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Thomas D. Mallery, Research Advisor

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END OF TOUR REPORT

Thomas D. Hallery
Research Advisor

October 11, 1962

1. General Objectives and Goals:

The objectives of the assignment were to assist with the organization and development of a group of trained Liberians capable of conducting the agriculture research program when foreign technical assistance is phased out.

2. Activities:

Participated in the preparation of programming for and evaluation of the established research projects for the DAC and U.S.O.M. Assisted in the preparation of research budgets for the DAC, GOL, and for U.S. participation. Advised the DAC on research policy. Acted as liaison between the U. S. technical staff of 7 advisers and the chief of the Agriculture Division, Monrovia, and between the Station staff and the D.A.C. for the improvement of logistics and the handling of fiscal matters. Advised Liberian Station Directors (5 directors in 21 months) in the administration of the Station.

3. Factors Affecting Technical Assistance:

- a. Unfavorable Factors: One of the most unfavorable factors was the untimely construction of facilities for large all-inclusive agricultural experiment station in 1952 incorporating most of the major specialized divisions found in more advanced countries.

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The funding and technical assistance given by the U.S. in the early years made this approach appear feasible. However, with diminishing U.S. support, Liberia finds herself with an experiment station she has neither funds nor personnel to operate. Since March 1960 there have been 5 Station Directors who served from 4 months to one year. The operation of the Station was taken over too soon by the GOL. The Liberian staff is not sufficient and are inadequately trained and experienced to conduct research independently. In the past, U.S. assistance was made less effective by the lack of trained counterparts, and by inadequate administration and logistic support from the D.A.C. in Monrovia. The limited Station staff lacked sufficient authority and freedom of action for a successful operation. Projects often suffered by unexpected withdrawal of equipment and personnel. This made it impossible to efficiently carry on work schedules for routine operation and maintenance of the station and its research projects.

The lack of logistics hampered the initiation of experiments with any assurance that they could be completed satisfactorily. Equipment maintenance, storage facilities, and labor supply were inadequate to support effective research activities.

D.A.C. employees and daily workers were not paid regularly. Payments often were four to eight weeks late. Practically all employees have their own farms or businesses on which they rely for supplementary income and to which they can go after they have

fulfilled their patriotic obligation to the Government. Under these conditions it is very difficult to develop a loyal Station Staff.

The soils on the Station are poor and the rainfall distribution is inadequate for good plant growth. Although, a small irrigation system has been developed at the station, it is doubtful that this method would represent the potentiality of Liberian farmers as they could not afford the costs. A more suitable site for the experiment Station would have been one more representative of the soils and rainfall of Liberia.

The research goals which were originally established were not practical of achievement under prevailing conditions, and most of them were not applicable to the immediate needs of developing agriculture in Liberia.

- b. Favorable Factors: The appointment of a Secretary and the organization of the Department of Agriculture and Commerce in 1948 placed Liberia in a more advantageous position to accept technical assistance in the cooperative advancement of her agricultural industry. This gave impetus to the organization of the Extension Service including home economics and 4-H club projects, and to the initiation of agricultural economics, marketing, and farm credit activities.

Much improvement in the Participant Training program has been realized during the past two years. The selection of candidates

and Liberian personnel have contributed to the improved spirit of cooperation between divisions.

There have been a few worthwhile contributions resulting from experimentation. Good progress has been made in the testing and selection of swamp rice varieties and improvement in cultural practices. One rice variety which was tested yielded 2 to 3 times more than that of the most popular local variety. Attention is being given also to upland rice improvement since more farmers are accustomed to growing it and will probably be reluctant or slow to change to the cultivation of rice in swamps. Selection of synthetic varieties of corn has also been initiated. The most intelligent counterpart on the research staff is in the Agronomy Division.

The herd of grade cattle was finally eliminated, because of mixture and unsuitable for breeding or experimentation. Steps are being taken to acquire suitable breeding stock and to provide more ample facilities for a productive animal husbandry program, including swine and poultry as well as cattle and also to provide a veterinary service.

