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NATIONAL CEREALS PROJECT12/11/76 MEETINGEVALUATION

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M. Brah Mahamane, Rural Development Secretary of State, presided over a debriefing with USAID's Evaluation Team concerning the National Cereals Project. It was held in the usual room of the Ministry of Plan. Present:

MM A. Baron, Regional Development Officer, AID
 J. Livingston, Project Manager, USAID
 J. Fisher, Coordinator of CID
 C.H. Raullerson, Coordinator of Texas Tech. Univ. Project
 J. Williams, USAID Team Leader, Extension Advisor
 W. Hall, Seeds specialist, USAID
 C. Harvey, Genetician, USAID
 C. Brown, Agricultural Engineer, USAID
 E. Foerster, Rural Engineer, USAID
 L. Siegel, USAID
 Moussa Abba, NCP Coordinator
 Amadou Garba, Director of UNCC
 Oumarou Moussa, INRAN
 Ousmane Bawa, Direction of Agriculture
 Abdou Arouna, Direction of Agriculture
 F. Foucher, " " "
 Y. Boulanger, BEPRO MDR
 Clisse Amadou, General Secretary of MDR

The Secretary of Rural Development opened the meeting and welcomed all the participants especially the members of USAID Evaluation Team. He excused himself and informed the participants that he would have to leave during the meeting. The General Secretary of MDR would replace him.

The Secretary of State, after having shown the importance of the project for Rural Development in Niger, pointed out the difficulty, perhaps even the impossibility of making a complete evaluation at the present stage, as the project was only in its beginnings and had to prove itself. However, a few questions could already be resolved which prevented the proper functioning of the project. The Secretary of State informed the audience of the importance he was giving to the Coordination Office to integrate the different aspects of the project and control all the operations: the coordinator must be empowered with an effective authority over the control of operations, and it is in this perspective that the MDR signed the order N° 28, dated 11/19/76 stipulating the different attributions of the Cereals Project Coordinator. This coordination does not exclude the possibility for INRAN to integrate the operations of the Cereals Project into its own activities. On the contrary, the services concerned by the project must try to integrate the activities of the Cereals Project. The different services should be linked by a close collaboration, so that, for example, the work carried out by INRAN may profit the Service of Agriculture and the UNCC.

NCP Coordinator: The Coordinator then summarized the main points discussed during the "working" meetings with INRAN, Service of Agriculture and the UNCC, and presented the main points of the Project's program that have been carried out up till now.

1) Construction: They started at the level of the delegations of the UNCC arrondissement, of the Seed Multiplication Centers, of N'Dounga's CFJA.

2) Training: Up to the present time, 40 aide-encadreurs have been trained by the UNCC, and 40 others will soon be selected in order to be trained. 150 aide-encadreurs were hired to work within the framework of agricultural extension.

3) Production: Within the framework of the Dosso Productivity Project, a millet operation was carried out in the areas where cowpeas had been produced in 1975. Thus, 3,384 hectares of millet were taken over and yields of between 500 to 600 kilos/ha were obtained. We must realize that these yields are excellent compared to those obtained by neighboring fields. However, they were handicapped by delays in the delivery of orders: the hoes did not arrive on time and only 30 tons of urea were made available for the campaign and the operation.

P3 Kolo Seeds production experiments were made at the Multiplication Centers:

<u>CENTRE</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Prod.(T)</u>	<u>Yields(Kg/ha)</u>
GUECHEME	20	5.86	293
MADAOUA	8	1.3	162.5
MAGARIA	20	13.0	650

Then the Coordinator went through the main difficulties the Project encountered during the first year:

- delays in the orders
- delays in the delivery of equipment, materials and inputs
- delays at the level of the Financial Service of the Ministry of Plan in the payment of salaries and payments for the purchase of equipment and supplies.

As concerns the objectives 77, the Coordinator noted that the outlines for the elaboration of the future plan of campaign have already been defined in the different services and thus the actions of the project may be directed to the objectives in view.

SEDR : He noted that this problem of supply concerning inputs, material and equipment limited the Project in some ways presently, and something has to be done for the inputs to be in place for the next campaign.

Mr Baron : He addressed his compliments to the Nigerien Government and especially to the MDR for the implementations carried out up to now, and raised the following question: As the main objective of this Project is to improve the production of cereals to feed the population, should the campaign 77 define precise objectives in terms of numbers of villages concerned by the project? Could the project possibly and realistically reach in 1980 ,4,000 out of the 10,000 nigerien villages? On the other hand, the AID Representant suggested that publicity about the Cereals Project Evaluation be given to the newspapers and to the radio.

SEDR: He expressed his agreement to fix precise objectives and sees no objection to the question of publicity.

Coordinator: He addressed the AID Representant and invited him to communicate to the members participating in the meeting the observations made by the Evaluation team. These observations could be useful for the preparation of the next plan of campaign and the local expenses budget for the next year.

