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SUBJECT - ~~Completion of Assignment Report dtd 197x~~
End-of-Tour Report

REFERENCE -

D.G. CURRY

I. Introduction

1. In early 1966 USAID entered into a PASA Agreement with USDA through which technical assistance was to be provided to the GOL. The leader of the PASA was to serve as Food and Agriculture Officer of the AID Mission in Liberia.

2. The writer arrived in Liberia on August 28, 1966. At that time the AID agricultural staff consisted of one technician in forest utilization and a three member Farmers Union International Assistance Contract Team (contract No. AID/csd 255). The Forestry Advisor was in the process of phasing out a long standing forestry program and departed from the country in November. The FUIAC contract team consisted of three members: a cooperative specialist, a credit specialist and a tropical crop agronomist. This team arrived in Liberia in June of 1966 and were attempting to establish a cooperative and credit program through the GOL Department of Agriculture and the Liberian Agricultural Credit Corporation.

3. All agricultural activities were combined under Project Agreement No. 669-11-190-101 entitled Agricultural Production Advisory Services.

4. The major objectives of this agreement was "entered into for the purpose of planning development programs leading to more productive agricultural activities in Liberia and introduce cooperative and credit systems where these organizations will facilitate agricultural productivity."

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5. More specifically the duties of the Food and Agriculture Officer were defined by the AID Mission as follows:

Description of Duties

USAID - Description of major duties associated with the PASA describe the major duties to be performed. The Performance Evaluation Report lists these duties as follows:

a. Develops programs of U.S. Technical Assistance to the GOL in agriculture and related industries.

b. Acts as senior agricultural adviser on the Mission staff and supervise operations of the USAID agricultural assistance to the GOL.

c. Maintains close relationship and advises the Secretary of Agriculture and his principal staff on agricultural programs and program of U.S. assistance in agriculture.

d. Coordinates assistance programs with FAO, the College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Liberia, and agencies of other international organizations and governments having assistance programs in Liberia.

e. Represents the USDA and plans and coordinates future programs in the field of agricultural development as they may relate to and involve the USDA under its PASA with AID.

6. The writer's understanding of his role was to function within the content of the perscribed duties. The ultimate objective being to assist the Mission in planning a program of assistance that would encourage the development of agriculture in Liberia, especially as it is related to self-sufficiency in rice production.

7. As a representative of the USDA a more specific role was to identify those areas in which the USDA could best assist the Mission and the GOL in accomplishing their development objective in the field of agriculture.

8. History of U.S. Assistance to Agriculture in Liberia

The U.S. Government has been providing assistance to Liberian agriculture for 21 years and has spent an estimated $4,324,000 representing about 4% of the total AID budgeted for Liberia during the period. Other donors have contributed an estimated $2,500,000 to agriculture development (FAO special fund, etc.).

TABLE I

U.S. Contributions to Agriculture to June 30, 1966 in Thousand of Dollars

Project	Years	Technicians	Participants	Total Obligations in $1,000
AG Experimentation	1951-1962	57 man years	28	$ 852
AG Extension	1951-1964	61 " "	20	1,478
Fresh Water Fisheries	1952-1965	13 " "	2	328
Forestry	1951-1967	38 " "	23	939
AG Prod. Adv. Serv.	1965	4 " "		317
Large Scale Farming Exp.	1966	-	-	375
Gbedin (Dam cost)	1967	-	-	25
Commodity Support PC	1967	-	-	10
			Total	$4,324

9. At the time of the writer's arrival in Liberia the U.S. Government had been providing assistance to the GOL for the development of its agriculture for 20 years. Close to 4½ million dollars will have been spent by the close of FY-67; U.S. technicians have spent 173 man years in Liberia and 73 participants have been trained under AID sponsorship. Concurrently with the U.S. effort the GOL and other donor agencies have contributed large sums for training of personnel and providing technical guidance directed toward agricultural development.

10. The UN Special Fund has sponsored the College of Agriculture of the University of Liberia by providing funds for buildings and teaching staff including the establishment of the University farm and research station. The Nationalist Chinese are providing technical assistance with a view to promote swamp rice cultivation. Private concessionaires are cooperating with the GOL in its effort to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production and promote the production of oil palm.

11. Most observers find it difficult to identify a degree of progress in Liberian agriculture commensurate with the financial and technical assistance imputs over the last twenty years.

12. The notable exception is rubber production where the impetus to produce has been provided by concessions through research marketing and promotion within their concession and among Liberian farmers.

II. Accomplishment of Objectives

13. Through this assignment the writer has continuously emphasized that the basic requirements necessary to stimulate agricultural production included the "Essentials for Agricultural Development" identified by Dr. A.T. Mosher in his book Getting Agriculture Moving.

