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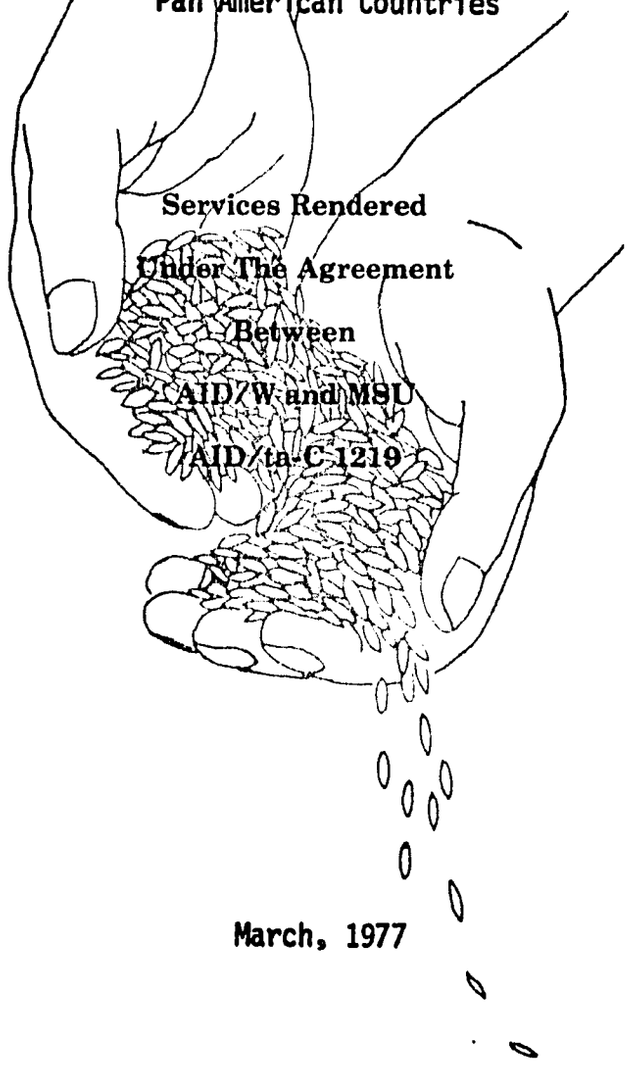
REPORT TO AID/W

VIII Pan American Seed Seminar and Seed Program Activities in Pan American Countries



Services Rendered

Under The Agreement

Between

AID/W and MSU

AID/ta-C-1219

March, 1977

SEED TECHNOLOGY LABORATORY
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISSISSIPPI

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Seed Technology Laboratory
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi

March, 1977

Introduction

The Pan American Seed Seminar was initiated in 1958 to encourage exchange of technical information concerning all aspects of seed among technicians from all Caribbean and Latin American countries. The USAID was largely responsible for the formation of this Seminar and has actively supported it. Initially, the USAID funded most of the activities and many of the participants and advisors. In more recent years, USAID participation has been limited to sponsoring selected speakers and advisors. The seven previous seminars have been hosted by Chile (58), Peru (60), Columbia (62), Brazil (63), Venezuela (66), Paraguay (70), Mexico (72). The VIII seminar was held in Honduras in 1977 and the IX Seminar has been tentatively scheduled for 1979 with Argentina serving as the host country.

Terms of Reference

The request for participation of personnel working under Contract AID/ta-C-1219 was made directly to MSU by the Permanent Secretary of the Seminar, Dr. Eledoro Fuentes of Chile. The contract manager was informed of this request and authorized participation for two of the contract's senior staff. Drs. C. H. Andrews and H. C. Potts participated in the seminar's activities March 6-11, 1977.

Activities

The VIII Pan American Seed Seminar was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras from March 6-11, 1977 (Appendix I). Seventeen Pan American countries were represented plus the U.S., Canada, Spain, and Switzerland. This seminar provided an excellent opportunity for the 168 representatives to participate and discuss similar or unique characteristics of the seed industry in their respective countries. Some countries reported considerable progress in Seed Program Development, while others

are still experiencing difficulties in various aspects of program development.

