grenada does and can enjoy. Thirty or forty people have gathered at Buddy and Roberts's and several hundred more have taken part in the feast. Many more will participate in the Nation Dance, which will continue until dawn, the drummers playing the sun up in a frenzied finale to the event.

The next day villagers moved from house to house, visiting one another. Everyone’s home is supposed to be open, Buddy told me, and food offered to every
person who comes to the door. In this and various ways the Saracca translates what is perhaps the most vital—often tense—biological necessity, eating, into an act of shared community. It is exemplary of the kind of ceremonies that Eric Wolf says “serve to underline and exemplify the solidarity of the community to which” the peasant/small farmer belongs (1966:7). Two researchers conducting marine research at nearby Levera attended the Saracca as I did in 2008; several emigrants were back home for visits from the US. But like the Carnival events I witnessed in July, River Sallee’s Saracca was in no way a tourist event; there was nothing to buy there.31 In a community that was divided politically, Edwards said, “Saracca is the only thing that brings people together,” although she noted that the local Pentecostal church did not participate.32 Clearly a celebration of River Sallee’s small farming heritage and ability to sustain itself, the Saracca—I felt—is clearly in keeping with FS principles and could form one cultural centerpiece of a Grenadian movement for FS and project of national repeasantization.

Pigeon Peas and the Plains of Chambord: Local Production in a Common Property Arrangement

In June 2008 I brought my family to spend three months in River Sallee. One evening early in our stay Roberts asked us over to shell pigeon peas. Pigeon peas, popular throughout the Caribbean, are hardy, easy to grow, and—with sweet potatoes—Grenada’s most widely planted crop (Grenada Agricultural Ministry 1996:29). They are a subsistence staple. According to former Grenada CARDI head Ken Buckmire, whom I interviewed in 2012, as many as 57 cultivars of the pea have been grown in Grenada. A perennial, pigeon peas are traditionally planted in July in Grenada (Martin 2007:191). Like other legumes, the pea enriches soil by fixing atmospheric nitrogen, converting it into ammonia for plant growth. It is a high-protein food that can be eaten fresh or stored
for long periods dry. The peas can be sprouted and eaten that way, boiled, even ground into flour. In some places the shoots and leaves are eaten; with the flowers and seeds this softer growth makes good animal fodder. The plant's purple flowers attract bees. You can prune pigeon peas for mulch, and pruning releases nitrogen around the plants' root nodes. Growing on average from four to five feet high, the plants offer shade and shelter to smaller intercrops—their open architecture admits a dappled light. They are particularly good around young fruit trees. Pigeon peas self-seed and multiply quickly; their deep tap roots penetrate hard ground and improve the soil. They can even be used as trellises for other plants. They are a highly beneficial, productive plant.

I had not participated in this kind of pleasurable, once-common activity since childhood, when I shelled sweet peas from my grandparents' garden on their back porch; it was the kind of shared undertaking where no one feels required to talk. Roberts was faster than we were, but we lightened her work. I admired her technique, and observed that I thought she could do it in her sleep. She said she had sometimes found herself doing it while she dozed before the TV. Later I helped to plant some of the peas with Roberts on common lands she and Buddy worked on the Chambord plain.

Lying just east of River Sallee, the plains of Chambord are huge by Grenadian standards—750 to 800 acres according to a 1994 GRENCODA report. A large portion of the estate on which the land lay—419 acres, originally owned by two local families—had been sold in 1964 by the government to a Canadian expatriate group for housing development. But the company never created the "high cost residencies" planned for the site.
At the time of the sale about 100 tenant farmers were working the Chambord lands growing a number of cash and provision crops—sugarcane and cocoa intercropped with bluggo were also grown there. According to the GRENCODA report the farmers were allowed to continue working at Chambord on a provisional basis, agreeing to grow only crops of short maturation ("short crops"), paying a nominal annual rent of EC $10, keeping no animals except in a designated pasture, and accepting that they must vacate if given notice. They were warned they would receive no compensation for any trees planted if forced to leave.

A crisis developed during 1993-94 when the Toronto-based owners found a new buyer, a group of developers who, according to an article co-authored by GRENCODA General Secretary Judy Williams, planned to use the property "for tourism and commercial development" (Vermeulen, Williams, and Phi 2005:6). At this point 103 people were working about 240 acres at Chambord, growing "corn, pigeon peas, pumpkin, watermelon, cassava, sorrel, sweet potatoes, some yams, cabbage, tomatoes, carrots, and beets, and a small amount of bluggo, as well as plantain." The authors noted that farmers were reluctant to invest in improvements to the land or their operations while they remained uncertain if they could stay (GRENCODA 1994:3-4), a longtime problem—one with ecological and economic consequences—in places where farmers work without secure tenure. The contribution to local food consumption was significant: "A considerable percentage of the. . . food crops available in the Grenville, Sauteurs, Gouyave and Carriacou markets is produced in Chambord," the GRENCODA authors observed. "The alienation of 100-125 acres of Agricultural lands from Agriculture and its use for Housing and Residential Development will be a loss of
considerable magnitude." The loss of the area’s prime agricultural lands especially was “a tragedy for sustainable development,” they warned:

[S]ale of the entire . . . area FOR DEVELOPMENT was only possible because of the absence of any Government Land Use Policy. This Committee strongly recommends that Government. . . take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the livelihood of well over 100 people now, and the opportunity for future generations to farm be protected and guaranteed.”

The Chambord farmers sought help from GRENCODA, and the organization began working with them to secure long-term use of the land. The strategy developed was threefold, according to Williams: to build evidence with the farmers that they were using the land in ongoing, effective fashion; “to widen both farmers’ and officials’ picture of how Chambord. . . fits into the national food system”; and to draw attention to their battle to retain the lands among the public and with the government (Vermeulen, Williams, and Phi 2005:6).

Among the strategies employed was expanding the number of crops that farmers planted. “We want to plant many types of crops because as long as we are doing that, they can’t take the land” said a Chambord farmer at a meeting in 2003. The NGO paid for cadastral mapping of farmers’ plots and they used the maps “to agree on field boundaries, to report oral histories of local land title for GRENCODA staff to record, and to keep records” of their farming practices. “Farmers have used the. . . map as a basis for working out local development preferences,” Williams wrote—“which sites are best for agriculture and which could go to other development,” where irrigation and roads should be, “how land ownership and tenancies affect these and other options” (Vermeulen, Williams, and Phi 2005:7).

The farmers also worked to place their struggle “in the context of national policies and concerns,” noting that most of the crops they produced were being promoted by the
government’s Food Security Programme. Several farmers, including Buddy and Roberts, volunteered to participate in the program “to reinforce the point that they have good, nationally important, agricultural land for food production” (Vermeulen, Williams, and Phi 2005:7). The farmers also made their struggle for secure access to Chambord an election issue, “inviting each candidate in their constituency to a public meeting to spell out their vision” for use of the land (Vermeulen, Williams, and Phi 2005:7). Their local parliament member failed to attend and was not re-elected.

Among plans by Chambord farmers when I first visited in 2008 were a cassava-growing project, overseen by the Grenada Rural Enterprise Programme (GREP) with funding from the UN Development Program (UNDP). Buddy was on a committee that had identified 21 cassava products that would be created. The project's developers, including Buddy, had secured a commitment from Grenada's Food Fair and Foodland grocery stores to sell a number of the products. It was a promising project with potential for long-term growth and livelihood at several levels of the economy. Twelve women had been trained to process the cassava and there was excitement about having the project in River Sallee. The farmers had also held a farmers' market at Chambord for a time, and were discussing reviving it in 2012.

Chambord, like Levera and Mt. Hartman, represented an impressive if insecure common property arrangement, reached by the local community, that enabled members to share and manage a precious resource. Certainly, Buddy and Roberts viewed the collective handling of the Chambord land as a success. The working out of arrangements for historic common properties at Chambord, Mt. Hartman, and other places in Grenada—including local customs and innovations involved in these
practices—deserve more study. The three sites and their history as shared arrangements should be examined for commonalities as well as for clues about how Grenadians might divide remaining Crown and other lands to benefit agriculture, the country, and future Grenadians. In their case study of land issues in Grenada in the aftermath of the hurricanes, Barnes and Riverstone suggest consideration of a laddered approach in which tenants develop additional rights (including collective rights) to lands over time, leading to full title or secure tenure. This might begin with certification of a right to make use of the land in question, they say (2008:41).37

Levera

_We are chanting earth's homage, oh father,
All over and back home._

—Yoruba song recorded by Alan Lomax at Levera, 1962

On the day after the Saracca Buddy decided that I should have a swim. We stopped in front of a rum shop with the Wheelbarrow to pick up his buddy Selwyn Alexis: "Let's go limet"38 Buddy shouted out the window. River Sallee's local beach, Bathway, sees few tourists, but is popular with Grenadians. During Saracca week it was thronged with local families sharing picnics, youths playing soccer, elderly people taking sand baths, and bulls—stalking the margins and sending beachgoers flying as (every now and then) they stampeded. Three nearshore islands—Sugarloaf, Green Island, and Sandy Island—help to keep the offshore waters tranquil as do the ancient coral reefs, worn down to grey stone, that stand just offshore and slow the Atlantic waves. Nearby, Buddy kept several cows and was growing sweet potatoes.

But in times past the Levera lands had been far more productive. The beach and bluffs behind us, which stretched across a partly bulldozed planned resort, were part of
a 450-acre Levera-Bathway National Park that included the offshore islands, opened in 1994 (Martin 2007:141). Much of the park had once been grazing land and forest used by the surrounding villages, some of it farmed. Now most of it was being developed as a resort, after losing its national park protection from the government in 2008.

Rumors circulated while I was living there that TV personality Oprah Winfrey (also popular in Grenada) had toured Levera, that she was thinking of buying “a unit”—Levera was the most beautiful place, it was reported, she had ever seen. Certainly, the views from the empty administration office, where Buddy and I sometimes repaired to talk agriculture, were stunning. My edition of the Lonely Planet Eastern Caribbean Guide, written when all 450 acres were protected parkland, calls the park—much of which is rare dry forest—“wild” and “beautiful” (Anglin 2001:244). Grenada’s largest mangrove stand edges one of the island’s unique volcanic ponds, 20 acres wide and just yards from the Atlantic shore, providing habitat for many species, including waterfowl (Anglin 2001:244). Herons, black-necked Stilts, wild duck, and snipe (these latter two game birds) can be found there (Martin 2007:141). With its sheltered beaches, the area had long been a nesting place for the endangered giant leatherback turtle, prized for both its meat and eggs and subject of a sophisticated local effort to protect them and develop eco-tourism at the same time. Grenada’s tourism website notes that area reefs and sea grass beds shelter lobster and beautiful reef fishes. Former Grenada Prime Minister Tillman Thomas, then Tourism Minister, extolled the benefits of the site for eco-tourism when Levera was made a public park in 1992 (Pattullo 1996:119).
The area had during the colonial period held a group of estates (the Levera Estate grew coconuts); Fédon aide-de-camp Charles Nogues had raised cotton there [Martin 2007:177]). During Gairy’s tenure a reported 200 acres had been seized by Eric Gairy as part of the Land for the Landless program. Farmers from nearby villages had shared the land and grazed animals there. But in 2003, 243 acres of Levera were appropriated for the resort, its protected status revoked by the NNP in the same parliamentary coup that took Mt. Hartman, a move that involved no public debate, conservationist Tyrone Buckmire told me in 2008. Farmers who refused to sell their lands to the developer had them taken by eminent domain under Grenada’s Compulsory Purchase of Land Act (Pattullo 2005:42-43).

