



chapter seven

Human Resources





Human

Resources



Employment in Agriculture and in the Sugar Industry

Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that employment in the agricultural sector, comprising both large and small establishments, stood at 47,300 workers in 2007, corresponding to a slight 1.2 per cent decrease from 2006. The agricultural sector represented 9 per cent of total employment, down from 9.3 per cent and employment in large establishments within the sector represented 45.8 per cent.

In 2007, employment in large establishments of the sugar industry, including sugar cane cultivation and sugar milling, totalled 15,993 workers, of which 87.5 per cent for sugar cane cultivation. With an estimated 4,000 workers employed in small sugar cane plantations, total employment in the sugar industry worked out to about 20,000 workers in 2007.

As shown in Table 19, employment in large establishments cultivating sugar cane increased slightly in 2007, whereas there was a marginal decrease for those engaged in sugar milling. Estimates for 2008 show that employment in these sub sectors of the sugar industry would decrease by 15 and 18 per cent respectively, owing to some 7,000 departures under the VRS II and ERS schemes, and the Blueprint. Since the introduction of the VRS I in 2001, about 8,000 workers have opted for the scheme.

Concerning other agricultural sectors, the number of workers in large establishments of the non sugar sector decreased marginally by 2 per cent compared to the previous years. The fishing sector registered the highest fall in employment (6.6 per cent), whereas there was a 7.9 per cent increase for the tobacco sector.

Table 19: Employment in Agriculture (Large Establishments), 2004 - 2008

| | March | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008* |
| Sugar cane | 14,822 | 13,803 | 13,797 | 13,996 | 11,885 |
| Sugar milling | 2,282 | 2,234 | 2,008 | 1,997 | 1,636 |
| Tea | 330 | 333 | 286 | 283 | n/a |
| Tobacco | 183 | 165 | 140 | 151 | n/a |
| Fishing | 985 | 974 | 963 | 899 | n/a |
| Flowers | 455 | 451 | 367 | 347 | n/a |

*Provisional

(Source: Central Statistics Office)

Tripartite Wage Negotiations

Wage and Salary Increase

At the third round of negotiations between representatives of Government, employers and trade unions on 21 May 2008, the National Pay Council (NPC) recommended a rate of increase of 8.1 per cent for those earning up to Rs 3,500 per month or Rs 283, whichever was the higher, and a maximum of Rs 400 for those whose monthly income was above Rs 8,000. This rate of salary increase was based on the inflation rate, which has been estimated at 8.7 per cent for the financial year ending June 2008, down from 10.7 per cent last year, the employment and unemployment rate, national productivity and competitiveness and national capacity to pay.

Whilst trade unions, whose proposed formula for determining the wage compensation was solely based on the rise in consumer and food prices, were not satisfied with this recommendation, representatives of employers were favourable to it. Government finally agreed to the recommendations of the NPC and strongly urged performing sectors, which have the ability, to pay a rate of compensation which is higher than what had been decided by the Council.

It was estimated that this wage increase would necessitate a total outlay of Rs 4 billion, of which 65 per cent (i.e. Rs 2.6 billion) would be borne by the private sector. For the corporate sector of the sugar industry, the average rate of increase was 5 per cent and represented an additional wage bill of around Rs 30 million for a full year.

Industrial Relations between MSPA and Trade Unions

Following the award delivered by the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal in favour of the introduction of the 40-hour week on a six-day basis during crop season, which Government ratified on 6 July 2007, the MSPA engaged in consultations with trade unions to discuss the modalities relative to the implementation of the 40-hour week, namely with regard to a review of the wage rates for cutting and loading of canes during crop season. On 27 June 2008, Government finally agreed to an increase of 11.5 per cent in these rates with effect from 30 June 2008.

Such an increase is meant to restore the disparity prevailing between the wages of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers of the sugar industry. Hence, as from the 2008 crop, workers employed for cutting and loading canes received a wage increase of 16.5 per cent (including the wage and salary increase of 5 per cent).

According to the MSPA, these increases would represent a total disbursement of Rs 85 million for the corporate sector of the sugar industry (including Rs 55 million for the 11.5 per cent increase).

Government also agreed to the extension of the 40-hour week over six days during crop season to cane planters who are not members of the MSPA, thereby implementing the measure to the whole sugar industry.

Regional Training Centre

(Formerly: The Robert Antoine Sugar Industry Training Centre)

The year 2007 was very challenging as the anticipated reform in the sugar industry was delayed, coupled with a negative growth rate for the sector. These had a direct bearing on training plans and budgets for both employees and eventual VRS II beneficiaries. However, once the MSPA-Government of Mauritius deal was concluded on 5 December 2007, enrolment on training courses was precipitated in order to attain the number of participants required to meet the EU's performance indicator of 1,500 employees enrolled and attending training and re-skilling programmes by the deadline (which was subsequently extended) of 31 December 2007.

At international level, the climate was similarly non-conducive to investment in training activities as all the ACP sugar-producing countries were busy with their own reforms and political turmoil was rampant in several African countries.