Many of the countries represented at this conference had received technical assistance in seed program development under the auspices of the MSU/AID Contract No. AID/ta-C-1219 (Appendix II). In view of the long-standing interest and committments of AID and MSU, contacts were established with the country delegates so that future plans and goals could be discussed and evaluated. We were pleased to note considerable enthusiasm for continued cooperation with the MSU/AID Contract, and numerous program requests were discussed.

Country Contacts

Costa Rica

Discussions with Dr. Ronald Echandi, Director, Centro para Investigaciones en Grano y Semillas, University of Costa Rica, centered around the possibility of conducting an intensive seed testing, analysis and quality control training course in San Jose. Those countries with a more advanced appreciation and understanding of seeds and seed programs will be encouraged to send participants for indepth training. Dr. Echandi indicated that he will initiate contacts to determine the interest and support for such a course.

Dominican Republic

Discussions with Sr. Vinicio Reyes, Director, del Departmento de Semilla in Santo Domingo revealed that he is attempting to establish an appropriate time and date for a training course. This program will be presented from a rather basic standpoint to encompass the broad and general concepts of an overall seed improvement program.

Colombia

Contract services in Colombia have not been continuous since 1971;

however, the current USAID Ag. Officer, Mr. Phil Smith, has re-established communications through AID/W with MSU. In Honduras we were able to contact Dr. Javier Bernal Eussee, Chief of the Seed Division, and tentatively set dates for a training course in the early fall. Since there has been a complete turnover of personnel in Colombia, the scope of the proposed program will include the more basic and broad concepts of all phases of seed improvement. More detailed and intensive courses will follow.

Ecuador

Contacts with the Ecuadorian delegates indicated that they wish to continue to emphasize their seed program by presenting additional seed improvement courses. Although no tentative dates were set, their delegates expressed an interest in contacting MSU at an early date concerning possible assistance.

Honduras

Honduras is still experiencing difficulties in various aspects of their seed program. The processing plant at San Pedro Sula continues to experience difficulties in attaining operational efficiency and with equipment acquisition and maintenance. In addition, assistance is needed to set the final stages of seed regulatory control, its adoption and implementation. The current director of the seed program publicly stated that he did not know why certain provisions were in the proposed seed law and that those technicians who "understood" the law no longer worked for the Ministry. Another of the delegates from Honduras suggested a series of seed improvement seminars at strategic locations in which MSU could provide assistance. It appears that a major problem in Honduras is that of estimating actual seed demands and then following through with adequate commericalization. Further study and assistance in this area is badly needed but has not been requested.

Appendix 1

Program VIII Pan-American Seed Seminar
Tegucigalpa, Honduras March 6-12, 1977

March 7	0800-0900	Registration
	0900-1045	Preparatory Session
	1100-1200	Inauguration
	1400-1730	Reports of Seed Programs of Individual Countries
March 8	0800-0945	Technical Papers: (Simultaneous Sessions) (a) Plant Breeding (b) National and International Commerce
	1000-1045	Conference: "USAID Technical Assistance Program for Seeds in Latin American Countries." Dr. Howard C. Potts, MSU/AID Contract ta-C-1219.
	1045-1230	Roundtable Discussion: Improved Seed in Programs of Technology Transfer
	1430-1600	Roundtable Discussion: Breeders Rights and Protection of Genetic Materials in Developing Countries.
	1615-1800	Technical Papers: (Simultaneous Sessions) (c) Processing and Storage (d) Seed Research
March 9	0900-1100	Tour of Pan-American Agricultural School at Zamorano
	1100-1200	Conference: "Germplasm Bank." Agr. Victor Munoz Pan-American Agricultural School
	1400-1600	Tour of Flower Seed Production Facilities - Zamorano
March 10	0800-0945	Technical Papers: (Simultaneous Sessions) (e) Production, Analysis and Certification (f) Education and Promotion
	1000-1045	Conference: "The Cartagena Accord for the Andean Pact Countries." Ing. Agri. Jaime Rodriguez Camacho, Director, Agricultural and Livestock Dept.
	1045-1230	Roundtable: Schemes for Production and Promotion of Improved Seed by the Public and Private Sectors