The first resort venture, planned to feature a golf course—ecological nightmare in the dry forest setting—ultimately failed. According to one source, the developers (or those who posed as developers) disappeared with US $5.9 million dollars that the government had advanced them for the project. But according to Malachy Dottin, ecologist in Grenada’s Agricultural Ministry writing in 2007, “[m]ost of the area” was “excavated to accommodate the golf course” (Dottin 2007/8:20). Despite the failed project, the land was now primed for development. Buddy had become foreman of the landscaping crew for the reshaped venture, the Levera Bay Project, which developers promised would be ecologically sound.

But there was no getting around the fact that Levera had once held farm, forest, and grazing land, and a national park shared by all Grenadians. Surrounding communities had all made use of the area, not just for farming but for fishing. Extractive activities (fishing, hunting, crab catching) had been halted inside the area.
groomed for the resort. “The loss of farming land for a major resort means that the local community has lost its financial independence and its social cohesion,” Pattullo wrote in 2005 (43). It is not clear which community Pattullo alludes to—Rose Hill, a very poor North Shore community, was hardest hit according to Roberts. Attempts to compensate displaced farmers, including Rose Hill residents, were largely unsuccessful because farmers there could demonstrate no legal claim to the land.

According to Buddy, the area had not been farmed intensively for 60-70 years, which suggests that there was room for debate about the matter. (Buddy also noted that many local lands were going unplanted, including at Chambord.) But there was no public debate on the matter; local farmers never had a say. “We had World Cup cricket on a Thursday,” Buckmire told me in 2008, “and on Friday it was done”—the land’s park status had been revoked. A host of contradictions, wrapped up in questions of secure tenure and the failure of government to insure that farmers could make a living from planting, were wrapped up here.

But the displacement of farmers from Levera is not just a matter of what was lost to current farmers but what was lost to Grenadian agriculture, and the manner in which it was carried out—part of a wider pattern of land-grabbing that is ongoing in Grenada (here carried out by the government on behalf of shadowy interests), a country plagued with failed tourist projects. And the long period of inactivity—the continued exclusion of farmers from the area as the process dragged out—seemed difficult to defend.

**Thinking through the Food**

*Jab Jab don’t eat Kentucky Fry!*
*Spit it out! Spit it out!*
*That don’t belong in your mout’!*
*Jab Jab will help you*
*To cook some nice saltfish!*
“Now everything you buy,” Bernadette Roberts had told me. The intensification of commercial agriculture has meant a narrowing of the number of foods people eat, a fact that health experts across the world have noted. Globalization and agricultural intensification, according to a UN Environmental Project document “have diminished the varieties traditionally used, with only 30% of the available crop varieties dominating global agriculture. These, together with only 14 animal species, provide an estimated 90% of the world’s consumed calories.”

An extended stay in River Sallee showed that food had many constituents beyond farm and field—the roadside margins where animals grazed, for example, and the grasses that passersby gathered for them to graze on. Could food remain available when one productive natural space after another was enclosed, bulldozed, or built upon?

Take the blue land crabs (*cardisoma guanhumi*) that emerged everywhere in early June, washed out of their holes by the onset of rainy season, scuttling over the roads, which in some parts of the Caribbean and Florida are now seen as invasive. Suddenly children were selling them, alive or cooked, sometimes on skewers. The tasty crustaceans, traditionally hunted at night with torches (Martin 2007:59), had formed a symbiotic relationship with Grenadians, especially sugarcane growers, centuries ago—the cane fields made a fine habitat for them. For Elliot Bishop they offered a reminder of the heyday of the GCFA, of wonderful meals that followed maroons and cane harvests, as well as of his youth—the welcome beginning of rainy season. “The crabs would have been breeding in among the canes,” Bishop told me. “The canes are harvested and the
rains begin and the crabs get flushed. For a week or so everyone is feasting.” The rural year in Grenada was once punctuated with such pleasurable times of surfeit—not all forgotten—“mango time,” “parch(ed) corn time,” or “skinop” (“guinep,” *melicoccus bijugatus*) time, and the feasting that went with them. The loss of cane lands, especially in the south of Grenada, meant diminution of crab habitat. Further celebration of these times, appreciating their place in the turn of the yearly wheel, the role of this bounteous side of nature rather than the scarcity model imposed by commercial resource competition, could be made part of efforts to build FS.

The crabs remained part of the commons. The hundreds of conch whose shells adorned our driveway (called *lambie* here, *lambi* in the DR, often cooked in brown sauce, “soused,” or curried) were another commons food, lying just offshore, to be included in the incomplete but growing list I began to compile. A query to Buddy produced this list of things that a River Sallee resident might pick up while “traveling through the bush”: soursops, sapodilla, sugar apples, golden apples (june plum), pineapples, and sweet gospo (sour orange, with medicinal value, used for improving appetite). People also collected fig leaves and water grass weed to feed their pigs (for whom imported feed is very expensive), and various vines to feed their rabbits. When I began to pore over the long list of plants in Groome’s *A Natural History of Grenada*, I saw that every plant listed had some use as a foodstuff, spice, or for industry like furniture-making or house-building. Various medicinal plants could be used to promote FS and improve health. Many—like the swizzle stick (which comes from a “swizzlestickwood” or swizzle stick tree), asthma plant, and tonka bean (1970:69, 70, 87)—have fascinating histories of use by Grenadians and their island predecessors,
waiting to be told in an FS context. New uses for many undoubtedly await discovery.\textsuperscript{50} Such a pursuit of the value in Grenada's rich bio-diversity, the value in "every herb-bearing seed," might form part of a national or Caribbean-wide campaign for FS, counterpoint to the exploitation by genetic manipulation and hunt by biotech and medical companies to exploit the Third World's forest and biota—it could help to spur conservation efforts and preservation of remaining common areas. Hundreds of sea plants, shell fish, and mollusks are also edible. Investigation would reveal that Grenadians have eaten many of these through the years.

A useful way to form connection among Via Campesina Caribe groups might lie in probing such relationships, broadening the plant base in pursuit of regional agrodiversity (such a pursuit could start with Maroon groups). The incredible diversity available, of plants and fruits of every color, answered lingering questions about whether—if you were going to plump for FS—the Grenadian diet was healthy. What Grenadians actually consume, of course, is a related and complex issue. But the assertion that members of Grenada's Food and Nutrition Council made to me in a June 2012 meeting that the country's food inheritance rivaled any country's in terms of its healthy potential was undoubtedly true, especially since most anything can grow here. ("Grenada is not a poor country, but a country made poor," former Prime Minister George Brizan wrote [1998:346].) The plentiful variety of foods available was an important counter to the temptation to see Grenada solely in terms of privation. It was the right to the local diet, to produce it and preserve it in its diverse scope that FS advocates must argue for, I realized. This went beyond what farmers planted to the broader resource base.
Pigeon Peas II: Planting Peas and Corn

One day toward the end of my 2008 stay I found myself at Chambord planting the ancient Caribbean staple of pigeon peas and corn with Roberts, Selwyn, and Buddy’s brother Bernard (“Posse”). We started early in a bath-like fog, everyone agreeing it was perfect planting weather. There was plenty of gossip and high spirits. There was also rueful analysis of the election, just passed, in which the party that Roberts favored, the NNP, had lost.

The three-acre field had been plowed by Robert Charles (“Spree”), a GCFA farmer who owned one of the few tractors on the island, a man who had come to assume folkloric proportion for me as I encountered him again and again on Grenada’s back roads. Waiting for the busy “Spree” had delayed planting several weeks. (Such waits make a difference in yields; lack of plows is a big problem in Grenada). Now we moved along the hillocks turned up by Spree’s plow where Selwyn and Posse had already spent hours opening holes, dropping 9-10 pigeon peas from plastic bags—the peas we had shelled with Roberts several months before—with four kernels of the corn into each hole.

At first Roberts and I worked opposite sides of each hill—she with peas, I with corn—opening each with our hands as we moved forward, dragging dirt over the hole with our feet to close it as we passed. Then I worked with Posse, going between hills and dropping seeds to left and right, Roberts coming behind to close the holes, adeptly, again with her bare feet. The wet black soil stuck thickly to my shoes. Later, Buddy would spray the field with herbicide and fertilize by hand. (He had a spreader, but felt it wasted fertilizer.)
As we worked I thought about the question of efficiency, focus not only of agronomists working for big agriculture but of investigators who sought to help small farmers. My companions seemed pleased with my progress, but Roberts worked much more rapidly than I did. The rows were uneven and sometimes failed to spread to the edges of the plot. There was efficiency here, especially of movement. The most strenuous task, the plowing, had been done by a machine. But it was low-tech farming, a reminder that across the world most farmers work with just a few tools, most even without the tractor-drawn plow—with animal traction, or by hand—in a manner not so different from the ways they worked 100 years ago (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006:12).

Was more “competitive” farming the pressing issue here, I wondered? What would greater efficiency mean in the context? When every farmer I met lamented how much of their production was not consumed? FAO official Dunstan Campbell, who had worked with the GCFA, said in 2004 that an estimated 20% of Grenadian produce was wasted annually. Would figuring out how to plant this field with fewer people—in fewer hours (paid hours?)—be a priority when nearby villages were filled with unemployed and (often) unoccupied young people?

Efficiency is defined in many ways, predetermined by our values. Buddy—a man who could expatiate at length on soil chemistry—was continually refining his methods. But certain kinds of scientific or managerial efficiency (doing the job more quickly, introducing machines to plant or harvest) seemed less pertinent issues to small farmers I talked to than getting secure land to work, being able to sell their produce, protecting crops from price pressures that no amount of efficiency could make competitive—all of which might go to adequately compensating them for the work of feeding people. If
efficiency were pursued only in terms of profit—if it meant just growing one crop or employing small farmers, it could mean a consequent “deskilling” and loss of small farmer knowledge.⁵² There might often be higher orders of need than efficiency in a FS context, I decided. In fact, I wondered whether “efficiency”—a word routinely employed by the MNIB’s Fitzroy James—might be something of red herring in a place Grenada, where even FS advocates might be placed in a defensive posture trying to convince officials that small farmers were productive, or could be, when they had more pressing immediate concerns. Here FS mean the right to farm, and to do it on your own terms.