Mr Baron: Before communicating the observations of the Evaluation Team, Mr Baron pointed out the fact that training of administrators and program officers within the

framework of the Cereals Project must be seriously taken into consideration. USAID specialists should be requested to come to Niger to organize training seminars on the spot.

Mr Siegel : He noted that USAID offered several training scholarships to the MDR for study in the USA or in other countries (ex: two months' training period for the production of seeds in Ibadan (Nigeria). But the MDR answered most of the time that they had no available candidates for training-periods offered.

Director UNOC : As concerns training scholarships within the framework of the Project, he stressed the fact that the totality of specialities was not taken into account. Especially, more attention should be given to the need for Cooperative administration specialists.

Mr Baron : He communicated the main observations of the Evaluation team, beginning with the general problems:

a) The main problem which could prevent the Cereals Project as a whole from succeeding is coordination between the different elements of the project. A special care should be given to the relations between the different services . These must be seen in terms of the Project objectives: to improve farmers' millet and sorghum production.

b) The key to success of this project is the transmission of information and techniques developed at the research level to the farmers. It is evident that a certain number of practices, capable of substantially improving the production, do exist, but we are not sure whether the Project had organized 'or not' a system of transmission which would respond to the needs of Niger.

c) As a priority item, the project aims to replace, progressively the foreign technical aid. Therefore, it is important that the calendar proposed for the training of Nigeriens must be closely followed. The homologues and trainees must be selected as soon as possible.

d) The Cereals Project especially needs management and planification personnel. This project represents a new approach in Niger, and its ultimate success will depend on the competency of the managers, aware of the needs of the agricultural development.

e) Another vital point is the selection of sites and construction of the research and multiplication centers.

MR Baron then presented the observations of the Evaluation team concerning research at INRAN.

a) The Cereals Project will improve the research capacity of INRAN. Meanwhile, the research sector of the Cereals Project must be continually looking for practical solutions to a specific problem: the development and organization of techniques destined to improve production. Research within the program of the Cereals Project seems to be the best way to develop a capacity for Nigeriens to rapidly identify and offer practical solutions to their own problems.

b) INRAN personnel should be more interested and involved in the other sectors of the project. For example, it should get involved in the training of personnel for demonstrations.

c) An additional research should be programmed to develop and determine the economical feasibility of animal traction and other simple technical innovations.

d) The organization of additional research substructures and the program for construction should be linked to the production potentiality .

e) The extension plans of the NCP research program should take into account the personnel available and especially in the beginning the CID team should stress the training of personnel.

f) In the preparation of recommendations for the totality of topics linked to practical techniques, one should bear in mind the economical feasibility and the degree of receptivity of the farmer.

g) The proper functioning of the project has not been delayed in any way by construction yet, but it will soon be the case: consequently, important decisions should be made now, and if necessary, additional financing should be foreseen or the plans modified in terms of available funds.

Mr Moussa Oumarou: As concerns buildings, he stressed the importance of starting the construction of the 3 research sub-stations at the same time. He added that INRAN's construction is in good process except for Tarna's which has not received USAID's agreement.

Mr. Siegel: He observed that the problem of construction constitutes the principal bottle neck of the project up to now. This is the reason why USAID had suggested appointing an expatriated civil Engineer at the Rural Engineering Department to help the existent team responsible for the Project construction. However, the Director of Rural Engineering has not agreed to this. On the other hand, it was suggested that Mr Foerster could supervise the constructions. But as he is assigned to INRAN he has too much work dealing with the questions of water economy in Maradi to be able to have any spare time for this problem.

General Secretary: He closed the discussion on this point and announced that a Canadian engineer (rural engineer) will join the Bureau of studies and will help to find a solution to this problem.

Coordinator : He suggested that INRAN should supply technical forms for the application of technical topics at the farming level. On the other hand, animal traction research must be aimed towards extension. As concerns the expansion plan of INRAN, he considered that INRAN must bear in mind its available personnel. INRAN proposed the construction of 3 sub-stations at Gállam, Tanout and Diffa, at the same time whereas he, himself, proposed at first the construction of one sub-station at Qualam and then consider the personnel available before starting the construction of the 2 other sub-stations.

Finally the Coordinator asked INRAN to nominate a correspondent for all questions linked to the Cereals Project.

Mr Baron : Communicated the observations of the Evaluation team concerning the Seed Multiplication Centers:

a) The problem of lack of workers will delay the progress of the Project; more attention should be given to training, to the selection of short-term consultants and to the other needs as soon as possible. For example, it is already obvious that an aid will be necessary to gather, render efficient and train teams for the cleaning of seeds and their processing.

b) The cleaning and processing equipment has not yet been ordered, short-term consultant-experts who will help to make a final decision and place the orders should be requested immediately.

c) The progress made by the project will depend, in its final stages, on a strong national seed policy, consequently attention should be given to its elaboration as soon as possible.

d) The progress of work carried out at the center of Lossa depends on the solutions found for a few technical problems, including the size and type of irrigation system; thus, we recommend placing special care to this problem.