Training Statistics

There was a dramatic fall of 47 per cent in the total number of participants trained in 2007 compared to 2006. There was a regression both in the number of local and international participants, with a greater decrease (49 per cent) in local participants. This resulted in a considerable reduction in the number of man-hours of training both for local and international courses.

| Year | 2006 | | 2007 | |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | No. of Participants | Man-Hours | No. of Participants | Man-Hours |
| International | 42 | 10,980 | 41 | 4,901 |
| Local | 1,320 | 49,389 | 678 | 12,957 |
| Total | 1,362 | 40,369 | 719 | 17,858 |

Training for Supervisors, Artisans and Workers

Half of the training activities for the year ending 31 December 2007 were devoted to supervisors, artisans and workers.

Two new programmes were designed and developed for Médine sugar factory in order to improve sugar processing, namely: Basic sugar factory principles and Basic sugar factory practices. Over 100 artisans followed the programme which was run in-house by Mr Arthur Mariette. Several modules on *Hydraulique* and *Variation de vitesse des moteurs à courant alternatif* for factory artisans were run at the *Institut Supérieur Polytechnique*. The course Elementary Sugar Technology attracted 13 participants from Société Usinière du Sud and Médine S.E.

Drivers, mechanics and overseers from Médine and Union sugar estates followed a course entitled *Mieux réussir la récolte mécanique* whilst 29 garage workers from Médine attended a basic course for maintenance of Bell loaders. Another basic maintenance course for pneumatic tractor and Bell loader operators was followed by employees of Mount and Médine sugar estates. Beau Vallon garage employees were trained in Effective Communication for the Sugar Industry. There were 73 supervisors and workers from various growing companies who followed the IT courses (*L'informatique pour tous*) run in the National Computer Board *Infobus*.

Training Activities for Management and Staff

Several short courses on various aspects of sugar cane agronomy were followed by management and staff. A total of 57 field staff followed courses on: *Nouvelle approche à la préparation du sol*, Herbicide Application Technology, Irrigation and Water Management, *Aménagement et épierreage fin*.

The Regional Training Centre is diversifying its activities in order to attract clients from other sectors of the economy and most of the management courses had a mix of participants which reflected this strategy. Various management seminars and workshops were run in 2007 including: Effective negotiations, Negotiation and collective bargaining, Finance for non-finance managers, and *L'affirmation de soi, comment sortir des conflits*. A business lunch on leadership, organised in collaboration with the Association of Training Professionals and run by Mr. Mohamed Vayid, attracted 24 participants from a wide range of enterprises.

International Training

There were 10 international and 3 local participants who followed the francophone versions of the International Certificate Courses which were held between May and July 2007.

Course

Agronomie de la Canne (5)

Fabrication du Sucre de Canne (7)

Contrôle Chimique des Sucrieries (1)

Nationalities

Côte d'Ivoire (3), Mauritius (2)

Central Africa (1), Côte d'Ivoire (5), Mauritius (1)

Côte d'Ivoire (1)

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The Anglophone International Certificate Courses in Sugar Cane Agronomy, Cane Sugar Manufacture and Chemical Control of sugar factories were held from September to November 2007 and attracted 6 overseas participants and 8 local participants.

| Course | Nationalities |
|----------------------------|---|
| Sugar Cane Agronomy (9) | Ethiopia (2), Kenya (1), Mauritius (6) |
| Cane Sugar Manufacture (5) | Ethiopia (2), Mauritius (2), Mozambique (1) |

Several study tours were organised for international clients from Ethiopia, Kenya and Réunion Island. Two employees of Wonji-Shoa, Ethiopia, studied mechanisation and irrigation of sugar cane in July-August 2007 and Mr Charles Kipkering Ng'etich, Senior Manager, Mumias Sugar Company, Kenya came to Mauritius to study Productivity Improvement for Small-scale Sugar Cane Growers. In May 2007 a group from *Sucrierie de Bois Rouge, Réunion* came to visit Médine S.E., Société Usinière du Sud (SUDS), Deep River Beau Champ S.E., Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) and Alcodis Ltd.

VRS II/ERS Training Project

Over 6,500 employees of the sugar sector retired under the VRS II and ERS schemes in 2007, of which about 4,200 showed an interest in enrolling in the 27 different training courses identified according to the priority needs expressed. Around 2,000 VRS II/ERS beneficiaries have followed courses which aimed at facilitating the transition to other sectors of the economy such as: Introduction to Gardening, Basic Vegetable Production, Food Production Techniques, Domestic Pipe-work Installation, Basic Arc Welding, Housekeeping Operations, etc.

Future Projects

The downward trend in the number of participants and man-hours of training observed in 2007 has completely reversed in the first half of 2008 due to the VRS II training project. Despite this upturn, further efforts are being deployed to diversify the client base and extend the range of courses offered; it is expected that courses will be run in eco-tourism, and landscaping in the near future. Study tours for participants from the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso are being organised and opportunities for training in-company abroad are being explored.

Staff Matters

Dr Linda Mamet, Director was made a Fellow of the Mauritius Academy of Science and Technology. Ms Shamnaaz Sufraj resigned from the post of Training and Development Coordinator in September 2007 in order to follow Doctoral studies at the University of Trento in Italy. Mrs Roshan-Ara Nuthoo was recruited as Training and Development Coordinator in January 2008.

chapter eight

General