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ENGEL'S LAW: THE CASE OF CAMEROON, WEST AFRICA

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FOREWORD

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T. T. Williams
Director

Engel's Law: The Case of Cameroon, West Africa

by

Anthony S. Pabum
May, 1976

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to determine whether Engel's Law holds true for Cameroon for the period 1964-1974. Therefore, the hypothesis is that as per capita national income increases, more of this increase is spent on the consumption of non-food items than on foodstuffs. Restated, the hypothesis states that as per capita national income increases, the income elasticity of demand for non-food items is greater than the income elasticity of demand for foodstuffs.

Specifically the paper is going to limit itself to foods and manufactured goods. Six commodities are to be considered, three food items and three manufactured items. The paper is also limiting itself to imports of these items for two main reasons: The first is that data on domestic production of foodstuffs and manufactures are hard to obtain. The second is that domestic production of both foodstuffs and manufactures is still very low and was much lower during the period under consideration.

ASSUMPTION

As a result of the above, the assumption of this paper is to let imports of these items equal domestic consumption or expenditure on them for the period under consideration. In other words, let domestic production of the selected foodstuffs and the selected manufacturers during the period 1964-1974 equal zero.

Professor Keith Campbell of Sydney University, Australia, suggests that Engel's Law can be observed from the domestic, regional and international level. On the international level, he says that the law can be observed by comparing per capita income with consumption on food and non-food items (he calls non-food items "luxuries").¹ This paper takes this approach.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE CAMEROON ECONOMY

The economy is heavily dependent on foreign trade. Most production activities come from the export sector: the iron ore and diamond mines, the rubber, coffee, bananas, tea, cocoa and oil palm plantations and the lumber industries.² Mining and agriculture account for the greatest percentage of the gross domestic product. These concessions account for 48% of GDP, 90% of exports, 45% of national employment and 27% of government revenues while manufacturing accounts for only 4.3% of GDP.³

The demand for goods is almost totally synonymous with the demand for imports. This is especially true of manufactured goods and machinery and equipment. In other words, given that domestic supply equals domestic production plus imports, the ratio of domestic production to imports weighs heavily in favour of imports. This is also true for foodstuffs, even though to a lesser degree. However, for the period under consideration, this was much truer than it is now.

Table I calculates imports as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (y) and shows that between 1964 and 1974, Cameroon spent an average of about 37.5% of her GDP on imports yearly. This shows that imports are an important source of supply in Cameroon.

COMMODITIES SELECTED

- I. Foodstuffs - meat and meat preparations, rice, and fruits and vegetables.
- II. Manufactures - motor-cars, clothing, and footwear.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The selection of the six commodities are not based on a random sample. They have been selected on the basis of having the highest quantum and value import figures for the period under consideration. Secondly, they are all final products, i.e. they are not entering the production process in the sense of being intermediate capital goods used in the production of other goods. This is important because it eliminates any influence that the import of capital goods may have on the co-efficient of income elasticity of demand, especially on certain types of manufactures like non-ferrous metals which for some reasons, are listed as manufactures instead of being linked to machinery and equipment.

PROCEDURE

The paper is first going to consider a general case in which all imports are considered. Here, no income elasticity is considered. The paper will simply calculate the rate of growth of the demand for foodstuffs and that for manufactures over the period under consideration and show in percentage terms that the expenditure on manufactures has been rising faster than that on foodstuffs. Implicit in this, of course, is the fact of a growing yearly per capita GDP even though per capita GDP is not used as a denominator.

Secondly, the paper will then calculate per capita income elasticities for the entire period and compare their co-efficients. It will then show that the average income elasticity co-efficients for manufactures is higher than the average for foodstuffs.

