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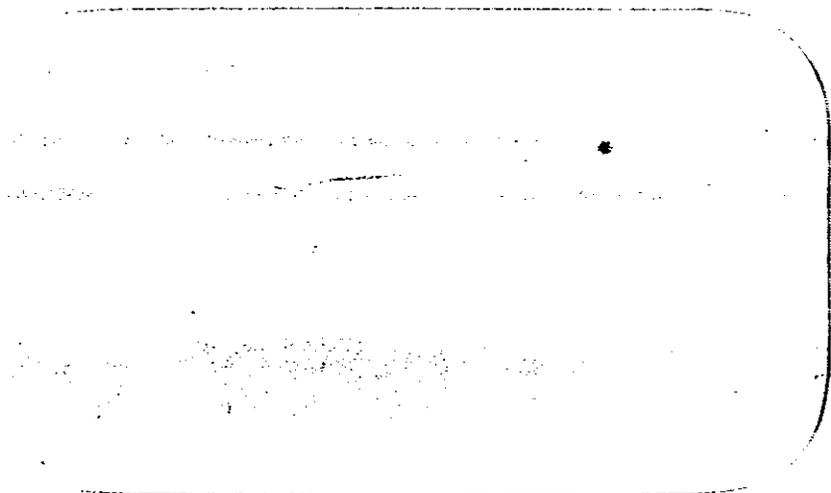
وزارة للزراعة واستصلاح الأراضي
الوكالة الأمريكية للتنمية الدولية
مشروع إصلاح للسياسات الزراعية
وحدة تصميم وتنفيذ السياسات

Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation

AGRICULTURE POLICY REFORM PROGRAM

Reform Design and Implementation Unit (RDI)

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APRP

Reform Design and Implementation Unit

Development Alternatives Inc. Group: Office for Studies & Finance, National Consulting Firm Development Associates, Cargill Technical Services, The Services Group, Training Resources Group, Purdue Universities, University of Maryland

RDI REPORTS

A

Report No. 143

*Egypt Cotton and
Rice Market
Information Systems*

*Prepared by:
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Executive Summary

This report highlights progress made since the end of February 2001. The research team identified additional data sources and successfully secured a significant amount of data on rice. The project hired a web developer who will be able to maintain and update the two sites during the testing period that will be extended through December 2001.

These websites will be finalized and published. A preliminary report will be written and presented to the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade to discuss progress to date, ownership, update and maintenance. It is proposed that the two sites be separated and run under two different domain names and web presence during the testing period. A final report will be presented to the Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade with options regarding the ownership of the two websites. A decision will be made at that point.

Data collection has been extremely difficult and this in turn has delayed the completion of the websites. These websites will likely be posted by the end of June 2001 and will be announced to key stakeholders (cotton website is already running). The testing period will begin after the sites are published.

Preliminary observations reveal that most stakeholders in rice and cotton sectors lack knowledge in information technology, particularly with respect to the use of Internet and electronic communication. And until they are trained so they can access and use the Internet, it is doubtful they will be able to take part in the testing period successfully. These need to be identified and trained so they can access information posted on both websites. They will provide feedback useful for upgrade and maintenance.

A needs assessment needs to be conducted to determine accessibility and Internet knowledge skills of potential users. They need to be trained on how to access and

Cotton site is near completion and while the team succeeded in securing additional data on rice, the site has not been fully redone. This will be completed by the end of June 2001.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to the RDI Management Team. I would like to thank Dr. Edgar Ariza-Nino, the assignment supervisor, for his dedication and guidance throughout the assignment. Thanks also go to the Drs. Ibrahim Siddik, Magdy ElGuindy, and Ragaa El Amir for their thorough understanding of cotton and rice sectors and their dedication and beliefs in the usefulness of this assignment.

I would like to thank Dr. Jane Gleason, Chief of Party for her enthusiasm and friendship. Her support made a significant contribution to the outcome. She organized the trip to Mount Sinai (Moses' Mountain) and Red Sea for beautifully colored fish underwater.

The Assignment Team:

Dr Edgar Ariza-Nino, Agribusiness/Marketing Specialist, RDI

Dr Ibrahim Siddik, Agribusiness/Marketing Specialist, RDI (also Vice President and Professor of Agricultural Economics, Monoufiya University)

Dr Madgy El Guendy, RDI Consultant, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Monoufiya University

Dr Ragaa El Amir, RDI Consultant, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of Assiut

Dr Djimé Adoum, RDI Consultant, Agricultural and Marketing Information Specialist and Web Developer, Maryland, USA

Mr. Hazem Gomaa, Research Assistant to the Research Team and website developer

Egyptian Cotton and Rice Market Information Systems

Introduction

This report highlights accomplishments to date and is a follow-up to the first one. It will discuss progress made with respect to cotton and rice and provide comments. It will also highlight what remains to be done to complete the assignment. The research team was strengthened by the presence of a research assistant and web developer.