These observations only skim the service of a large conversation about efficiency (perhaps “productivity,” too), and about the use of such words in FS versus commercial—or food security—contexts. It is easy to see how small farmers could be ruled out entirely in pursuit of certain kinds of efficiency. Profitary efficiency is different from the pursuit of sustainability or human needs. Contexts vary: Grenada needed resources, agronomists, agriculture in the school curriculum. My look into farmer practices had suggested that the use of manures and compost was too limited in Grenada, something that a revitalization of island animal production, and cane farming, could help to address.⁵³ Surely, Grenadian farmers could be more efficient, more productive, too. But I was convinced that small farmers were at present in greater need of people to fight with them than outsiders to tell them how to do it better.

River Sallee in 2010

I spent just one day with Buddy when I came in 2010; the Wheelbarrow stood up on blocks in his side yard. I got to watch him pull up in the new used Toyota truck that he had been waiting to take delivery of when I left in 2008. “It makes life easier!” he said
as I admired it. Bernadette Roberts was in New Jersey, visiting relatives and trying to
earn some money.

We drove out to Levera where the view was as phenomenal as ever, even if it
seemed a lonely place. Buddy’s plantings had matured beautifully, but no new
construction was evident. I asked how the Saraca had gone this year? Well enough, he
said, although he complained that there were now deejays in everyone’s yard; the
sound systems were competing for attention. Everyone should have drummers, he said.
“That is the tradition!”.

And how were things generally? “Times are hard. I am scared, man. I tell you I
am scared,” he said. In fact, Buddy was moving forward, as conversation revealed; it
was River Sallee that was struggling. A lot had happened in a year and three-quarters.
He was reconfiguring his planting, moving the watermelon and pigeon peas out of his
houseyard, planning to do only provision and fruit trees there and to grow vegetables on
his lands. “Two vegetable farms is too costly,” he told me. Currently he had two men
employed in the fields and was sometimes employing five; this was a source of pride to
him. Bernadette had gotten into goats and had 17 in the yard—had reached as many as
30 at one point. And he had continued to proselytize for sugarcane.

When I told him of my doubts about the thrust of the 2008 NDC government’s
policy, the emphasis on commercialism and farmer competitiveness, Buddy saw the
government’s plans as misplaced emphasis: “You not talking commercial, you should be
talking sustainable,” he said. If the planned commercialization of agriculture—stated
goal of agricultural policy—took hold, and it undermined the 600 families that were
farming in River Sallee, “hunger will start to affect everyone,” he said. Again I felt caught
in the contradictions—the places of mutual incomprehensibility—between the demands of a thrust toward commercial farming and a subsistence or mixed farming approach. In some ways this was my problem—people like Buddy had negotiated the contradictions all their lives. But there had never been the explicit intent to make small farmers move away for the subsistence portion of their production that full commercialization implied. Would it be ironic or just dismal if a move to “diversification” and cash crops, largely based in local markets, were more crippling to small farming than their accommodation with export crops had been?

I asked about River Antoine, the distillery and lands. So much of the life of the villages still revolved around the estates, yet I had heard little or nothing about the place during my time here. “Right now River Antoine contributes nothing to River Sallee,” he said, “just takes its money for white rum.” The Antoine River had been low and—with water pressure insufficient to turn its ancient water wheel—the distillery had not been able to grind cane during the drought. The low water pressure should be additional impetus to get the Pointzfield mill going, Buddy felt.

I asked him about the Cane Farmers Association. They had one more project they were working on, he said. “If it doesn’t go, I am out,” he declared. He had been excited to be named to the advisory board for cane, but little had come of it. At the last meeting they had met with the Prime Minister, only to find that he knew nothing about the project to revive the mill, showed little awareness of the issues surrounding sugarcane, and clearly had not been briefed for the meeting. Neither former GCFA official Ferron Lowe nor Agriculture Minister Dennis Lett had shown up to the meeting. When board members complained about the way that Clarke’s Court and Sugar Factory
owner Leroy Neckles were trying to push Calivigny farmers like Joseph Gill and Frankie Lewis off of their land, the PM protested that he knew nothing about it. And they didn't pay Buddy's expenses or gas to travel to St. George's for meetings—no small issue. But Buddy didn't seem to be giving up on sugarcane altogether: farmers in River Sallee were still producing cane, he said. Many more would be happy to jump in.

I tried out the pigeon pea story on Buddy, describing the turns the story had taken in my head—beginning with shelling the peas at his house and planting by hand on his lands at Chambord. I had seen a can of canned pigeon peas in a market in St. Georges and become convinced that Grenada farmers could never compete with pigeon peas produced by Green agriculture methods by agro-industrial giants. Then I had begun to wonder if my analysis might be wrong-headed: perhaps food would become so expensive, or people so poor, that they would be driven back to planting. Buddy wasn't encouraged by this analysis either way. He shook his head and said simply, "The small farmer will die." The wealthy countries worked to prevent poor countries from protecting their agricultural products, he said, even as they protected and boosted their own production. "When they [Caribbean government officials] go to the commercialization meetings they say yes to the conditions" demanded by the wealthy countries and IMF, he said, "because they are scared. Because if they don't comply they do not get the nine or ten billion dollar loan package."

I posed the pigeon pea question in terms of food security versus FS: you can import enough pigeon peas to feed everyone in an emergency, I observed. . . leading the conversation a little. "Food security is still dependence," Buddy said. "What happens
if the price of oil goes up or there is a disaster and the boat cannot come to Grenada for four or five months? We are in trouble.”

We talked about an accusation of bribery that had been lodged by the London Sunday Times against Grenada’s Agricultural Minister in the case of Japan and the Whaling Commission (2010). Whaling, and sovereignty over its own waters, were FS issues for Grenada too. Until now my view of the matter had been wholly negative. An NDC government that had made its reputation on fiscal probity was caught with its pants down, I felt: given that Buddy identified with the opposition NNP I expected him to be critical too. But the irony of the situation was not lost on him. Instead he noted that the Japanese government was helping Grenada to start a fish processing operation. “That is a bribe,” he laughed. “But when the IMF forces you to hurt your farmers in order to obtain a loan that is not a bribe. The colonialism is still there,” he said. “It’s not shackles and chains. But we’re still not making our own decisions.”

The cassava project planned for Chambord had fallen through. Initial plans had for the project to be carried out on some of Buddy and Roberts’s land, but Buddy had backed off, that it could create jealousy among local farmers. The participants had been offered a nearby piece of land and, with difficulty, saved the money to buy it. But the government never surveyed the land as promised, according to Buddy. Eventually, the landowner obtained another offer and sold it. By then the processing equipment—$32,000 EC worth—had shipped from Trinidad. (In 2008 they had learned it would ship in May, then never learned what had happened to it.) Buddy understood that the equipment had ended up at the agriculture school at Mirabeau, in St. Andrew Parish, and sat there unopened for two years. UNDP, the primary funder, had ultimately
withdrawn support for the project, according to him. Not only did this make people cynical about future projects, he said, but it would make it harder to obtain backing for future projects. Twelve women had been trained to process the cassava; there had been excitement about keeping the project in River Sallee.

We talked about the St. Lucia company, Baron Foods, and its agro-processing plant. “Who invites these people in?” Buddy wondered aloud. Government officials had bragged about the plant, putting out the word that Barons would “buy all of your produce.” There had been excitement that farmers would again have an agroprocessing outlet for their produce. “But they’re paying a dollar [EC] a pound for peppers,” Buddy told me. “How many acres do you need to plant to make a few dollars?”

Buddy hadn’t voted for the new government and therefore expressed no surprise at the fact that small farmers were being given no say in policy direction under it. But his gloom went beyond party politics. “You’re not part of it. You will never be,” he told me.

We talked about the rising water bills, about having to pay for water. He used the issue to demonstrate how hard it was for the average River Sallee family to get by. The bills were issued on the 15th of every month, arrived on the 20th and were due the 30th. “How would you find the money to pay for the 30th,” he wanted to know, “in such a short time?” He said that men with families in River Sallee might work three days a week and make $50 a day—that’s $700 EC (roughly US$260) a month. “Your cable bill is $100,” he says. Your telephone is $70, and the water is $90.”

We were heading for his car, and Buddy turned to tell me that 3,000 students were finishing school in Grenada every year: “What will they do for work?” he wondered. This provided a segue for me to ask about the status Levera and whether
the jobs promised there would materialize. Fifteen hundred jobs Levera was supposed
to offer in the construction phase, Buddy told me, 900 permanent jobs when done. He
said that government was withholding a tax concession that the company needed to
proceed with work. You didn't need to be an economist to see how tantalizing the lure of
even half as many jobs could be to local people or the government. As we gazed out on
the landscape of the moribund project—Buddy's landscape—I asked if farmers could
graze their animals at Levera. No, he said; unfortunately, it would ruin the plantings. The
resort development plan did include an organic farm, though. Last year he had begun
planting with several local people. They had "brought 2,000 pounds of watermelon out,"
giving food to a home for the elderly, an institution for the disabled, and another for
juvenile delinquents. People were thankful for the food, he said.

Charity was different from growing for yourself, from holding secure tenure over
your own land, from making such plans with the community or by yourself, I thought—
approaches that would be much closer to FS. But Buddy knew that. As we drove out he
noticed two long fishing lines, invisible to me, hovering over the pond near the resort
entrance—a pond that Buddy had himself helped to stock with fish not long before my
first visit. No one was in sight; they were hiding back up in the bushes above the pond,
Buddy was sure. "That is not allowed," he said. He drove me to the road, we said our
goodbyes, and he sped off to catch the poacher.

... 

The day before I left I had a call from Buddy. I had been making the argument
that so-called "backyard farmers," as Fitzroy James called them, were in fact highly
productive, that looking at them as unprofessional, "not serious," as Joseph Gill termed
it, or—worse—not as farmers was a mistake.60 If women tended to perform most of the labor in houseyard gardens, as was traditionally the case, and you failed to help them, I reasoned—as (again) James argued should be the case—women would be most affected. My evidence remained anecdotal. But adding up increasing post-hurricane female poverty, testimony about the number of women seeking work in St. George's, the falling number of people doing farming generally and the decline of houseyard culture, it seemed likely that it was women who were being most strongly affected by the thrust of an agricultural policy, pushed on Grenada from just after the US invasion, that recommended adaptation of commercialization and false diversification measures. When you hurt women you tended to hurt families, children, and the dependent elderly because women spread their incomes more widely.61 “Commercializing agriculture” meant commercializing the social relations of production. Widening class distinctions and the further impoverishment of those who already struggled would be the outgrowth in a place whose inherited culture had been constructed, in demonstrable degree, to overcome these.