These five essential are:

a. Markets for farm Products
b. Constantly Changing Technology
c. Local Availability of Supplies and Equipment
d. Production Incentives for Farmers Transportation

14. To achieve implementation of these essentials and persuade the GOL to take the necessary measures to implement them, it was recommended that a team of experts provided for under the PASA agreement proceed to Liberia to make a thorough study of rice production and marketing. Unfortunately the request for this study was delayed until December 1967. The team conducted their study in Liberia between March 16 and April 24 of 1968. The results of their study were published in a document entitled "Rice Production and Marketing in Liberia" by the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating with the Agency for International Development.

15. The summary of the report contains the following recommendations:

A. Actions that will induce immediate increases in rice production.

Farmers can be induced to grow more rice now by increasing the price they get for their rice and making it easier to market. The following policies and services if adopted by the GOL will stimulate rice production even in the absence of other changes:

1. Establish a minimum price for rough rice.

2. Establish a minimum price for farmer-milled rice.

3. Establish collection points for the purchase of rough rice.

4. Provide drying and milling equipment at or near the collection points.

5. Establish a crop reporting service and a market news agency within the Department of Agriculture to better measure the availability and price of rice.

6. Construct a network of roads into the major rice-producing counties.

16. In order to implement these services it is recommended that a Rice Marketing Specialist with experience in market development be provided to advise and assist the GOL in establishing an orderly marketing system for rice. It is also recommended that temporary technical assistance be provided so that the GOL can set up a program to guarantee a minimum price to farmers for rough rice and to establish a crop reporting service and a ~~already~~ market news agency. These policies will increase rice production on land already under cultivation.

B. Actions that will take time to induce increases in rice production.

In the long run, upland rice culture on steep slopes must be discouraged, and irrigated (swamp) rice production must be increased. If this is not done, the soils of Liberia will continue to deteriorate, and the rice deficit will increase.

17. The transition from upland to irrigated rice will not begin immediately. Before it does, it will be necessary to initiate programs that will provide a sound physical and technological basis for the transition and to extend this information to farmers. The programs to be initiated are as follows:

1. A detailed survey of the soils of Liberia to determine the location and acreage of soils suitable for both lowland (swamp) and upland rice production. At the same time areas suitable for mechanized rice production and labor intensive rice production can also be identified. This inventory should be made under the guidance of a short-term advisor.

2. A sound applied production research program to develop improved varieties; to determine the best method, time and rate of seeding; to establish cropping systems that will improve rice yields and minimize erosion; to determine the best rate, ratio and method and time of application of fertilizer; to determine irrigation methods that give maximum yields; to determine the serious weeds in rice and establish control methods; to assess the losses caused by diseases and insects and develop resistant varieties or other control methods; and to develop practical and efficient methods of harvesting, drying and storage.

The Central Agricultural Research Station at Suakoko is the logical place for this program. Recommendations concerning the size of the research facilities and the personnel needed depend upon whether a West African Regional Rice Research program is begun and when. Fewer people and less elaborate facilities will be needed in Liberia if such a regional center is developed. In this case an agronomist and an irrigation engineer may be all the outside personnel that are necessary. However, if a regional program is not developed within the near future or at all, a plant breeder also will be needed in Liberia.

3. An effective program to extend information on the new varieties and new cultural techniques to farmers and to carry out the seed multiplication program. It should be headed by a competent official of the Department of Agriculture, GOL, with an advisor who has had experience in rice production and in conducting rice field demonstrations and training programs. Irrigation and drainage demonstrations on farms should be under the guidance of an experienced irrigation and drainage engineer. In the beginning this program should be limited to the area around Suakoko and Gbedin. As this area is developed and trained Liberian personnel become available, the program can be enlarged to include other areas.

18. In May 1968 Dr. Charles E. Lindblom visited Liberia at the request of the Mission Director. The findings of his study were presented in a paper entitled "Diffusing Economic Development in Liberia". This paper along with the rice team's report provide specific recommendations for the planning and implementation of future USAID programs in agriculture. They combine the best judgements of competent scientists and provide specific guidelines which if followed may result in increased agricultural production. The similarity of the recommendations in the two documents is striking indeed.

19. In July of 1966 the Department of Planning and Economic Affairs of Liberia issued the following "Statement of Government's Policy on Commercial Rice Production".