	1430-1600	Roundtable: Plans for Harmonizing the Services, Legislation, Certification, and Terminology for Seed in the Central-American, Caribbean, Andean Pact and ALAIC trade markets.
	1615-1700	Conference: "ISTA, the Organization, its Work, Importance and Principals." Dr. Eleodoro Fuentes, General Secretary, Pan-American Seed Seminar.
March 11	0800-1000	Technical Papers: (g) Seed Production and Technology
	1015-1230	Plenary Session
	1430-1730	Plenary Session
	1800	Closing Exercises

Appendix II

The USAID Technical Assistance Program in Seeds through the Mississippi State University Contract

Howard C. Potts
Professor of Agronomy-Seed Technology
Mississippi State University

In behalf of the Mississippi State University and, in particular, Dr. H. Dean Bunch, our Director of International Programs who was one of the early leaders of this Seminar along with your permanent Secretary, Dr. Fuentes, I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the technical assistance program and services available from our Laboratory through the USAID Mission in your home country.

For nearly 20 years, the Seed Technology Laboratory of Mississippi State University has been under contract to the USAID to provide short-term consultative services in all areas of seed production and technology to any country in which there is a USAID Mission. For those of you who are not aware of the scope of these services, I will briefly outline the two most important.

First, we can work with you in your home country in the following ways:

a. assist in planning, organization or reorganization and implementation of seed improvement programs or projects and their intergation into the overall country strategy for agricultural development.

b. work with you in the identification, analysis and hopefully resolution of technical and operational problems in seed production, harvesting, drying, processing, testing, storage and distribution.

c. conduct studies and analyses to determine the need for and feasibility of seed facilities and programs and, when needed and feasible, determine with your assistance the most efficient type, capacity, and location to include production sites, drying and storage units, processing facilities, testing and research laboratories as well as assist in setting up certification, foundation seed and seed regulatory programs.

d. work with you in the preliminary design and preparation of technical specifications of physical facilities and provide guidance in installation and operational checks of equipment.

e. Assist you in planning and execution of training programs of varying intensity, duration and emphasis on the technical, operational and managerial phases of a seed program.

The second major aspect of our contract, which many of you have expressed an interest in and used, is our "Information and Advisory Center." Under our contract with the USAID, we maintain a library of informational reprints and publications covering nearly every technical

aspect of seed related operations, programs and techniques. Much of this technical information is available in Spanish. All of the nearly 200 articles are available to you without charge. To obtain this information write to: Seed Technology Laboratory, Box 5267, Mississippi State, MS 39762, USA. When writing please indicate the specific crop or subject matter area in which you need information. We do not maintain supplies of publications printed by other organizations such as FAO, CYMMIT, CIAT, ISTA, etc. but will be glad to refer you to these organizations.

You are most directly affected when one or more of our staff comes to work with you to conduct a training course or to resolve a specific problem. To assist those with whom we have not had an opportunity to work to better visualize the type services available through our contract with the USAID, I will briefly summarize the consultant services we have rendered in Latin America during the past 3½ years.

Personnel from the Seed Technology Laboratory have made 31 separate visits to 11 different countries in Latin America. The average visit has been of two weeks duration. Additionally, our staff spent nearly 400 days at home either preparing for or following-up on the visits made to these countries. In most cases we have found it better for you and us to make 3 two-week visits over a period of time than to try to solve "all" the problems in a single six-week visit.

The countries visited and the activities conducted during the latest 3½ year period were:

Bolivia - 2 consultations - processing facility, design, and installation.

Costa Rica - 3 consultations - processing facility, design and installation. Seed Program Development.

Dominican Republic - 2 consultations - Seed Program Development and seed processing facilities.

Ecuador - 7 consultations - Review of seed program, two training courses, three consultations to design, prepare equipment specifications and then work with the architect.

El Salvador - 2 consultations - Redesign processing facility and consult with architects.

Guatemala - 1 consultation - Review of seed activities with ICTA, DIGESA and Rockefeller personnel.