I had tried these ideas out on Buddy, unsure of what his take on them might be. But like Buddy agreed that refusing to boost backyard farming was a mistake. His response had less to do with gender than with the knowledge that houseyards were productive. (“Almost every farmer works in his backyard!” he said.) Could he do a back-of-the-envelope calculation of how much he and Roberts produced in theirs, I asked, curious? He could do better than that, he said—they kept careful tabs on their production. Now he had called to give it to me. “Have you got a pen handy?” he asked now.
Various fruits, vegetables, and spices not featured in the table below are grown for family consumption in Buddy and Roberts's houseyard. But items on the list portray commercial production—what was taken to be sold (as noted, various kinds of livestock are also in production there, and would swell these numbers considerably).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watermelon</td>
<td>7000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>13000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yam</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>11000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet pepper</td>
<td>5035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteloupe</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumber</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47,056 pounds</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long had they been planting there, I asked Buddy? “Twenty-eight years,” he told me.

One houseyard's statistics don’t constitute a sample. But within a half mile of Buddy and Roberts I could point to four or five houseyards that were more or less as intensively planted as theirs. Much more research remains to be done about houseyards and their role in Grenada’s economy. But Buddy’s production, the continuing role of houseyards in small farmers’ efforts, and the powerful historical role that they have played in the country’s economy and culture suggest that—rather than being downgraded or ignored—they are the place to begin work in establishing a wider FS on the island.

**Conclusion**

While it has been eroded by commercial and imported food and the patterns of consumer culture, a still-vital small farmer culture and real degree of subsistence
production continue to inhere in River Sallee. In the Saracca and other cultural manifestations, the village demonstrates the kind of popular spirit that made it a bastion of support for the early rural labor activism of Eric Gairy, and that could infuse a contemporary national campaign for FS. As with the many traditional and modern foods that they grow, Reginald Buddy and Bernadette Roberts’s Saracca tray suggests the extent to which subsistence production—a real degree of the kind of food independence on which FS must be predicated—remains within Grenada’s reach. The many foods that local North Shore residents gather for themselves and their animals, whether from the nearby sea and rivers or in moving through the bush, suggests the degree of extraction from nature that has long prevailed on the north shore, the critical importance of its maintenance for FS. FS, River Sallee makes clear, means preservation of threatened and diminishing public and common spaces, and access to them. A push to investigate the value and utility of neglected or ignored native and endemic plants for FS could extend to plant medicine and building materials. It could form the basis for a program of research by regional LVC advocates for a new kind of science in the public interest, based not in the desires of development officials or outsiders, but of regional nations like that embodied in River Sallee’s Nation Dance, helping to inspire and solidify FS campaigns.

Projects like the several animal projects developed by local NGO GRENCODA point to ways that local grassroots organizations directly focused on promotion of FS could contribute to development of Grenadian food independence, building on the economics of increase inherent in nature and by adding subsistence, food security, and micro- or local-processing components to income-generation projects. Facilities like the
small factory developed by the River Sallee Women’s Cooperative also point to ways that micro-processing and food production—even development of local food banks—could reduce local seasonal hunger and malnutrition.

As at Mt. Hartman, where GCFA members worked out ways to share local resources and critical knowledge, the common property arrangement on the Chambord lands outside River Sally suggests another way in which contemporary innovations, building on the country’s small farmer inheritance, could contribute to FS in Grenada. Particularly notable and innovative in this regard is landholders’ decision to focus their efforts to retain the lands in local food production, an idea that could help furnish a model for other efforts—even seizure (“capture”) of unused lands by local groups—in Grenada. As Chapter 6 also suggested, the growth of suburban development around River Sallee, including on good agricultural lands, shows that the stamp of consumer culture extends beyond food and other imported products to the built environment, powerfully impinging on Grenada’s ability to establish FS. The loss of lands at Levera, of access by local people to subsistence activities there, shows that the achievement of secure tenure—historically limited for Grenada’s small farmers—would be critical to the establishment of national FS. In the same way, evidence suggests, pressure to commercialize agricultural production is displacing women from houseyards—not just from their traditional roles in them (and knowledge about them) but from a wider sphere of cultural autonomy and future possibilities in Grenadian agriculture. An effort to expand houseyards and women’s influence in them could powerfully impact Grenadians and women’s livelihood, family nutrition, and well-being.
Figure 7-1. The outdoor kitchen at Roberts’s and Buddy’s River Sallee house, preparing dumplings for the Saracca in 2008.

Figure 7-2. The Saracca is held on the grounds of River Sallee primary school.
Figure 7-3. Roberts and Buddy make a point of including a little bit of everything they raise on their Saracca tray, a testimonial to their subsistence production.
Figure 7-4. River Sallee farmer John Philbert at Chambord, where farmers have worked to maintain hold on prime agricultural lands by devoting their production to meeting local food needs.

1 Despite initial plans I did not live in River Sallee but about half a mile outside it, in a tiny enclave of newer houses called La Taste. While different insights flowed from this physical location (I found myself close to the Chambord lands, for example), an intimacy with details of River Sallee town life that I had hoped to develop was limited because of it.

2 Spellings vary and include Saraka, Saraca, and Salaca.

3 According to Patrick Antoine's history of the nearby River Antoine sugarcane mill and rum distillery, however, there was no River Sallee Estate listed among those in 1824 records. By 1920 there were 22 estates, a River Sallee Estate listed among these (1984:10-12).

4 One thousand Yoruba were brought to Grenada as indentured servants in 1849 (EPICA 1982:23; Steele 2003:186). The 2007 obituary of local teacher/storyteller Crofton McGuire says that his research showed many River Salleeans were descendants of Yoruba as well as Ashanti African people http://btckstorage.blob.core.windows.net/site4842/Crofton%20Maguire.pdf, accessed September 18, 2012).

5 Charles, considered an authority on local history, told me flatly that River Sallee had been established by Gairy—research may reveal that new lands were added to the town or that it received some formal designation during Gairy's tenure. Although local agitation had its immediate cause in demands for better wages and conditions, Charles saw it as intrinsically related to land demands met in unsatisfying ways: “They got the estates to cut up,” he told me, “but gave the people space” on poor quality land where there was no plantation.”
Franklyn writes that Shango, named for the Yoruba God of Thunder, “is purely African. . . and does not contain elements of Christian religion.” Adherents may come from Catholic, Baptist, or Spiritual Baptist traditions. Shango gatherings are held at crossroads and the banks of rivers or other water bodies, including the sea (Franklyn 1999:40). According to Martin, a Saracca is “an essential part of” such gatherings (2007:232).

Although River Sallee has various amenities, pointed to with pride, like most Grenada villages it is under-served. The closest police station is twelve miles away in Sauteurs where the nearest health clinic also lies. For serious problems one must travel many miles along mountain roads to a poorly equipped hospital in Grenville. On the other hand River Sallee is wired, with internet and cable television service featuring 99 channels (all but three foreign), and a USAID-financed computer training center that Buddy helped the town obtain.

GRENCODA Secretary General Judy Williams affirmed the finding in a 2008 interview. In 2010 Isaac Bhagwan, then Permanent Secretary of Agriculture in the Ministry of Health, also affirmed that the finding accorded with the results of the country's 2008 poverty study for St. Patrick parish.

The statement is made (“No one goes hungry here”) in Ann Vanderhoof's An Embarrassment of Mangoes (2004:123), story of a yachting couples' island-hopping adventures whose Grenada chapters trade on the idea of the island as—if poor—a cornucopia of foods. The idea that poverty is largely benign can be comforting to tourist visitors.

Besson writes about this “trichotomy” as a Caribbean-wide phenomenon (2002:197).

In 2012 Buddy and Roberts moved vegetable production to some of their lands on Chambord Plain, taking advantage of a water pump they had installed and the free river water they could now use there.

When I asked Roberts what crops people had grown during her youth, she offered everything on Brierley's list, adding yams; more or less everyone had grown these things, she said. (“Then they have the garden with the cocoa, and the nutmeg, and bananas and stuff like that,” she said. Her family had not kept a houseyard garden.)

Elsewhere called “culantro,” with a taste like cilantro, a spice that Grenadians find many uses for, including in tea for flu, pneumonia, constipation and other maladies (Vanderhoof 2004).

I heard this term used a number of times, as when he or other farmers would say that “I have five, six lands,” not always under cultivation. I also heard Roberts refer to the principal plot away from their house at Chambord as “the big garden.”

When I asked Buddy if anyone was still working original provision grounds in Grenada he said simply, “Yes, the lands were slave lands.” I never heard him or any Grenada farmer explicitly refer to “provision grounds” (or asked whether “family land” that people referenced could be traced to their families' pre-Emancipation grounds). But the term was still in use in 1974 when Brierley began to study Grenadian farming, including to refer to land for subsistence growing accorded to estate workers. Fragments away from the house on which subsistence production took place also bore this name (Brierley:98,129). While the term “provision ground” is apparently no longer in use, Bishop told me that on the south side of the island people still sometimes call their holdings “grounds” (email communication with the author, October 6, 2010).

In Brierley’s 1974 survey 37% of farmers sampled had been employed outside of the country. The most common reason they gave for going away to work was to save money to buy land (64).

Buddy complained that there were drawbacks to participation: it aroused jealousy among other GCFA members; his crops sometimes suffered. At times he said he wondered whether his involvement was worth it.
There is a tradition in Grenada of naming important cultivars for “the farmer who had it,” according to Douglas (2003:32). In 2012 a “Reggie” potato was exhibited on the Carenage in St. George’s at a Root Crop Festival, less than 100 yards from where the St. Vincent boat regularly docked, bringing in the sweet potatoes for the MNIB that—Buddy believed—were helping to wipe out production in Grenada. FAO data suggest a strong drop in sweet potato production beginning around the time of the PRG, possibly owing to introduction of new food crops during the period, and a decline in growing since the hurricanes. Reasons for the decline require more investigation: http://data.mongabay.com/commodities/category/1-Pr../1-Crops/122-Sweet+potatoes/41-Yield/86-Grenada, accessed November 9, 2012.

After 2008 MNIB would end such contractual relationships with farmers and cease to buy as many of the couple’s sweet potatoes, denting their income.

Although I was told that some women cut canes, Roberts—like many women—did not participate but instead helped to bundle the stalks. When I questioned her about the pleasures of the harvest she demurred: “It fun for he!” she said. Bundling canes was hot, hard work, according to her. “The treacle make you itch a lot.”