TABLE I

IMPORTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP 1964-1974

	YEAR I	YEAR II	YEAR III	YEAR IV	YEAR V	YEAR VI	YEAR VII	YEAR VIII	YEAR IX	YEAR X	YEAR XI
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
IMPORTS AS % OF GDP	39.81	35.25	35.84	37.96	30.84	28.92	35.86	36.24	36.93	37.14	57.68
MANUFACTURES AS % OF GDP	13.47	10.98	11.94	15.08	9.98	10.93	12.08	11.30	12.15	11.06	11.60
FOOD AS % OF GDP	5.56	5.12	5.63	5.11	5.19	3.66	5.10	5.44	5.27	5.80	7.69
⁴ IMPORTS - IN THOUSANDS OF US \$	111.2	104.8	113.7	125.2	108.5	114.7	149.7	162.4	178.7	193.5	288.40
⁵ GDP - IN MILLION OF US \$	279.3	297.3	317.2	329.8	351.8	396.6	417.5	448.1	483.9	521.0	500.00

Source: External Trade of Cameroon: Imports 1974 (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Yaounde, Cameroon, June, 1975) pp 1-2

Source: 1964-1968: U.N. Statistical Yearbook, 1970, 22nd Edition, (Statistical Office, Dept. of Econ. and Social Affairs, New York, 1971) p. 557

1969-1972: *Ibid*, 1973, (New York, 1974), p. 555

1973: African Development: Cameroon Economic Survey (July, 1975) p. 10

1974: U.S. Dept. of Commerce: Foreign Economic Trends and their Implications for the United States (Bureau of International Commerce, May, 1975) p. 2

Let \bar{X}_m = average % figure for manufactures from Year I to Year XI and \bar{X}_f = average % figure for foodstuffs from Year I to Year XI.

$$\bar{X}_m = \frac{1}{11} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{11} X_{im} \right) \text{ where } X_i = \text{the years}$$

$$= \frac{1}{11} (13.47 + 10.98 + 11.94 + 15.08 + 9.98 + 10.93 + 12.08 + 11.30 + 12.15 + 11.06 + 11.60) \% = \frac{1}{11} (130.57) \% = 11.87\%$$

$$\bar{X}_f = \frac{1}{11} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{11} X_{if} \right), \text{ where } X_i = \text{the years}$$

$$= \frac{1}{11} (5.56 + 5.12 + 5.63 + 5.11 + 5.19 + 3.66 + 5.10 + 5.44 + 5.27 + 5.80 + 7.69) \% =$$

$$= \frac{1}{11} (59.57) \% = 5.42\%$$

$$\text{Imports as a \% of GDP} = \frac{\bar{X}}{y} \times \frac{100}{1} \%$$

where \bar{X} = imports and y = GDP

$$\text{Let } \bar{X}_{im} = \text{average of all imports from Year I to Year XI} = \frac{1}{11} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{11} X_{im} \right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{11} (39.81 + 35.25 + 35.84 + 37.96 + 30.84 + 28.92 + 35.86 + 36.24 + 36.98 + 37.14 + 57.68) \%$$

$$= \frac{1}{11} (412.47) = 37.49\% = 37.50\%$$

TABLE II
IMPORTS OF FOODSTUFFS AND MANUFACTURES 1964-1974
(in thousands of US \$)

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
FOOD	15,517	15,191	17,846	16,861	18,264	14,511	21,289	24,375	25,487	30,233	38,432
MANUFACTURES	37,645	32,647	37,868	49,722	35,129	43,329	50,429	50,646	58,817	57,618	58,011

Source: 1964 Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, (U.N. New York, 1966) p. 474

1965-68: Ibid, 1968, pp. 497-498

1969-72: Ibid, 1972-73, pp. 496-497

1973-74: External Trade of Cameroon, Imports, 1974. (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Yaounde, Cameroon June, 1975) pp. 5-7

