



Australian Population Association

12th Biennial Conference

population and society: issues, research, policy

15-17 September 2004 - Canberra, Australia

A taste of bitter sweet sugar

Suniti Bandaranaike (suniti.bandaranaike@jcu.edu.au)
James Cook University

Abstract

Sugar is the mainstay of the economy of a number of coastal towns in Queensland. This paper examines the dynamics of sustaining cane-farming communities under the threat of shifting patterns of global trade flows, collapsing world sugar prices and weather extremities. Does the answer lie in deregulation, financial assistance packages, diversification or annihilation of the industry? Intensive interviews, questionnaire surveys and focus group meetings were conducted in the Burdekin and the Hinchinbrook Shires, two of the largest cane growing areas in Queensland, between March and June 2004 to assess the needs, goals, plans for action, attitudes and opinions of cane farmers and other business persons associated with the industry. Options regarding the sustainable futures of the industry are discussed in the context of economic rationalism and social optimisation goals.

Paper prepared for the 12th Biennial Conference of the Australian Population Association, 15-17 September 2004, Canberra.