A 1992 Grenada guidebook suggested that the sale of vegetables (“cabbage, carrots, callaloo, beetroot, christophene, as well as seasoning peppers, chives, thyme and celery”) had still been a novelty 16 years before: “Some small farms have gone into production of ‘cash crops’ for quicker returns. A large variety of vegetables is grown.” (Grenada Isle of Spice, 2nd Edition:100). Some of Roberts and Buddy’s own production found its way to this store (“Spaceman”) and another, kept by relatives of Roberts, when the couple had it. Spaceman’s store had expanded and become more “like a real grocery store,” as Roberts described it, by 2012.

Traditionally breakfast, or “tea,” consisted of “a hot brew along with some solid food, preferably ground provision in the rural areas” (Douglas 2003:73). A larger meal, called a “second breakfast” in some places, might follow in late morning when farmers took a first break from work. Second breakfast might include black pudding; hot dogs in a tomato-based onion and pepper creole sauce; bakes; saltfish “souse”; fish cakes (a kind of fritter); scrambled eggs (with or without some fish like bonito) with toast; mangoes, papayas and other seasonal fruit; bacon; poached spam (often also in creole sauce); lettuce; fresh-squeezed juices of numberless combination and kind including carrot or cherry in season; and—more often than coffee—cocoa tea. In several homes I visited the afternoon meal was the day’s biggest, with leftovers consumed at the evening meal.

The group was referred to formally as The River Sallee Women's Agricultural Group.

Grenada has two growing seasons. Rainy season runs from June to December. It is during dry season, after Christmas, when hardship and hunger are often felt by the rural poor. In early 2010, just before my third visit Grenada underwent its worst drought in modern times, linked by observers to climate change: http://www.heatisonline.org/contentserver/objecthandlers/index.cfm?id=7716&method=full, accessed November 18, 2012.Carriacou's Saracca takes a different form; see Collins film referenced in previous footnote.

According to Sylviane Diouf sadaka, are voluntary donations given to acquire merit with God, a Muslim custom still practiced in West Africa. Offerings similar to those Diouf describes—made by forming balls of peas and rice—are prepared annually by Roberts and other participants in River Sallee’s Saracca. In Grenada as in West Africa there is an emphasis on giving food to children. Warner-Lewis, for her part, describes the “Sàràkà” as deriving “from the Hausa sadaka,” [cironflex over the d]. She describes it as an alms-giving ceremony, observed annually by Hausa and Yoruba descendants and others, often held in response to dreams in which an ancestor indicates the time is ripe for such offerings; these might also be given as thanksgiving “after recovery from illness or after job promotion” (1991:115-116).
In the slaughter that I witnessed, Buddy poured a little rum over the animal and crossed himself, gesture that was both gentle-humored and reverent.

From Collins’s “Saracca and Nation: African Memory and Re-Creation in Grenada.”

Shango dancing plays a role in River Sallee's celebrations, sometimes in others according to Franklyn (1999:40). According to one source, a number of traditional dances were revived by the aforementioned Maguire, teacher and storyteller who died in 2007.

On holidays people often “put down a pot” on the beach to cook oildown, the national dish.

The Pentecostal church is River Sallee's fastest growing and holds rollicking Sunday services in a new building in the center of town; its members also boycott Carnival.

Wolf lists the necessity to create a “ceremonial fund” or surplus to carry out social customs among the three basic economic necessities of peasants, along with meeting a caloric minimum of food intake and annual “replacement” fund (1966:6, 7). He writes of Protestant refusal to participate in peasant customs among Middle American Indian groups as an economic strategy that has in some places allowed some farmers to accumulate additional surpluses, “turning to a sober Protestantism for which such expenditures are not required,” helping to create a wealthier stratum of peasants (16). Here again—as in many such instances globally—Protestantism serves as handmaiden of the growth of commercial culture in Grenada.

Cassava—also known as yucca or manioc—is a nutritious food of many tropical countries long grown in the area, that among many, many uses makes baby food, and (mixed with peanuts, for example) could be used to wean Grenadian babies whose mothers—eager to do well by their children—often spend considerably on heavily advertised Nestle and other baby food products. This too is an FS issue. (See: http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_breastfeeding.html, accessed September 26, 2012.)

In the case of a holding like Chambord it might include the right of River Sallee residents or people nearby to specific local use of the land, or even agreement about what might be grown there and for whom.

Liming, passing time in a relaxed, talkative manner, is a Caribbean cultural art. The term may come from the scurvy-preventing limes colonial era British sailors sucked as they idled the time before shipping out of tropical ports.

The wetland remains protected, according to Tyrone Buckmire.

Levera is also one of the Caribbean’s five most important nesting places for the giant leatherback, conservationist Tyrone Buckmire told me in a 2008 interview. Each year between 700 and 1000 nests are laid along its 700-meter beach. The fascinating reptiles grow up to nine feet long, weigh as much as a ton, and are threatened with extinction. Once prized for their meat and eggs, they continue to be sought by smugglers, especially to South America, where some believe the eggs possess aphrodisiac qualities. In an effort to protect them an eco-tourism group led by Buckmire, called Ocean Spirits, was bringing in...
tourists during their nesting season, to lie in the sand beside them as they deposited their eggs. Buckmire told me that the venture's supporters worked on “the assumption that tourists are willing to pay and see what's unique about a place,” that this could be used to create jobs. The organization's goal was “to convince fishermen and residents that a live turtle is worth more to the community than a dead one.”


43 Dottin also writes that “[m]ost of Levera's forests have been lost to development,” (Malachy 200[7/8]:20), suggesting a wider cost for growth the area that includes building of a number of large suburban-style homes.

44 The new company associated with the project is called Levera Resort Development, Ltd. http://www.buildgrenada.com/Levera%20Project.html, accessed September 21, 2012. According to Ferguson, 350 acres are designated for development by the new company (see fn55 above).

45 Few farmers I interviewed knew about my relationship with Buddy. But it is possible that knowledge of it—or politeness—prevented some people talking to me about Levera. It is more likely that farmers didn't talk about Levera because I didn't ask, since I was late in realizing the importance of the site to the town in 2008. Some farmers' allusions to anger and factionalism in River Sallee may have been connected to Levera.

46 According to Buddy and Roberts a number of farmers were forced to leave when the lands were made a park. These farmers, they said, were compensated for their loss.

47 Jab Jab (for le diable) is a Grenadian folklore figure who appears especially during Carnival, often smearing spectators with the grease that his own body is covered with. The Jab Jab's “call-and-response refrains are often biting social criticisms of the mighty,” writes Grenadian cultural commentator Caldwell Taylor. His act “is a portrayal of class grievance and an important part of... negre jardin (field negro) theatre.” http://www.fun-lovers.com/carnival/jab_jab.php, accessed September 12, 2012.


50 Among possibilities are the renewed use of sargassum and other kinds of seaweed as manures for Grenadian plants, including cocoa (Groome 1970:64).


52 See Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital (1998) for the classic analysis of the abandonment of such skills in pursuit of a scientific division of labor by capital, and as long-term goal of capital, which led to considerable additional revision, research, and theory on the subject. See Lawrence Grossman (1998) for discussion of the process—and a challenge to over simple assumptions about it—in East Caribbean contract banana farming contexts.

53 The 1995 agricultural census found that 25% of farmers used organic manure; 76%, meanwhile, used no agro-chemicals and 55% no chemical fertilizer (1996:41).

54 One argument that Denyse Ogilvie, head of the local GRO People In Action, made to me in a 2012 interview was that agriculture must at the very least be integrated with tourism in places like Levera
and Mt. Hartman—tourist potential notwithstanding, they are too precious to be wasted as sites of agricultural production for the small country. In fact, "high end" and agro-tourist offerings that I have viewed in places like Jamaica's Treasure Beach in St. Elizabeth parish takes such integration—and tourist interest in local life, including agriculture—for granted. Anyone who isn't interested—I believe that Grenadians must declare—is welcome to go to more impersonal resorts on the bigger islands.

55 I was rereading Brierley at the time and noted—not for the first time—his frustrated assertions that subsistence farmers didn't care about refining their farming but only wanted to satisfy what Chayanov called "the yearly consumption budget of the family" (Brierley 1974:60). There was a contradiction between this and his assertions that becoming a commercial farmer was the ultimate goal of farmers (even as he noted that commercial farmers did not "generally display the desire or aptitude to grow the same variety and number of vegetables as semi-commercial farmers" [1974:201]). Amid the contradictions that farmers grappled with it was likely both were true: that many yearned to attain financial stability as commercial farmers, perhaps based in intensive production of one or two crops, and that they also worked to achieve a partial subsistence basis in more varied growing, often ending up hung up between both approaches. This goes to Eric Wolf's notion of the peasant "striving for subsistence," cited in Chapter 2 and questioned by Trouillot.


57 Elliot Bishop echoed this complaint, saying that prices Baron paid were so low that it didn't pay to take produce across the island to the company's facility to sell it.

58 I failed to ask Buddy how much the average woman's earnings might add to this total, but in a climate where female unemployment is much higher than men's, as noted in Chapter 2, the comment attests both to the structure of social relationships as well as the large degree of unremunerated work that women in Grenada perform.


60 I had not yet read Brierley's essay on kitchen gardens, which suggests an evolution toward commercialization and greater intensification of production in them, which in many ways bolstered my case for their importance, even if it also suggested a diminution of their role in ensuring diversity and as teaching tools central to the promulgation of small farmer culture.

61 Research across many cultures suggests that women are more likely to spend their incomes on children and on goods that aid the family http://blogs.wsj.com/ideas-market/2011/01/27/the-gender-of-money/, accessed November 29, 2012.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION: TOWARD FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR GRENADA

Nation is the community that is brought into being (and held together) in... acts of creative collaboration undertaken by individuals on the basis of their ties of blood and/or other real or imagined bonds.

—Caldwell Taylor
Nation Food and Nationhood

Overview

What practices can we point to, finally, as constituting the core of Grenada’s FS heritage? What did the GCFA do with that inheritance, and what does the organization’s experience say about the long-term viability of those practices? What are the outstanding impediments to the assertion of FS in Grenada, and how must they be combated? What are the prospects for mobilization around the FS idea today? This Conclusion summarizes the dissertation’s answers to these questions, set out in the introduction, and points to their wider meanings, including their significance for a broader Caribbean and global pursuit of FS. It also discusses possible avenues for development of a FS campaign in Grenada. Although the constraints are many and powerful, the country’s small farmers retain a significant power in their attachment to the soil, I argue, in their highly developed agricultural practices, and not least in their established ability to help one another as well as in a highly developed culture of sharing that is their inheritance.