TABLE III

% RATE OF GROWTH IMPORT OF MANUFACTURES AND FOOD IMPORT, 1964-1974 COMPARED

	Yr. 2-Yr. 1	Yr. 3-Yr. 2	Yr. 4-Yr. 3	Yr. 5-Yr. 4	Yr. 6-Yr. 5	Yr. 7-Yr. 6	Yr. 8-Yr. 7	Yr. 9-Yr. 8	Yr. 10-Yr. 9	Yr. 11-Yr. 10
	1965-1964	1966-1965	1967-1966	1968-1967	1969-1968	1970-1969	1971-1970	1972-1971	1973-1972	1974-1973
MANUFACTURES	13.47-10.98 = -2.49	11.94-10.08 = 0.96	15.08-11.94 = 3.14	15.08-9.98 = 5.10	10.93-9.98 = 0.95	12.08-10.93 = 1.15	11.30-12.08 = -0.78	12.15-11.30 = 0.85	11.06-12.15 = -1.09	11.60-11.06 = 0.54
FOOD	5.12-5.56 = -0.44	5.63-5.12 = 0.51	5.11-5.12 = -0.01	5.19-5.11 = 0.08	3.66-5.19 = -1.53	5.10-3.66 = 1.44	5.44-5.10 = 0.34	5.27-5.44 = -0.17	5.80-5.27 = 0.53	7.69-5.80 = 1.89

$$\bar{X}_m = \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^n X_{im} \right) = 1/10 (-2.49 + 0.96 + 3.14 + 5.10 + 0.95 + 1.15 + (-0.78) + 0.85 + (-1.09) + 0.54) \%$$

$$= 1/10 (8.33) \% = .83\%$$

$$\bar{X}_f = \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^n X_{if} \right) = 1/10 (-0.44 + 0.51 + (0.01) + 0.08 + (-1.53) + 1.44 + 0.34 + (-0.17) + 0.53 + 1.89) \%$$

$$= 1/10 (2.64) \% = .26\%$$

THE RATE OF GROWTH OF IMPORTS OF MANUFACTURES
AND FOODSTUFFS COMPARED

The purpose of this calculation is to show that between 1964 and 1974, the rate of growth of import of all manufactures was faster than the rate of growth of food import. This calculation is derived from Table I and is shown on Table III.

From the calculations on Table III, it is clear that while the yearly rate of growth of imports of manufactures from 1964-1974 was about .8%, the average rate for foodstuffs was only .3% approximately. In other words, given our initial assumption of imports equalling domestic expenditure, Cameroonians were increasing their expenditure on the import of manufactures by an annual rate of .5% while increasing their expenditure on food by only .3% for the same period.

Another way to look at it is to calculate per capita import of food and per capita import of manufactures for the same period. These are shown on Table IV and V.

TABLE IV

Per Capital Import of Food, 1964-1974

,000's \$	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
Imports	15,517	15,191	17,846	16,861	18,264	14,511	21,289	24,375	25,487	30,233	33,432
Pop. in thousand	1.047	1.062	1.078	1.12	1.12	1.15	1.5	1.57	1.41	1.45	1.5
Per Capita (M)	14.82	14.30	16.56	15.05	15.88	9.67	14.19	16.16	18.07	20.85	25.62

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States (Bureau of International Commerce, 1969 and 1970), p. 2

TABLE V

Per Capita Import of Manufactures, 1964-1974

,000's \$	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
Imports (M)	37,645	32,647	37,868	49,722	35,129	43,349	50,429	50,646	58,817	57,618	58,011
Pop. in thousands	1.047	1.062	1.078	1.12	1.15	1.5	1.5	1.57	1.41	1.45	1.5
Per Capita \bar{M}	35.95	30.74	35.13	44.40	30.55	28.90	33.62	32.26	41.71	40.86	38.67

NOTE: The per capita imports are my personal calculations. Note that the figures for 1969 are low because of a stockpile of imports that were not delivered to Cameroon as a result of a dock strike in New York in 1969. The figures for 1971-1974 are high because of the inflationary situation in Cameroon's sources of imports, notably the United States. If adjustments were made for inflation, the figures would be less in both calculations. Real per capita imports in both cases were actually lower.⁸

Even though I have thus far shown that expenditure on manufactured goods has, on the average, surpassed expenditure on foodstuffs, I have not weighted the movements against per capita GDP movements over the same period. This is the main weakness of the above methods. To do this is to prove Engel's Law.

