

AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20523  
BIBLIOGRAPHIC INPUT SHEET

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**Batch 70**

1. SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION  
A. PRIMARY  
Food production and nutrition AN10-0000-G196  
B. SECONDARY  
Agricultural engineering and structures—Benin

2. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  
Animal powered mechanization program; progress report, Sept. 1976–March, 1977

3. AUTHOR(S)  
Sargent, Merritt

4. DOCUMENT DATE  
1977

5. NUMBER OF PAGES  
9p.

6. ARC NUMBER  
ARC

7. REFERENCE ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS  
Mich. State

8. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES (Sponsoring Organization, Publishers, Availability)  
(Activity summary)

9. ABSTRACT

10. CONTROL NUMBER

**PN-AAE-509**

11. PRICE OF DOCUMENT

12. DESCRIPTORS

Agricultural machinery  
Animal husbandry  
Benin  
Surveys

Technical assistance

13. PROJECT NUMBER

14. CONTRACT NUMBER  
AID/afr-C-1260 GTS

15. TYPE OF DOCUMENT

AID/afr-C-1260 GTS  
Mich.  
PN-AAE-509

SIX MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

by

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April 25, 1977

## INTRODUCTION

This six-month progress report covers the period from September 1, 1976 (the beginning of AID/afr-C-1260) to March 31, 1977. Since I was on a consulting contract to AID/Niger from January 11, 1977 until February 11, 1977, I have assumed that the six-month period in this contract has been set back one month.

## RESEARCH CLEARANCE

In October of 1975, while serving on an MSU mission to West Africa, I had the opportunity to discuss the feasibility and desirability of undertaking such a survey as that which is mandated under this present contract with Beninois officials in the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Technical and Superior Education, National University of Benin and in the Atakora Provincial Agricultural Service. In general people were extremely interested in seeing such a survey undertaken and reassured me that the need for research clearance would pose no problem. The level of interest in the survey has remained high but as to the facility of obtaining clearance, I was sorely misled.

The recent readjustments and reorganization in the decision-making mechanisms at all levels in Benin have resulted in a certain amount of rigidity in administrative channels as well as reticence on the part of middle and lower level officials to take decisions. In this atmosphere I arrived in September and began discussions with my Beninois research

colleagues on how to proceed. It was decided that I should request to be assigned to the Rural Economics section of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at the National University. Once assigned, I would be detached to undertake the research program in the Atakora Province. It was then learned that the Rector of the University required a letter direct from the Dean of Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University to the Rector requesting said collaboration. This was obtained, and my dossier submitted to the Rector by the Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. From November till January, my dossier remained on the desk of the Rector awaiting transmittal to the Minister of Technical and Superior Education who, upon approval, was then to transmit a request for research clearance to the Minister of Interior and National Security. My dossier remained with the Rector despite efforts by the Director of the Atakora Provincial Agricultural Service, the Dean of Agricultural Sciences, the Director of the National Laboratory for Economic and Rural Sociological Studies, and the Director of the National Bank for Agricultural Credit to expedite it.

In late December, I was invited to spend a month in Niger working for USAID. I accepted the invitation for several reasons. Nothing was happening with my request for research clearance. I thought that leaving for Niger for a month might jolt things in Benin by demonstrating that Benin was not the only place to work. I also wanted to look into possibilities for pursuing my research in Niger should that prove necessary.

Just before I left for Niger, the Beninois colleagues I was working with decided to drop the initial strategy and pursue my clearance through the Direction of Agricultural Research. I was to be assigned as a

researcher to the National Laboratory for Economic and Rural Sociological Studies to undertake this research program.

Upon my return to Benin, I rewrote my dossier in these terms and it was submitted to the Director of Agricultural Research who immediately transmitted it to the Ministry of Technical and Superior Education for forwarding to the Ministry of Interior and National Security.

On March 24, 1977, the Ministry of Technical and Superior Education informed the Ministry of Interior and National Security that it was authorizing my research. I have enclosed a copy of that letter.

#### LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The village of Pehunco has no water system, no electricity, no post office and only three African trader shops. Gasoline and kerosene are available only in small amounts at high prices. Pehunco is the seat of the Commune of Pehunco.