Methodology

The methodology remains the same, that is, the research team continued to collect data either by calling or visiting different agencies. The research team also identified the Egyptian Economic Promotion Center (EEPC) of the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade and had established weekly meetings at the project site to discuss data needs, establish data collection tools and review those data. This new arrangement appears to bear some fruit. The EEPC was successful in collecting limited but preliminary price data on rice by calling private mills. The EPC Unit was also successful in obtaining publications from the General Organization of Export and Import Control (GOEIC).

The research team and the EPC Unit are scheduling visits to Alexandria to meet with rice millers and exporters during the week of June 9, 2001 through June 15, 2001 to discuss the project and data needs.

What has been accomplished to date?

The research assistant (Hazem) designed a new frame prior to Dr. Adoum's arrival. This new frame may be used for both cotton and rice when the websites are completed. Dr. Adoum and Hazem redesigned the navigational menu for cotton and rice and will update as data become available.

Data collection remains a difficult task. This is not only due to lack of data but even when data are found, they are often inconsistent and require careful scrutiny.

Given that limited progress was made in collecting rice data, the research team instructed Dr. Adoum to finalize the cotton website, at least with respect to data obtained and processed during February 2001. Rice website is also running, albeit more needs to be done. Dr. Adoum spent the last two weeks collecting cotton data from the Internet, creating new tables and links and populating these links. The same will be done for rice, particularly with respect to rice data on competitors.

Dr. Adoum added few more links to the cotton web site and populated all links with data. The research team intends to discuss this site and present it USAID. The research team will schedule a meeting with personnel from MEFT to present the two websites, currently housed at <http://www.agpolicy.com>. A suitable date will be arranged for such meeting.

List of Acronyms

ACC	The Agricultural Commodity Council
ALCOTEXA	The Alexandria Cotton Export Association
ALEB	The Agriculture-Led Export Businesses
APRP	Agricultural Policy Reform Project
GOEIC	General Organization for Export and Import Control
MVE	Monitoring, Verification and Evaluation
RDI	Reform Design and Implementation
RTTC	The Rice Technology Training Center
The Wayout.net	The Internet Service Provider
TIC-Egypt	Trade Information Center-Egypt
Wakalex	The Wakil Import and Export Company in Alexandria
EEPC	
CATGO	Cotton Arbitration and Testing General Organization

What needs to be done?

Cotton

As mentioned earlier, the cotton website has been nearly completed, uploaded and is currently running at <http://www.agpolicy.com>. These pages will be downloaded and transferred into the frame designed by Hazem.

Rice

The research team collected additional data, edited and reorganized the previous data. New tables are currently under construction. These tables will be reorganized according to the new frame and will be incorporated. Work on rice is slightly behind given that efforts were concentrated to finishing cotton because the research team thought it might have to present preliminary work on cotton to MEFT Personnel. Nevertheless, rice website has been updated with new tables and uploaded. More needs to be done regarding data for cargo, white rice, stock, import, and competitors. These links are currently empty and need to be populated when data become available according to new format currently shown on the website.

Important note about meta-tags: Meta tags are key words that are inserted into each page before these web pages are submitted to search engines. These key words (such as rice, milling, paddy, production, marketing, Egypt, Nile, etc.) help in the identification of websites during Internet searches. Since we are still constructing these sites, we did not think it necessary to include tags yet but will do so when the sites are near completion and prior to submitting them to the search engines. Appropriate and useful links will be added later

Website hosting issues and testing period

Experience to date clearly showed the extent to which data collection is a slow and complicated process. Since the assignment is about processing and publishing data on both cotton and rice on the World Wide Web, and although much progress has been made, much more remains to be done. This slow pace also delayed the initial launch of the sites and the testing period as well. Given this, we propose that a different time frame be established during the remainder of the exercise to do the following:

1. First the two websites need to be separated into individual site. This can be easily done by dividing the space we have available on the ISP server. Since the two sites do not contain many pages, space available (6 Megs a piece would suffice for now).
2. Second, we propose that both cotton and rice be registered under different domain names, such as egyptianrice.com for rice and egyptiancotton.com for cotton. The domain name registration will cost about \$70 to \$100 each. This brings the total registration fees to about \$200 (if one considers the upper limit)

3. Potential users are then identified and trained so that they can use these sites and provide feedback during the testing period.
4. A final report will be written and submitted to MEFT for consideration of ownership.