The FS Inheritance

As the dissertation has shown, Grenada retains some of the Caribbean’s most extensive, enduring, and developed peasant traditions. A host of agricultural adaptations and inventions have contributed to the impressive measure of food security and livelihood that the country’s small farmers have to now attained. These include the
maroon system of shared labor; the houseyard and provision ground system (extending to include mountain grounds as well), with the rich cultural meanings of the former still barely documented or explored; the polycropping and intercropping that support those systems and the agricultural diversity that they signify; and the flexible subsistence food system of provision and provisioning, foundational Grenadian FS concepts that are central to island cuisine. The inheritance includes subsistence extraction of various flora and fauna from Grenadian nature, and the “times” of their greatest abundance, in which—briefly—nature appears to supplant the scarcity construct that haunts the import-dependent economy of a country made poor. The inheritance includes celebrations of the Saracca, where a wider nation of people whose pursuit of cultural and material independence is invoked and the community’s successful collective subsistence achievement is celebrated. And it includes the many additional institutions, formal and informal, around which a wider culture of reciprocity and mutual aid (of “FS plus”) have been established in Grenada.

As early as the 1770s, enslaved proto-peasant farmers were keeping their families and the planter class alive with their skilled plant and food production on the island. It is both ironic and encouraging to recognize that their efforts made Grenada a “home fed” colony before emancipation, while such food independence is deemed impossible by experts today. Although colonial administrators worked hard to prevent the development of a peasant economy, to tie the former slaves to the estates and deny them land—although all of the island’s good low-lying land was “engrost” by the colonial state—many gained a toehold in the soil. By the middle of the next century they had established a local economy of highly varied production for subsistence consumption,
sale, and off-island trafficking. Though hampered by lack of formal recognition or encouragement—by the emerging peasantry's lack of political power—this local economy continued to grow, unlike the peasant economies of many islands, through the middle of the next century.

As described in Chapter 3, Grenada's post-emancipation Free Village communities functioned as hubs of productive activity in the wider farming systems that villagers established. Houseyards and houseyard gardening, the nucleus of peasant production and a “symbol of autonomy” from the estate/plantations (Besson 2002:16), became a particular province of women and women’s culture. Of such practices it is not exaggerating greatly to say that the pursuit of FS—of food independence—was the implicit goal. Such classic peasant village arrangements, in which some residents worked outside the village during the day, remain suggestive for future production in Grenada in pursuit of FS, especially if more land were freed, found, or “captured” for use in common property arrangements like that at Chambord, described in Chapter 7.

The Free Village movement also engendered cooperative systems of labor and production, of money-saving and burial aid, prototypical economies of solidarity and sharing like those now advocated by LVC. These mutual aid constructs helped rural dwellers to retain social equality and cohesion, acting as a barrier to the articulation of greater class differences between small peasant proprietors. Such collective post-emancipation cultural constructs, including the markets and social relations that evolved from them, are not just historical artifacts but continue to provide much of the food security that Grenada still retains. They suggest a flexibility and generosity that mock
notions of peasant selfishness, inadaptability, or laziness that others sometimes seek to attribute to today’s small farmers.

While the strong basis of Caribbean culture in such proto-peasant and peasant practices has been acknowledged by researchers, its material dimensions and continuing value tend to be ignored. With the critical exception of the plantation economic theorists, many Caribbean analysts, including progressives, have assumed that peasant methods were anachronistic. This is in part because of the institutional neglect in which small farmers toiled; in part—as with the GCFA—because of lack of public knowledge about their achievement; in part because of abiding ambivalence about slavery and images of toil; and in part because of the compromised role that governments have played in maintaining the plantation character of the economy. Small farmer labor and estate worker landlessness remained the unacknowledged basis of elite wealth, and change meant undermining the persistent “comprador” character of Grenada’s economy. Island elites were more dependent on the system than farmers were. This remains the case today.

The independence of the region’s Black peasant peoples themselves also contributes to ignorance of this FS inheritance—theirs was a mode of resistance to the plantation economic system. The degree to which small farming has stood in implicit opposition to commercial monocrop and raw export farming is not taken into account by those who accuse its practitioners of failure. Black peasant farmers have sometimes proved as great a challenge to the hegemony of rising Caribbean elites as they did to their colonial masters. The idea that small farmer customs and culture are the alternative to a century and a half of plantation economic dominance, that such
practices could supply the foundation for agricultural and economic dependence, continues to be studiously ignored. It is clear, nonetheless, that these practices could be integral to the establishment of Caribbean FS, to invigoration of the rural sector and culture, and to maintenance of sustainable livelihood in Grenada.

**Gairy and the PRG**

By organizing estate workers and—through them—mounting the greatest challenge to the plantation system in the island’s history, but without handing them the reins of power, labor leader and first Prime Minister Eric Gairy created a militant if politically stunted rural working class. One legacy of this achievement, however, is a rural split between small farmers and plantation workers. Their differences represent an obstacle to the establishment of rural solidarity—thus FS—in Grenada. Gairy’s haphazard and partial “Land for the Landless” reforms failed to stimulate wider production or the growth of a local economy whose full elaboration—long-delayed—must be part of the wider goal of any FS campaign. But Gairy’s actions linger in popular memory as having empowered the Grenadian people, 25% of whom remain union members today. They carry an awareness of the discipline that once propelled a rural working class to challenge local elites and to bring serious change to the island. They carry a reminder of their implicit if largely unexpressed power.

A still older split between the Gairyites and progressive members of Grenada’s better-educated “brown” upper classes, who came to dominate export agriculture as well as daily life in St. George’s, represents a more fundamental problem: one of the classes was, and in real degree remains, maintained by the efforts of the other. This divide complicated the efforts of the initially popular and avowedly socialist PRG government (1979-1983) that overthrew an increasingly despotic Gairy.
Nonetheless, the PRG strove to establish an organic base for agroindustrial development and made the establishment of food independence a collective goal. Many of the PRG’s efforts hold continuing promise from the standpoint of FS. This includes that government’s largely failed cooperative ventures, which although insufficiently supported or organized, could still prove useful to Grenadians in meeting island-wide needs for dairy, coconut oil, saltfish and other food processing and production goals, if appropriately scaled. (Microprocessing techniques put many of these within reach today in cheaper ways than were previously available. These are worth exploring in the context of not just national but local community production, as the experience of the River Salle Women’s Agricultural Group shows.) During a period of world recession under the PRG in the early 1980s, Grenada alone among Caribbean countries demonstrated economic growth. But as some former PRG backers today acknowledge, the PRG—a creature of its period, conditions, and class backgrounds—held limited appreciation of the country's peasant/small farming heritage. Bent on modernization through industrialization, captive of its own entente with the island’s ruling class interests—which had after all made their bloodless revolution possible—it failed to address the land question in any serious measure or to hand power to Grenadian rural workers themselves. Still, even moderate Grenadians retain admiration for many PRG government initiatives in the rural sector, which showed that practical alternatives to lingering twentieth-century plantation economic dependency exist. Grenadians have a right to examine this aspect of their history fully—as they do the peasant past and the changes instituted by the US in the counter-revolutionary period that followed—especially in the context of FS.
USAID and Its Impact on Grenada

The restructuring of Grenada’s governmental bureaucracy and tax system after the collapse of the PRG experiment has received less attention than the invasion. But it was more consequential, as the account of those activities in Chapter 4 suggests. Together, the invasion and USAID’s restructuring paved the way for the neoliberal climate of indebtedness and discipline that constrains Grenada now. The US established a new police presence on the island that has been used to discipline working people, an implicit threat to future collective action by Grenadian workers. Cultivating lenders, donors, and IMF officials places Grenada public officials in positions of even greater dependency upon such outside institutions and their neoliberal culture, with a growing part of the limited resources of government spent in amassing reports, looking for new loans, and seeking money-making projects to repay them. This moves the government and bureaucratic apparatus farther from the Grenadian people, and agricultural initiatives farther from practices that address the needs of Grenadians, toward (instead) a numerical episteme—and a pursuit of money-making alone—that are destructive of women and children’s needs and Grenadian culture. The possibility of economic reprisal by the US and First World was cited by several progressives I spoke with in 2012 as a reason why Grenada could not join ALBA, which promotes FS, let alone defy institutions of the neoliberal order, the WTO, IMF, or World Bank. Like many countries around the world that demonstrated such defiance, Grenada has been bombed by US airplanes. That lesson remains vivid. With Grenada saddled with a poorly designed and regressive tax system and sputtering attempts to commercialize agriculture (often under the false flag of “diversification”), and largely failed attempts to launch major tourism projects, there can be little argument that the measures imposed
on the country by the US left the island better off. Rather, they have served as powerful brakes on the Grenadian people’s assertion of greater independence—including where the most basic need, food, is concerned. Tellingly, all of these constraints, and the political timidity that go with them, continued to be as true of the 2008 NDC government that followed twelve years of NNP power as they were of its predecessor, despite the NDC’s professed desire to clean up the nation’s finances and to elevate the role of agriculture.¹ These are all reasons why Grenada needs a farmer movement that is outside the mainstream political process.

The GCFA Achievement

Despite the atmosphere of crisis that prevailed after the 1983 invasion, the GCFA began an organizing drive in the country's traditional sugarcane sector, adapting the agricultural models of members' historical and cultural inheritance in a project of repeasantization that echoed the process that their post-emancipation forbears engaged in. In doing so, Chapter 5 shows, they created an effective new basis for cash-and intercrop farming in Grenada and made a powerful case for the continued viability of a number of peasant practices. GCFA members transformed the despised sugarcane plant into an effective social crop, making it the central node of an integrated, productive, ecological small farm system that through intercropping created not one but various cash crops, contributing to family and community subsistence, to the local food economy, even ameliorating Grenada’s trade deficit. In doing so they improved the planting methods of small farmers, diversifying both food production and consumption in the country’s poorest villages. Work parties and maroon harvests, powerfully affirming for participants, helped to solve small farmers’ “labor problem” and generated organizational solidarity. A decade before the FS concept was declared by LVC, the
GCFA was contributing strongly to food independence in Grenada. The GCFA lifted the image of small farmers, making it clear—if it needed demonstrating—that Grenadians would embrace farming if it brought dignity and sustainable livelihood. In 2012 interviews, former GCFA official Peter Antoine described the powerful impression that GCFA farmers made in local communities when their efforts enabled them to buy new vehicles, and when their children traveled to Cuba and Central America for WINFA and LVC youth events. Whether or not their efforts were thwarted permanently or only temporarily, in Antoine’s view the organization had succeeded.

But—preoccupied with the growth of the organization and members’ survival—the GCFA never developed more than a modest voice in the national discussion about agriculture, the place of the small farming tradition in the country’s future, or FS. In this, like the PRG, the GCFA was a creature of its time and place. Most Grenadians I talked to held only very general, often uninformed, ideas about the GCFA, and knew little about the organization’s broader efforts. Few—including officials firmly oriented to Grenadian farming—had much appreciation of the community-building aspects of the GCFA’s sugarcane model, and fewer had glimpsed the value in their agroecological practices. When I interviewed ART Secretary General Sandra Ferguson about her response to Chapter 5 she said that she felt that her organization—perhaps Grenada’s most progressive—had underestimated the GCFA’s social contribution to public welfare. Ferguson also said that she felt that the GCFA had sometimes been patronized by aid organizations who were largely unaware of the sophistication of the group’s methods—cane farmers had been seen as a poor constituency in need of welfare projects. Ferguson spoke of the “social profit” that the GCFA had rendered, and insisted that this
should take precedence over money. But for most of the officials that I interviewed, the highly integrative GCFA model was simply not a commercial project—there was no obviously profitable or simple bottom line to be discerned in it. Most felt that the organization was unlikely, in the current climate, to gain backing from a government bent on commercializing agriculture.

**Confronting the Contradictions**

Grenada finds itself consumed in a cycle of destructive contradictions. Land sits idle on derelict or under-used farms and plantations, sometimes held out of the market for speculative purposes. Topsoil is removed through illicit river dredging. The best agricultural land is often not used for agriculture. Sand mining has caused whole beaches to disappear, with the sand used to create concrete block for houses that remove still more land from agricultural use. The country’s parkland is taken without notice from the people. Government lands are inventoried far from the eye of farmers and the public, while decisions about their disposition go unannounced. Agricultural zoning—a clear prerequisite for FS, acknowledged by almost every onlooker as necessary—always becomes inconvenient for the party in power. Land remains inaccessible to small farmers when it does reach the market due to high US dollar-denominated prices and unaffordable loan terms.

But there is also a great deal of unused land in Grenada, which it is difficult to induce farmers to plant, including at places like Chambord. The country experiences seasonal gluts—which raise fears among farmers about any expansion of production—while seasonal hunger and malnutrition persist and food import costs grow higher, their prices placing them further out of reach of the poorest people. Labor shortages are lamented by the better-off while the country suffers massive unemployment/
underemployment. This knot of contradictions can only be sliced through by returning agriculture to its first purpose—nutrition for Grenadians—and predicating future economic initiatives on Grenadians’ needs. Grenada offers striking evidence that neither of the mainstream parties is willing or able to effect such changes. What is needed is a farmers and landless peoples’ movement.

**Toward a Movement for Agrarian Reform in Grenada**

*The people have lost their voice.*  
—Peter Antoine  
Former GCFA official

*Mobilization is still our principal strategy.*  
—Vía Campesina declaration (Borras 2004:2)

Although Grenada possesses a powerful historic basis for FS in its small farmer/peasant culture, it currently presents little or no organized political opposition to the pressures that face small farmers and rural dwellers. Thus there is no real resistance—other than political lip service—to the inroads of imported food in the country, no ability to influence agricultural policy by farmers. This is especially true given the recent inactivity of the country’s leading LVC organization, the GCFA, and the failure of Senator Keith Clouden’s GFAFO to emerge as a progressive force for Grenadian farmers.

All of which is to say that in the end there can be no substitute for the hard work of organizing and political education outside of the established narrow corridors of mainstream power in Grenada. Grenada needs a united farmer front, one that eschews party affiliation or identification, with the goal of obtaining comprehensive agrarian
reform. Only through such work is there a chance for creation of real opposition to the status quo, as GCFA leaders have long understood.

Unsurprisingly, given the global character of the restraints outlined here, solutions for Grenadian farmers and rural dwellers must come not just from inside the island country, but through alliance-building with progressive movements and countries regionally and in Latin America, and in the transnational politics and inspiration of organizations like LVC. Until now, for example, communications from LVC Caribe to WINFA affiliates have been filtered through an extremely busy WINFA headquarters in St. Vincent, which has often slowed or stopped the flow of information between groups. Especially because of Grenada’s unique small farmer heritage, the GCFA and other Grenada farmers need to be able to interact with all LVC Caribe groups, including through revival of former farmer-to-farmer exchanges and joint investigation of regional farmer practices, and through endeavors like English-, Kreyol-, and Spanish-language learning exchanges.

Clearly, a new rural coalition should recruit landless farmers as well as agricultural laborers. It must address, history suggests, not just small farmers but work to bridge the gulf between the two social classes, making their most prominent shared grievance—the historical denial of land and access to sufficient land—part of their central demand to the Grenadian state. Further coordination should be sought with local environmental interests, expanding the natural and promising alliance that arose during the struggle to keep Mt. Hartman.

Among early objectives for a new farmer movement might be popularizing the idea of FS, challenging the food security idea as limited and commercially-oriented, and
insisting on farmers’ right to their cultural heritage and collective subsistence foodways. Farmers need to become more prominent in Grenada’s national political conversation, challenging the existing vision of a modernized Grenada based in debt dependency and tourism, asserting their right as farmers to speak in the name of Grenadian people, the voice of a more culturally authentic Grenadian nation.  

The undemocratic character of decision-making about farming that brought about the adoption of the ARD plan, with its commitment to commercialization and decision to neglect subsistence production; that underlay the land grabs at Levera and Mt. Hartman for the Grenadian people; that has underlain the decision not to devote remaining Crown lands to small farming—all these need to be challenged more fully by the Grenadian people.

The development of necessary reforms should begin with a frank national discussion, beginning at village level, taking a leaf from the PRG’s local assemblies, about agriculture, food security, and FS. Among demands that might be formulated by local farmer groups are

- Restoration of the image of farmers and their struggle and achievement, including historical education for children in schools, and a curriculum based in the agrodiverse methods of small farmers, helping in the long run to improve rather than replace their methods.

- Access to land for significant projects like sugarcane and cassava production, and prioritization of bestowal of remaining land to landless farmers over continued investment in monocrop and raw export crop production.

- Adequate compensation for small farmers through affordable access to loans, crop and catastrophe insurance; and establishment of programs that boost small farmers’ and agricultural laborers’ incomes commensurate with their contribution to the nation's historical wealth and contribution to public welfare.

- A policy of non-interference in Grenada by the multilateral institutions and their affiliates in questions of food and food policy; a declaration of the country’s right to protect any and all food products that it deems necessary from dumping or through price supports, accompanied by renunciation of agreements that prevent this.
A reorientation of MNIB to adopt, as state organ, some of the risk involved when farmers enter commercial markets; prioritization of local development over the export economy in pursuit of basic needs.

A layer of extension for small and subsistence farming, to receive the lion’s share of agricultural ministry funding, with officers trained to respond to the needs of small farmers in pursuit of an integrated national and community subsistence.

Grenadian farmers should pressure the government to adopt a wider policy of houseyard promotion, one designed to attain the full agrodiverse and cultural promise of the country’s traditional kitchen gardens/houseyards, assuring the ability of families to put food directly into the mouths of their children and older people. Houseyards offer a superlative opening for a wider campaign for both FS and food security. People who are not threatened with hunger make calm life choices, including the choice to refuse coercive offers of outside aid that may undermine their communities and ways of being. Women require not just a “right to the houseyard” but to land, generally, including in common property arrangements like River Sallee’s Chambord, and to protagonism in pursuit of these wider rights.

The above recommendations are not simply prescriptive. They reflect what has been done in the past, during slavery time and in the post-emancipation period, during the early years of independence, and what is going on now in Grenada in small measures. They grow out of Grenada’s FS inheritance.

A New Maroon Movement for FS

Although the economic crisis is sending more Grenadians back into subsistence farming, as various people told me in 2012, desperation to grow food may mean poor planting practices and degradation of soils—including on the country’s slopes. In 2012 at least some people were voting with their feet, refusing to continue to seek work and returning to farming. “People tell me that they don’t want jobs,” ART General Secretary
Sandra Ferguson told me. “They say why should I try to find work when I can't make enough to feed my family and pay for transportation?”

If Grenadians are turning back to the land anyway, it would be most appropriate if they took advantage of their own cultural patterns. Events in 2012 suggested that many were doing that. In 2010, Elliot Bishop started a maroon collective with local Marian farmers; he told me about his idea for a “Maroon Initiative” for the entire country, with maroon organizing at community level through various kinds of self-help activities, including sharing of food and marketing, organizing for land, and lobbying for government aid for farmers’ efforts. Bishop’s is a perfect final step for the maroon concept: maroons as the most grassroots kind of political organizing, anchored in the soil of local community, productive to its core. In 2012 I collected a list of nine maroon groups that people informed me were operating on the island. Several were of recent vintage, said to have been formed in response to the economic crisis—in Mt. Moritz (“yams and eddoes”); the Marian effort (called the “Village Maroon”); the Northeast Farmers Association; one in Hope, St. Andrews; another in Mt. Rich, St. Andrews; The Vincennes Farmers' Group; and groups in Malaika, Munich, and La Digue. As modes of resistance, the maroon spirit and the core institutions of Grenadian small farming continue to represent the leading ideological and material means to effect practical popular change in Grenada.

Such groups could build a maroon alliance for FS in all of Grenada, and form the heart of a new rural movement. Maroons and work teams can provide a counterweight to government measures to push commercialization and policy plans to help only "more promising" farmers and help keep the smallest farmers—including otherwise landless
farmers—in production. Maroon groups that include local small farmers could also make it their business to reach out to youths from landless families, possibly in organized efforts at apprenticeship that would help to further systematize small farmer knowledge and to link them to land and food production. It could also identify good unused local land and occupy it or negotiate community use, purchase, or (if appropriate) capture of it, expanding on such projects that have taken place at Chambord and elsewhere.

FS Villages and Knowledge Production

As the example of River Sallee shows, the adoption of FS could form part of a wider cultural revival for Grenada. FS proponents could cultivate a revival of pride in Grenada's villages and demand government recognition for such efforts. Both farmer organizations and LVC Caribe should consider applying for UN Heritage designation as a way to celebrate and protect villages that maintain the small farming heritage in the region, including as a method to protect their subsistence practices from pushes to commercialization and monocrop farming. LVC Caribe could itself designate villages that met established criteria as “FS Villages,” holding award ceremonies and promoting recognition of them in the local and regional press, helping—with festivals like the Saracca—to cement the FS idea in the national consciousness, not as folkloric vestige but as engine of community trust, solidarity, and productive reciprocity.