Progress has been made in meeting the schedule of development of fish hatchery facilities at the Central Agricultural Experiment Station to service the ever increasing number of private and community freshwater fish ponds dispersed throughout the Central Province. There are some 50 ponds in operation at present and 10 under construction with 38 projected under the RAD program for '62 and '63. Research facilities in Freshwater Fisheries await the availability of trained personnel for

effective utilization.

It has been demonstrated that Arabica coffees are not suited to Liberian conditions. The Robustas produce better but the cost of disease control and fertilizing can not be supported by present prices. The endemic Liberica coffee is best suited to local conditions. It brings a premium price, especially on the Scandinavian market. Bananas and cacao are not suitable for plantation culture in Liberia.

5. Current Trends: (August 15 to October 15, 1962)

Early in August of this year Mr. Julius Cooper, the 5th Liberian Station Director since January 1960 was appointed by the D.A.C., during the first two months of his incumbency, the Station has taken on what appears to be a new lease on life. Several desired changes have been made, or are in the process of being implemented.

Among these are the following:

- a. The Horticulture, Entomology, and Plant Pathology Divisions have been discontinued as such. It is planned that future work in these fields will be limited to specific crop improvement.
- b. Crop improvement for the next year or so will be confined principally to rice, corn, citrus, livestock, farm pond fish production, and probably some vegetables. Crop acreage on the Station is to be increased, and as much experimentation as possible with available funds and personnel is to be carried on with the objective of increasing yields and improving quality of products.
- c. A part-time Liberian is putting the books, bulletins, and periodicals

in order and is attempting to initiate better controls over their use and circulation.

- d. The Maintenance Division is functioning much more effectively than at any time during my residence. Buildings are being repaired and painted, the Station roads are being properly graded and drained, motorized equipment is operating a greater portion of the time, and service shop and warehousing facilities are improving.
- e. The Station grounds in general are being cleaned and a serious effort is being made to improve the landscaping and to make the Central Agricultural Experiment Station a more orderly and pleasant place in which to work and live.
- f. The new organization and management activities and the realignment of research goals recently established by Mr. Julius Cooper embody many of the elements which this advisor and other U.S. technicians have strived to attain."

6. Recommendations for the Future:

a. Agricultural research in Liberia should be confined to experimentation

to meet the basic needs of improving crops and methods of farming.

The amount of experimentation done directly by the DAC should be limited to that which the government can administer properly, support logistically, and staff with trained Liberians or qualified third ~~country~~ nationals. Experimentation beyond these limitations should be contracted to qualified outside research institutes. Any U.S. aid for experimentation should require the fulfillment of these conditions.

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Prime prerequisites for furnishing U.S. Technicians should be that the DAC be able to administer the research, provide adequately trained counterparts, and otherwise support such projects.

- b. The avowed interest of the GOL in its vitally important agricultural development is not reflected in the allotment of only 1.6% of the national income to the advancement of agriculture in calendar year 1962. Present indications are that the funds allotted for 1963 will be the same as for 1962. It was hoped that a decrease in technical assistance in agricultural research at the end of FY '62 would have a stimulating effect toward self-help by the GOL through the DAC.
- c. Experimentation on crops should be done at locations in the country where the soils and climate are most suited for the particular crop. This would require sub-stations or contracted projects operated by an outside research institute.
- d. The Department of Agriculture should improve its personnel policy to give greater incentives to young, educated Liberians in order to persuade them to select a Government career and pursue it with dedication and devotion.
- e. Greater authority and support should be given by the DAC to the Station Director for the execution of his duties.

It is sincerely hoped that the changes initiated by Director Cooper will reach a satisfactory level of attainment and that the dedication initially shown by him and his new staff will continue. I believe these things will come about if the Director continues to receive the support from the D.A.C. which he apparently is now receiving, and if sufficient incentive is given to him and his staff.