ENGEL'S LAW

Table VI, VII and VIII are going to prove Engel's Law. Table VI shows the quantum movement of the selected foodstuffs and manufactures over the period 1964-1974. Table VII shows the per capita GDP movements over the same period. Table VIII shows the various income elasticities.

TABLE VII¹⁰

Per capita Gross Domestic Product, 1964-1974 = Y

YR. 1	YR. 2	YR. 3	YR. 4	YR. 5	YR. 6	YR. 7	YR. 8	YR. 9	YR. 10	YR. 11
1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
192.0	201.0	210.0	217.0	225.0	264.0	277.0	285.0	298.7	312.1	333.0

TABLE VI

SELECTED QUANTUM IMPORTS OF FOODSTUFFS AND MANUFACTURES, 1964-1974 IN THOUSAND TONS

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	YEAR 11
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
A. FOODSTUFFS											
1. Meat and meat preparation	-	1,619	1,735	1,555	1,581	1,342	1,395	2,063	1,999	1,964	2,193
2. Cereals and cereal preparation-rice	-	6,326	7,536	6,564	8,681	5,201	9,771	9,970	7,777	12,317	15,828
3. Fruits and vegetables	-	1,219	1,429	1,417	1,222	1,142	1,400	1,769	2,784	2,037	2,483
B. MANUFACTURES											
1. Motor-cars	-	11,493	9,692	9,490	8,342	118,486	13,491	16,629	17,414	18,626	25,082
2. Clothing	-	2,868	3,440	3,266	3,478	6,798	3,890	4,755	6,260	5,537	6,406
3. Footwear	-	1,439	991	1,033	856	1,208	1,000	1,494	1,507	1,626	2,640

Source: 1965-1966: Yearbook of International Trade Statistic 1968 (U.N. New York) pp. 497-498

TABLE VIII

INCOME ELASTICITIES OF DEMAND FOR FOOD AND MANUFACTURES, 1964-1974 (eY)

	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	
	$\frac{\Delta Q/Q}{\Delta Y/Y}$	\bar{e}_Y									
A. eY _{f1}	-	1.60	-3.11	0.45	-0.87	0.80	1.60	-0.67	-0.39	1.74	0.13
eY _{f2}	-	4.27	-3.87	-8.74	-2.31	17.84	0.37	-4.72	-13.01	4.25	1.28
eY _{f3}	-	3.85	-0.25	-3.73	-0.38	4.59	8.69	12.31	-5.98	3.27	2.48
B. eY _{m1}	-	-3.50	0.63	-3.28	2.18	3.55	7.67	1.01	1.55	5.18	1.66
eY _{m2}	-	4.45	-1.52	1.76	5.51	-8.69	7.33	6.79	-2.57	6.58	2.18
eY _{m3}	-	-6.95	1.27	-4.65	2.37	-3.50	16.29	0.19	1.76	9.31	1.79
	Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5	Col. 6	Col. 7	Col. 8	Col. 9	Col. 10	

Let $eY = \text{income elasticity} = \frac{\Delta Q/Q}{\Delta Y/Y}$

$eYf_1 = \text{income elasticity of demand for meat and meat preparations}$

$\bar{X}eYf_1 = \text{average of } eYf_1 \text{ from 1964-1974} = \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} eYf_1 \right)$

$$\frac{1}{n} (eYf_{1_1} + eYf_{1_2} + \dots + eYf_{1_9}) \text{ ----- (1)}$$

$eYf_2 = \text{income elasticity of demand for rice}$

$\bar{X}eYf_2 = \text{average of } eYf_2, 1964-1974$

$$= \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} eYf_2 \right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{n} (eYf_{2_1} + eYf_{2_2} + \dots + eYf_{2_9}) \text{ ----- (2)}$$