I first returned to Pehunco in early October 1976 and my wife and I stayed with friends I had known when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer there. We were able to identify only one house in the village which met our needs. We needed reliable protection against the weather, a reliable water supply, and office space. As both of us are undertaking research, it was paramount that once our research was underway we not be inconvenienced by lodging problems. The suitable house was nothing but a shell when we arrived in October (walls and roof). The owner said that with financial assistance he could complete it in November. We agreed. In November nothing had been done on our return from Cotonou. The Commune offered to let us use an administrative lodging (three rooms, mud walls, straw roof, no water) until our house was completed.

We move into our house in May 1977.

## WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

### National Level

The discussion above on the problems of research clearances has indicated most of the national level organizations I will be working with. Assigned to the National Laboratory for Economic and Rural Sociological Studies, my responsibilities will be to undertake this research program, to consult with colleagues in the laboratory on other research efforts underway and proposed, and to deliver seminars on the progress of my research. The details of these responsibilities will be worked out later.

As the animal powered mechanization program involves a medium term credit scheme, the National Bank for Agricultural Credit which supplies the credit is interested in the performance of the credit scheme and in an analysis of credit capacity among farmers in the survey. As they become available, my findings will be delivered to the Bank.

The techniques of husbanding oxen on the farm as practiced by farmers, the costs of maintaining them and the beef production aspect of animal traction are of strong interest to the Livestock Service and the Office of Development of Animal Resources. I am to deliver partial analyses of the oxen husbandry on animal traction farms to these offices.

### Provincial Level

I am working very closely with the Provincial Agricultural Service and the Livestock Service. Animal traction is a national priority and hence a provincial priority as well, particularly as the Atakora is a northern province well suited to animal traction. As of 1977, approximately half the villages in the province have animal traction farmers. The Director of the Provincial Agricultural Service looks to this research

program to assist his agency in generalizing the use of animal power in the province. He has made the agency's records available to me and requested his agents to assist me in any way possible. I have a similar arrangement with the agents of the Livestock Service and their Director.

#### District Level

The survey area covers the two districts of Kerou and Kouande. It has been necessary to explain the research program and then work out relationships not only with the technical services but also with the political structures as well. Without the approval and assistance of the political organizations both at the district and commune level, it would not be possible to undertake this research. This has been a very time consuming series of discussions. In the two districts there are a total of six communes covered by the survey area. Numerous meetings were necessary in each commune and in the two district seats to achieve an adequate level of understanding. Aside from the time factor, no other problems were encountered. At all levels, the research program has been approved and I have the active assistance of both the technical agents and the political structures at the local levels.

#### THE SAMPLE

In anticipation of the research clearance and with the approach of the rainy season, I decided to begin the process of choosing my sample of farms as soon as I had the conditional approval (conditional on obtaining the research clearance) of the Provincial Agricultural Service. At the end of the 1976 farming season there were 352 farms using animal traction in the two districts. Between 100 and 150 have been added prior to the 1977 farming season.

My lack of a research clearance as well as the disarray of the Agricultural Service's records meant that the plans I had for choosing the sample were far too ambitious. I was limited to using those records that were available and to talking only with local level agricultural agents. I could not begin interviewing farmers without formal research clearance. Besides limiting the breath of information I could use in sample stratification, this also made it difficult to check the accuracy of the data I did have access to.

It was my intention to do a purposive stratification of a set of data on all the animal traction farms in the two districts and then, given the logistical and budgetary constraints I had, choose a sample of 100 farms which reflected the basic variations observed.

As mentioned above, my sources were agricultural service records and village level agricultural agents. I was able to obtain the following data on each animal traction farm in the two districts:

1. The year in which each farm began using animal traction
2. The number of agricultural workers per family
3. The area of cash crops (cotton, rice and groundnuts) cultivated in 1976.

The first file is the most reliable as it was obtained from credit records. The second file has two problems. First, many local level agents have a poor knowledge of the family members. Second, the Agricultural Service counts only males over 14 years of age as agricultural workers. For not a few families, this can be very misleading. The third file is accurate to the extent that the farmer sought his crop inputs from the Agricultural Service. Unfortunately, the degree of accuracy cannot be substantiated until the survey is underway.

As of March 31, 1977, I am still attempting to fill in holes in the above data set.

#### CONCLUSION

The research clearance is assured by all those I have been dealing with. The progress on my house is slow but I have promises for May. My working relationships at all levels have been worked out and only await research clearance to be activated. Within a month I will be choosing the sample.

In the coming months, I will begin recruiting candidates for enumerators, finalize the sample, and begin training enumerators. I want them in their sites by early May.