A revival of village culture could inform and draw on historical and agricultural research necessary for community groups to return knowledge of farming and foodways—the nation’s agricultural and cultural knowledge—to the people, as well as to create new knowledge. Grenadian FS proponents should push for protection of subsistence production of key heirloom crops in the country, including through collection and seed saving. Indeed, LVC Caribe should develop such a program (and possibly a
think tank to go with it) in which farmers and community members investigate the culture and technologies of the alternative that their countries' small farmers have developed, to define their science and challenges for themselves, sharing their best practices across the region.

Just as FS opens the door to the practical recuperation of decades of knowledge gathered by anthropologists, historians, and even archaeologists about regional material practices, recognition of the Afro-Caribbean basis of Caribbean farming tradition can shed light on contributions ignored, under-appreciated, or confined to the ghettos of specialist endeavor. These neglected contributions include a Black nationalism too often dismissed by Caribbean intellectuals that potentially connects not just the Caribbean but also Southern US African-American and Afrodescendent communities of the entire Atlantic seaboard, and ultimately (of course) Africa itself. Such reasoning could lead to re-exploration of the work and self-help philosophy of Marcus Garvey and his followers, of Rastafarian communities and Maroon groups, many of which have long implicitly pursued FS. This includes the farming and back-to-the-land practices of these groups, practices that—among other things—offer recent conscious links to past practices, vital links to past and future projects of repeasantization. The maroon spirit is alive in many parts of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, from which no farmer group has, lamentably, yet been brought into LVC. Such research can give further social force and form to what could become a vibrant regional movement for FS, for which Grenada can serve as a powerful example.6

1 In April 2012, as I finished this project, the NDC was swept back out of power amid widespread disappointment with its efforts in agriculture. The NNP captured every seat in the new Parliament.
Grenada’s Food Security officer, for example, knew nothing of the GCFA’s operations, and told me that electricity costs at the organization’s mills threatened the sustainability of its plans. In fact, the mills used almost no electricity.

Citizens in Defense of Grenada’s Lands and Heritage, the local environmental justice organization led by Sandra Ferguson (who is also General Secretary of the Agency for Rural Transformation)—whose knowledge I draw on in many places here—is by far the leading social/political organization in the country.

When I asked one key extension official why the government didn’t proceed with the project of registering farmers and organizing production of their crops, as the NDC had suggested it might do, I received the reply that, “They too lazy.” Despite this several extension officials expressed willingness to organize maroons as part of their local duties. Several more said that they had always shared resources with small farmers, even when they had been instructed not to, and one former such official said it was the extension office’s duty to do so, whatever official policy dictated.

Starting in 2001 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights began an effort to protect the “oral and intangible” elements of culture concurrent with ongoing efforts to protect physical heritage sites. A Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was drawn up in 2003 to codify the effort (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=00022, accessed April 8, 2013). This is an issue that I plan to explore in future research.

To give some idea of the wider compass of such debates it is helpful to note that, echoing a speech that Booker T. Washington made at the Cotton States and International Exhibition in Atlanta in 1895, the great Trinidiadian historian and politician Eric Williams once also told a reported assemblage of 40,000 of his countrymen that he would “let down my bucket where I am, now, right here with you in the West Indies,” signifying a desire to overcome the traditional alienation between “the educated, westernized. . . Afro-Creole middle sectors and the black popular sectors” of his country's rural masses in pursuit of a genuinely autochthonous response to several centuries of colonialism and plantation economic domination in the region (Macdonald 1986:104).
APPENDIX
A CANE HARVEST MAROON

Nothing demonstrates the continuity and traditional ties between GCFA member's forbears and the practices of the New Village movement in Grenada like the cane harvest maroons, agricultural practice that the GCFA adapted and revived for a new generation of cane farmers in the period after the collapse of the Grenadian revolution. In May 2012, I had the opportunity to observe such a maroon in Marian, on Grenada’s south shore, which took place on lands once owned by Bishop's grandfather. Here cane once grew in all directions—“far as the eye could see,” several farmers in attendance told me—although large houses now crowded around us.

It had been a wet dry season and the canes were swollen; at the end of the day they would fill the River Antoine estate truck that came for them much higher than they had the previous season, according to the farmers. Fueled by rum that held a large chunk of babade root,¹ water, and various kinds of juice as well as coconut jelly, the men—Everington “Butter” Smith, John “Briner” Morain, Matthew “Africa” Peterson, Robert “Spree” Charles, Errol “Original” James, Phillip “Shep” James, Frankie “Amaday” Lewis, Samuel Macsween, and Bishop—moved rapidly through the field. Veteran cane farmer Frankie Lewis, 76 years old, lead the way, chopping the ratoons (this year's stalks) at their base, trimming their leaves, halving them, tossing them on the growing pile behind, sometimes deftly spearing them to get them out of the way, moving through one field of about 30 yards in the morning and a smaller stand in the afternoon. There is a fine art to use of the machete (má-shett, Grenadians pronounce it, as in French), or “cutlass”—most participants preferred a special curved blade they call The Mongoose (see photographs).² The previous year the one- and two-year stands had been
intercropped with dasheen (taro, here and in Trinidad and Tobago also called callalloo, “malanga” in Puerto Rico and Cuba, related to the also-popular eddo, a perennial plant whose corm is used in provision and whose leaves are also eaten). The remnants of last season’s dasheen crop still survived here and there among the second-year canes. Bishop nimbly trimmed his banana plants as he moved past, gesture unremarkable to him or the other farmers but an undoubted contrast to labor in the “factories in the fields” (Besson 2007: 136), the plantation settings where enslaved Afro-Grenadians—many of them women—had once toiled. No slave could have stopped for a drink of rum or juice, to chop and drink from a coconut overhead; nor could they have stepped briefly to sit down, returning to the work refreshed—nor can the migrant workers who pick tomatoes, sometimes under brutal conditions, in my home state of Florida, even today. All of this also bore also comparison to the cadre of landless, low wage laborers that the last two governments have sought to develop in Grenada and the observations by small farmers and even one anonymous extension agent: that instead of articulating a new class of poor (and mostly landless) laborers, the government should instead re-institute the maroons, “day-fe-day” and other practices to address the labor problem.

Bishop noted that a plum tree which had canes growing hard against it would now be exposed to the sun, just in time for its hard green fruit to ripen. Pigeon pea plants—big bushes—stood at the head rows and dotted the plot. Bats love them, Bishop told me, and they must be picked quickly when ready or be lost to the voracious flying mammals. Amaday and the other men shouted encouragement to one another, sometimes urging each other to get back to work: “Africa!” Amaday would cry out.

“Yes, bwoy!” came the reply.
“Cut the cane!” he ordered.

This was the maroon spirit I had read and been told about. When someone wandered out of sight Amaday said, “We won the war but we lost a soldier!” crack that—somehow—morphed into innuendo about the collapse of male sexual prowess as the rum and babadie root wore off. At one point it began to rain and several farmers shouted, “I'm going to stand up to the rain!” facetious reference to an encounter that Amaday once had with a local tough that he recounted (not for the first time, I suspected) to general delight. Seconds later everyone was under the coconut palm, sheltering under banana leaves (“farmer umbrellas”).

The rum fueled the work. And there was obvious irony in the fact that the alcohol that had likely left some of their fathers ill-humored or worse was in part the goal of the work. But not for the first time, I found myself marveling at how Grenada's Afro-peasantry had managed to take what was in many ways the ugliest feature of plantation slavery and redeem it in such a way.

“Three months, three months!” Amaday marveled. “From April to June—we used to do this every day!” Sometimes they rested part of the day on Sunday, working just long enough to initiate cutting on a new cane stand, the others told me. It was serious hard work and the Marian farmers were proud of their connection to it.

After cutting was finished, a feast of saltfish souse (salt cod with tomato, red pepper, and onion in olive oil, elsewhere called buljol), provision, and coconut bakes was washed down with homemade cherry juice provided by Bishop and his family. (One man groused that the food had not been ready as soon as we finished, seeing this as a violation of traditional protocol.) The men talked about famous cane cutters—Macsween's father had once been Grenada's Farmer of the Year—including those who
had gone on, their prowess with the cutlass and their luck with cane. “I man me children offa cane,” Amaday told us, emphasizing that he had been able to meet his fatherly duties because of cane farming. He recounted how the sugar factory had several times issued him short-term loans on the promise of his cane crop, how he had been able to visit New York City because of this. “I grow up offa cane,” Spree chimed in; his father had also been a cane farmer. It was also a time for people to share what was on their minds—one man recounted the intimate details of his mother's passing while everyone listened in sympathy. A thin, elderly man came down the road and Amaday ran to meet him, kissing him affectionately on each cheek.

1 Root used in some parts of the Caribbean to enhance general vigor and sexual prowess.
2 Other popular models, according to the farmers, include the “Alligator” and “Four Ribber.”
3 In Jamaica, an amaranth strain is given this name.
4 After 1800 women increasingly came to predominate in field work in sugarcane, according to Grenada historian Nicole Phillip. Women “were expected to work just as hard as men and were punished just as severely,” she writes. “Slave women in the first and second gangs did land clearing, planting, hoeing, weeding, cutting of canes, and carrying canes to the mills. At crop time, October to March, slaves worked from sunrise to sunset. They also did extended night work. Enough cane had to be cut before sunset to keep the mills running through the night” (2002).
5 According to this article at LVC member Coalition of Immokalee Workers website, Florida pickers were physically punished as recently as 1996 for trying to obtain water and are still sometimes subject to violence in the workplace: http://ciw-online.org/not_1996_anymore.html, accessed December 11, 2012.
6 As Amaday told it he knocked the belligerent to the ground, then began to run. A friend shouted to him to stand his ground as he had his wedger (weapon) with him, then streaked past Amaday, fleeing too. In the manner of traditional tall tales, Amaday said he did not catch up to him until the next day, implying both had run all night.
7 Brierley is dismissive of this practice, saying that the cost of food “is often as much as if [the host] paid workers” (1974: 182). But even if one assigned strict cost values to the labor and food (only part of which is purchased), this overlooks that most of the food eaten is not seen in cash terms by those partaking. It also omits the other benefits: development of community solidarity (opposite of the class relations that inhere when one man hires another and a zero net transaction if the cutter simply hires the host for the same task a short time later), involvement of wider family in the process, and the way that it keeps the “cold cash nexus” at bay. It is an institution of community subsistence.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Matthew Kopka attended the University of Michigan, where he majored in Spanish and English. In 2001, after a decade in the publishing industry that included service as a Senior Editor for several companies and adventures in freelance writing, music, and audiobook production, he returned to school to devote himself to public and international issues. He obtained a Master of Arts degree from Vermont's School for International Training in 2003, writing his thesis about the connections between slavery and the land question in Jamaica. After a stint as contributing writer for The Gleaner newspaper in Kingston, Jamaica, he entered the University of Florida’s doctoral program in interdisciplinary ecology, where he began work on this dissertation.