$eYf_3 = \text{income elasticity of demand for fruits and vegetables}$

$\bar{X}eYf_3 = \text{average of } eYf_3, 1964-1974$

$$= \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} eYf_3 \right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{n} (eYf_{3_1} + eYf_{3_2} + \dots + eYf_{3_9}) \text{ ----- (3)}$$

$eYm_1 = \text{income elasticity of demand for motor cars}$

$\bar{X}eYm_1 = \text{average of } eYm_1, 1964-1974 = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} (eYm_1)$

$$= \frac{1}{n} (eYm_{1_1} + eYm_{1_2} + \dots + eYm_{1_9}) \text{ ----- (4)}$$

$eYm_2 = \text{income elasticity of demand for clothing}$

$\bar{X}eYm_2 = \text{average of } eYm_2, 1964-1974 = \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} eYm_2 \right)$

$$= \frac{1}{n} (eYm_{2_1} + eYm_{2_2} + \dots + eYm_{2_9}) \text{ ----- (5)}$$

$eYm_3 = \text{income elasticity of demand for footwear}$

$\bar{X}eYm_3 = \text{average of } eYm_3, 1964-1974 = \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} eYm_3 \right)$

$$= \frac{1}{n} (eYm_{3_1} + eYm_{3_2} + \dots + eYm_{3_9}) \text{ ----- (6)}$$

$U_{\bar{X}eYf} = \text{mean of (1), (2) and (3)}$

$$= \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-3} eYf \right) = \frac{1}{n} (XeYf_1 + XeYf_2 + XeYf_3) \text{ ----- (7)}$$

$U_{\bar{X}eYm} = \text{mean of (4), (5), and (6)}$

$$= \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n-3} eYm \right) = \frac{1}{n} (XeYm_1 + XeYm_2 + XeYm_3) \text{ ----- (8)}$$

From Table VIII

$$\bar{X}_{eYf_1} = 0.13$$

$$\bar{X}_{eYf_2} = 1.28$$

$$\bar{X}_{eYf_3} = 2.48$$

$$\bar{X}_{eYm_1} = 1.66$$

$$\bar{X}_{eYm_2} = 2.18$$

$$\bar{X}_{eYm_3} = 1.79$$

$$U_{\bar{X}_{eYf}} = 1/3 (0.13 + 1.28 + 2.48) = 1/3 (3.89) = 1.29 \text{ ----- (7)}$$

$$= 1/3 (1.66 + 2.18 + 1.79) = 1/3 (5.63) = 1.88 \text{ ----- (8)}$$

Since (8) > (7), Engel's Law has been proved to hold true for Cameroon.

Notice the erratic nature of the elasticity co-efficients. Part of the reason for this is the reason given on page 8 about the dock strike in New York in 1969. Part of it is due to the fact that records are badly kept in Cameroon. Record-keeping in Cameroon is characterized by both over-stating and under-stating of figures, hence for any given period, it is difficult to reconcile figures relating to it. It all depends on the source of getting the figures.

So Engel's Law has been proved within the assumptions of this paper and the limitations imposed by the peculiarity of the Cameroon situation, i.e. the near absence of domestic production of manufactures and a very low level of domestic production. This is an important fact in so far as it has caused me to assume equality between total imports and total domestic expenditure. If this were not the case, total domestic consumption or expenditure would have been the sum of consumption on imports and on domestic production.

FOOTNOTES

1. Campbell, Keith O., Agricultural Marketing and Prices, (Cheshire Press, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Wellington, London, 1973), p. 14
2. African Development: Economic Survey of Cameroon, (July, 1975), p. 10
3. Ibid, p. 10
4. External Trade of Cameroon: Imports, 1974 (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Yaounde, Cameroon, June 1975), pp. 1-2
5. 1964-65: IM Statistical Year Book, 1970, 22nd Edition, (Statistical Office, Dept. of Econ. and Social Affairs, N.Y. 1971), p. 557
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