> "Having reviewed all past and present rice projects undertaken by both the Government and private interests, and having taken into consideration all of the plans and intentions of Government and private interests for the development of rice in Liberia, the Government has arrived at the following:
>
> 1. Investigations seem to reveal that mechanized swamp rice culture can be adopted economically.
>
> 2. Government should not be engaged directly in the production of rice except on a small scale for experimental purposes.

4. The Department of Agriculture should furnish, whether requested or not, corporations or individual farmers engaging in rice production with such technical information as may be available and should advise them.

Based on yields per acre at the Government's swamp (irrigated) rice project at Gbedin, it is clear that, given adequate support, this type of cultivation can be developed economically. (It was revealed that as much as 10,899 lbs. of paddy were produced on one acre of land by one farmer from November, 1962 to November, 1963, using the three-cropping (rotation) system).

However, the concessions presently engaged in upland rice cultivation would be encouraged to continue their operations.

Extent of Government's Involvement in Rice Production

In order to achieve rapid development in our rice production programe, as contemplated in the Four-Year Development Plan, Government shall withdraw from rice production, and would instead provide the basic stimuli necessary to facilitate the establishment, bu the private sector, or large-scale mechanized and small-size rice farms.

With respect to large-scale farms, Government would assist, initially and to the extent possible, in (a) identifying suitable land and (b) providing information on such land.

Regarding Government's direct participation in a corporation, such participation shall be discouraged. On the other hand, Government might consider alloting to any corporation, for a reasonable charge, any acreage of land selected provided that in the case of Gbedin and Cape Mount all land that has already been developed by Government will be retained for demonstration purposes, or as holding for farmers already settled in the area.

Government's assistance to small farmers could be in the form of well-planned and executed marketing arrangements, extension services, farm-to-market roads, processing facilitaties, machinery rental, etc. To this extent, it should be mentioned that the Department of Agriculture and Planning and Economic Affairs have held a number of talks with the USAID, the UNDP, and a French Technical Mission with the views of ascertaining the extent to which, based on the report of their experts, each of these external sources could supplement our own efforts in providing assistance to small farmers."

20. The major accomplishment during this tour has been to provide some guidance to the Mission and the GOL Department of Agriculture in developing a rational policy for the development of a technical assistance program.

21. Many other less effectual and short term benefits may have evolved but it would be difficult to evaluate them. These include: (1) Assistance to thee Secretary of Agriculture in an Advisory capacity. (2) Assistance to the Kng Chinese Technical delegation in the implementation of the Gbedin rice project. The major contribution was the provision of $25,000 to construct water control facilities which resulted in bringing into production an additional 100 acres thus nearly doubling the area under production. (3) Supervision of the FUIAC contract for the development of credit and cooperative facilities designed to stimulate agricultural production. The results of this effort were dis appointing and it is doubtful if the contribution in terms of measurable results can be determined. For a more detailed analysis of this contractors performance reference may be made to the U-307 reports. (4) The UniRoyal Large Scale Mechanized Farming Project received considerable attention. The writer served on the Technical Advisory Committee from the beginning of the experiment until his departure.

21. The results obtained from this project are by no means conclusive. Prelimary indications are that upland rice production based upon the presently available varieties and the existing knowledge of agronomic practices will be negative.

22. The project should be continued on a reduced scale to provide an opportunity to test more varieties for high yielding and disease resistance quantities. A good start has been made by the plant breeder using many local varieties and varieties of other countries.

23. The livestock phase of the project has not progressed to the point where results are available for analysis.

III. Recommendations

24. Future programs should be based upon the recommendations of the Rice Production and Marketing Report.

25. The UNDP is currently considering a program for rice production in Liberia. Any AID program should be planned and coordinated to supplement their efforts. At the movement it appears that AID could become involved in three essential phases of the total effort to achieve self-sufficiency in rice. These are: Marketing and price support - Research and road construction.

26. Requests have been made to UNDP to provide a marketing consultant to outline the necessary pre-conditions and assess the climate within the GOL for implementing a rice marketing program. This course of action should be followed to the point where a decision can be made which will define AID's future role in the effort.

27. The most serious deterrent to agriculture is the absence of a research effort in Liberia. Both Dr. Lindblom's report and the rice report place high priority on the necessity of a research program as a prerequisite to production.

28. Suggestions have been made that Suakoko should be reactivated. However, I do not believe the possibility of entering into a contract with Firestone or UniRoyal to carry on a research program designed to identify and/or develop varieties, proper agronomic practices and conduct economic studies in rice production under "swamp rice", paddy rice and upland rice conditions should be overlooked.

29. Whether research is carried on by the GOL or through other arrangements USAID must create an organization through which it can maintain control of the administration of the project. The history of former efforts clearly indicate that to follow any other course would result in failure or at the best marginal results.

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