Mr O. Bawa : Concerning seed processing, he proposed to define, as soon as possible the number of cadres to be trained to assure such an operation. He asked what will be the exact role of a short-term consultant. Finally, he underlined the fact that the equipment proposed by AID experts for seed processing is much too expensive and would affect the price of the seeds to the extent that it will then be too expensive for the farmers.

Coordinator : The Coordination Office has already asked AID experts to propose a list of equipment for seed processing, so as to be able to define the plan of the buildings and plan the training of personnel.

Mr Baron: He underlined the fact that USAID proposed a "basic" equipment in a first stage following nigerien suggestion. However the plans of the buildings will be drawn up so as to be able to integrate a more sophisticated equipment in the future. He reasserted that the most urgent and the most important point is to define a national seed policy.

Coordinator: We will study with the MDR the possibility of preparing plans concerning the national seed policy.

Mr Baron: Exposed the principal recommendations of the Evaluation team as concerns extension:

a) We believe that the key to success for the Cereals Project is based on the establishment of an efficient system of extension, in accordance with the needs and conditions of Niger. But up until now, there do not seem to be any adequate programs nor available personnel to develop such a system. A special attention should be given to the extension problem within the next 6 months.

b) We do not pretend to have an ideal extension system for Niger, but it appears that 1) the different services should be more coordinated 2) a detailed extension program should be prepared 3) The programs of all the different services might have to be brought together.

c) We know that the lack of qualified personnel constitutes a major restraint, thus a new and wider training program should be established and new extension techniques demanding less training should be tested. For example, young farmers of the CFJAs could be used as part-time encadreurs at the village level.

d) We highly recommend the extension advisor be used for all the aspects of extension of the Project and not be limited to only one service.

Mr O. Bawa: He pointed out that the extension program does not have its own personnel as there is no extension director. The agricultural agents must, as well, work with the Plant and Tree Protection Service, control the plant conditioning, deal with the fruit crops and the extension program. Some aide-encadreurs must be trained to do this work. On the other hand, there is no special extension program, but an agricultural campaign program which includes extension.

Director of UNOC: To alleviate this problem, stress should be put on the role of extension farmers. UNOC experimented with this within the framework of Dosso Productivity Project, where means and personnel were limited. The action of the extension farmers on the project blocks is spreading, and many farmers apply the technical topics on their own blocks of land.

Mr Baron: He indicated that the Evaluation team proposed that the MDR could have its own independant extension structure.

Coordinator: Concerning the lack of cadres, he stressed the suggestion of using ex-CFJAs as aide-encadreurs. The aide-encadreurs recruited by the Agricultural Service could also be trained and the villages where they will work should be determined, making an effort not to scatter them all over the place. The best aide-encadreurs should be selected and the number of villages with which they will be concerned should be determined. But, what will they do when the project is finished? - Will the Service of Agriculture be able to hire them? This question has to be answered.

Finally Mr Baron enumerated the observations concerning UNCC:

a) We know that the production of millet and sorghum in Niger has been seriously handicapped by an insufficient supply system of vital inputs and deficient marketing and extension systems, therefore, as research establishes new techniques and tests new practices the Cereals Project must furnish an adequate supply of inputs and a protected market. Planning is needed with a view to expansion of UNCC as soon as possible.

b) As the Project progresses the funding needs for the purchase of inputs, of commercialization and storage will rise, consequently, the Government of Niger and USAID should discuss the situation so as to be able to respond to these needs.

c) The UNCC program should be expanded; we recommend that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a special training center for UNCC.

No discussion followed the recommendations concerning UNCC.

Coordinator: In conclusion, the main problems encountered by the Project were reviewed:

- delay in the orders and delivery of inputs and of necessary project materials.

- delay and difficulties in the area of financial payments by the Ministry of Planning: it takes two weeks before the Ordinator refuses a request of payment; it takes more than one month for a readjustment of the budget to be approved and salaries are not paid on time.

Mr O. Bawa: He remarked that the functioning funds of the agricultural Department are insufficient and the Advance Funds should reach 20 Million FCFA.

Mr Baron: He suggested planning next year's evaluation session for between the 15th of November and the 16th of December. He recommended preparing a revision of the financial document of the Project in January: the financing will need to be increased by 30% so as to be able to deal with the construction expenses: 275 million FCFA will be asked from the Counterpart Funds. Next year's budget for local expenses should be prepared and the plan of work for the next campaign should be completed.

The Coordinator of the Project closed the meeting by thanking the members of AID's Evaluation team and all the participants of the meeting.