Rationale for proposition above

This is based on experience and observation that consistent and information-driven websites are difficult to built (lack of data) and maintain (case of Alcotexa). As such it is extremely useful to keep both sites with the project (assuming sufficient resources to get the job done) during the testing period. Given that the sites need to be updated continuously, the process and analysis of data from various sources will be too difficult for institutions that do not have a web mentality. These websites are not constructed for esthetics, rather for their contents. As was demonstrated in many instances, even when data become available, they need fine-tuning before they are transformed. This function cannot easily be fulfilled by the industry, yet. This point cannot be emphasized enough given that the Research Team has 4 Ph.Ds and a research assistant all working hard to generate meaningful data to be published. While sufficient data have been gathered, they were extremely difficult to secure and require a high energy research

Proposed Work Plan – May 24th through June 12th, 2001 (for Djime) and through December for the Research Team

Date	Activity	Person Responsible
May 2001		
Thursday 24	Meeting and orientation	Dr. Ariza-Nino
Friday 25		
Saturday 26	Revising strategy	
Sunday 27		
Monday 28	Redesign of cotton Web frame	Djime and Hazem
Tuesday 29	Research and Tabulation	Djime
Wednesday 30	Research and Tabulation	Djime
Thursday 31	Research and Tabulation	Djime
June 2001		
Friday 1		
Saturday 2	Research and Tabulation	Research Team
Sunday 3	Research and Tabulation	Research Team
Monday 4	Research and Tabulation	Research Team
Tuesday 5	Research and Tabulation	
Wednesday 6		
Thursday 7	Meeting and Linking	Djimé
Friday 8	Report Writing	Djimé
Saturday 9	Report Writing	Djimé
Sunday 10	Draft and Debriefing	Djimé
Monday 11	Revision of Draft	
Tuesday 12	Departure	Djimé
Tuesday 12 th through 30 th	Design of Rice Website And uploading	Hazem
July 2001		
July 1 through July 15 th	Uploading of Rice Website	Hazem
July 15 th through July 31 th	Upgrade and maintenance of rice and cotton websites	Hazem
August 1 through 15	Meeting with stakeholders and presentation of both Rice and Cotton websites	Research Team with Djime
August 15 th through 30	Needs assessment and training	Djime, Ashraf and Hazem
September 1 st through October 31 st	Monitoring the two sites, upgrading	Hazem
November 2001	Identification (and training) of appropriate individuals within entities to ensure maintenance	Djime and Hazem
November – December 2001	Transfer the sites	The Wayout.net

Summary and conclusions

Data collection still appears to be difficult. However sufficient progress has been made with respect to rice. Sufficient data have been collected and the rice site could now be constructed similar to the cotton framework.

Two the websites should be registered under two separate domain names and hosted with <http://www.agpolicy.com>. These domain names could be egyptianrice.com for rice and egyptiancotton.com for cotton (assuming of course both names are available). A domain name search should be conducted to determine their availability.

Both sites should be functional by July 15th and uploaded. Cotton is ready and rice needs to be linked.

A needs assessment needs to be conducted to determine training needs of various stakeholders so that they can be trained to access and use the Internet. These skills will allow them to participate in the evaluation phase of the testing period when the two websites are published on the World Wide Web.

Entities likely to take over each site should be fully appraised on the monthly financial obligation it will incur once the site becomes their property. This can vary anywhere from \$20 to \$40 a month depending on the Internet Service Provider.

Recommendations

Experience to date showed us that most of the economic operators in both the rice and cotton sectors are not very conversant in Internet and electronic communication. To remedy this situation and help stakeholders benefit from the marketing information system of cotton and rice and to increase the likelihood that they will visit these websites, we propose to design and conduct a half-day training workshops to train stakeholders how to access these sites as well as improving their electronic communication skills.

1. Additional data on rice and cotton need to be gathered.
2. Hazem needs to construct tables for missing links and populate them according to established rules and regulations (Research Team determines this)
3. Conduct a needs assessment and design training program for Internet and electronic communication.
4. Announce dates at which the websites should be published on the World Wide Web
5. Present web sites to Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade
6. Discuss web sites ownership issues and monetary obligations with potential owners
7. Monitor web traffic on both sites
8. Identify potential owners and transfer sites with agreements from Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade