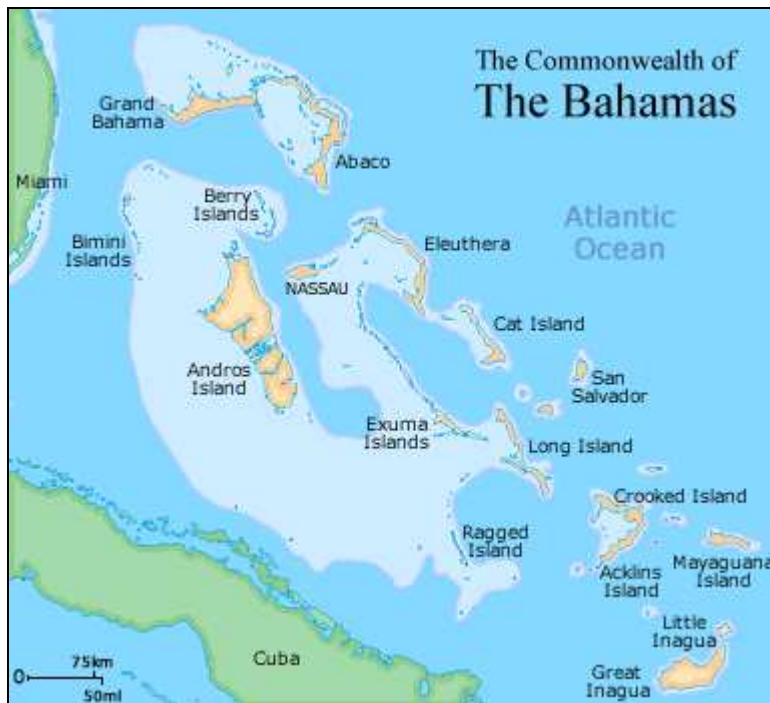


OUR RURAL BAHAMAS

The Bahamas is an archipelagic nation made up of over 700 islands and more than 2,000 cays and rocks. There are about twenty inhabited islands, of which New Providence and Grand Bahama are the most developed with Abaco following close behind. These three islands are also the most populated. We focus on these more developed areas of the Bahamas, however the majority of the islands are still considered “undeveloped”. The remaining islands are commonly referred to as Family Islands or Out Islands. These islands depend economically on domestic tourism, public sector employment, agriculture, fishing and craft. The 1994 agricultural census reported that there were eleven major agricultural islands.



The Bahamas is viewed as an industry leader in tourism and offshore financial services, but we are still in need of rural community development. The archipelagic nature of the Bahamas most persons concentrate on the more developed areas but majority of the Bahamas is still considered “underdeveloped”. There are 16 major inhabited islands. The archipelagic nature of the Bahamas has been described in many articles and stories. However, there is still an issue of city versus rural when it comes to describing our islands. Each island has a little of both and the further south – the more rural the islands appear to be.

Population of the Bahamas 1980 – 2000

<u>Island</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
New Providence	135,437	172,196	210,832
Grand Bahama	33,102	40,898	46,994
Eleuthera/Harbour Island/Spanish Wells	10,631	10,584	11,165
Andros	8,307	8,177	7,686
Abaco	7,271	10,003	13,170
Long Island	3,404	2,949	2,992
Exumas	3,670	3,556	3,571
Cat Island	2,215	1,698	1,647
Bimini	1,411	1,639	1,717
Inagua	924	985	969
Rum Cay & San Salvador	825	518	1,050
Acklins	618	405	428
Crooked Island & Long Cay	553	412	350
Berry Islands	509	628	709
Mayaguana	464	312	259
Ragged Island	164	89	72
Total	209,505	255,049	303,611

The projected estimate for 2008 is 338,300.

Source: Bahamas Handbook 2009, Page 447 (An Etienne Dupuch Jr Publication).

What is subsistence farming?

Subsistence agriculture is most commonly called “pothole farming” in the Bahamas. Indigenous subsistence farming developed because of the nature of limestone rock/soil. It is a farming method that dates back to the Arawaks. Farmers grow what they eat and sell the surplus. Source: Agriculture in the Bahamas, W. Godfrey Eneas (1998)

What is backyard farming?

It is similar to subsistence farming but on a smaller scale. It describes the “kitchen garden” that grows fruits, vegetables and/or herbs for household use.

How is this different from commercial farming?

Commercial farms: farms which produce crops and livestock primarily for sale. Source: Glossary 2009, NAL, USDA (<http://www.nal.usda.gov>)

A Farmer's Story on Cat Island:

Mr. Denburgh Turner (*Berakah Farms*) of Orange Creek, Cat Island - Mr. Turner is a member of the North Cat Island Co-operative. They have more than thirty members and their focus is the Mail boat and their school bus – the two items they have funded as community projects.

How long have you been farming?

“All my life. I learned from my Father and Grandparents, but mainly my Mom.”

What is being grown on your farm?

“In Winter - Sweet potato, Corn, Pumpkin
All year - Watermelon
In Summer – Tomato”

Any non-traditional crops being grown at the farm?

“Not yet, but I have an interest in Romaine lettuce, celery and herbs for the hotel market.”

Who do you sell to?

“Sammy T's (hotel), Orange Creek Food store, and Hot Spot (restaurant).”

Do you have any local customers?

“Yes, an average of 15-20 persons who buy and order produce.”

Marketing?

“This is done mostly by word-of-mouth and persons who drive by. The set-up and layout of the farm attracts customers. I have irrigation and black groundcover for weed control.”

What is your most expensive input?

“The Black ground cover and labour.”

What has been your best farm success?

"I have been able to invest in a tractor and the implements for it as well."

What is rural life to you?

"Heaven! It is tranquil, slow paced; relaxing, no traffic and you can get more things done. There are less distractions (no movies, no mall, and no traffic lights). In Cat Island there are only cottage style hotels, 2 high schools, 5 primary schools and 2 preschools."

What are you present training needs?

"I would like more information on greenhouses, hydroponics and crop management."

What is the land type in Cat Island?

"Cat island is a Coppice island and much of the soil is a sandy limestone."

How many acres do you farm?

"Approximately 15 acres."

What type or style of farming do you practice?

"On a quarter of the farm I practice pot-hole farming and the rest of the farm is mechanized."

Is there any community agriculture and what would you like to see develop?

"Right now there are no community events, there used to be a cultural festival 3-4 years ago. I would like to see a farmer's market and school gardens. I would also like to venture more into Agro-tourism."

Cat Island