Hati - 2 consultations - Review of seed program and development of implementation plan.

Honduras - 5 consultations - Seed program development, technical assistance on processing plant operations and seed legislation, planning and presenting a training course.

Panama - 3 consultations - three in-service training courses on operation and management of seed production and processing operations.

Peru - 1 consultation - Review of seed program.

Paraguay - 2 consultations - preparation of equipment specifications and consultations with designers.

In addition to these services you requested, our staff, in cooperation with the USAID Regional Office for Central America and Panama, IITA/ZN and the PCCMCA, conducted a survey of the current status of seed programs and facilities in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Costa Rica during late 1973 and early 1974.

Though not directly related to the USAID technical assistance contract, an increasing proportion of the technical assistance to the developing seed industries is achieved through those of you who have studied and worked with our staff for a few days or several years at our University, and then returned home to train your co-workers. One of the real rewards that we receive as teachers comes when one of you studies with us for awhile, returns home, and succeeds.

A total of 32 technicians from Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Columbia, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraquay and Venezuela will have earned either a BS, MS or PhD in Seed Technology from MSU during the past three years. Twenty-one of these men and women were from Brazil. Additionally, over the past 21 years, about 400 technicians from over 50 countries around the world, and I believe every Caribbean and Latin American country, have participated in the USAID sponsored Seed Improvement Training Course which we present each June and July. We are proud to have had a part in the progress that you have made over the past 20 years.

Concerning the USAID as an organization, I want to mention three items. What effect these will have upon the availability of our technical assistance, I do not know. Keep in mind that I am not an official of and can not speak for the USAID, but like many of you I am a very interested observer.

First, neither Dr. Andrews nor I have any knowledge of the Carter administration's policies or attitudes toward technical assistance for Latin America. However, as far as I know we can still supply information concerning seed peanuts.

A second factor is that the number of people working for the USAID has been reduced by over 50% during the past 10-12 years. Unfortunately for those of us most interested in the technical aspects of a program, most of this reduction of personnel has been in technically trained personnel. This means that when you contact the average USAID employee he or she will have minimal knowledge of your specific technical needs. This does not mean that the USAID personnel are not interested in assisting you, rather that you must more clearly think through and list your specific needs and plans before requesting assistance.

The third factor we must all recognize is that increasingly the U.S. funds for foreign assistance in the areas of agriculture, public safety, and health are being channeled through USAID sector development loans, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. This provides for greater input on the part of your government but decreases the discretionary funds available to the AID Mission operating in your country.

On the basis of regional study in Central America which I mentioned earlier, we arrived at five general observations concerning the development of seed programs. in Central America which are generally applicable to all of Latin America. I believe that all of us, you and me, must keep these factors in mind as we attempt to develop and implement seed programs.

1. One of the most serious constraints to development of effective seed programs is the "cheap" basic food policies in many countries. The subsistence farmer must produce enough basic food products for his family. These basic food products are rice, corn, and beans. The easiest way for small farmers to enter into commercial agriculture is to produce more basic food than they need for home consumption and to market the surplus for consumption by urban population. However, the low prices for basic food grains, especially at harvest time, offer little incentive to small farmers for surplus production. To produce a a surplus he would have to borrow money to buy improved seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc. He, like you and I, doesn't want to go in debt and work harder just to "break even". A market for surplus production must be readily available and prices must be high enough for the farmer to make a profit.

Sufficiently high prices for basic food grains to make it worthwhile for small farmer to produce surplus would, of course, cause dissatisfaction among urban workers, a very politically disadvantageous situation. Therein lies the dilemma; low food prices in the cities require low prices at the farm gate, which is a big disincentive for farmers to increase production and purchase seed of improved varieties.

2. Many of the problems in seed production and marketing arise from poor cooperation and coordination among the government agencies and private sector persons and firms involved. Reorganization of the public sector efforts in many of the countries, could provide better mechanisms for cooperation and coordination than in the past. As examples of what I mean, look at the rapidly developing seed programs of Columbia, Venezuela, Brazil and now, apparently, Ecuador.

3. Seed needs of large commercial farmers are adequately supplied. Large rice farmers buy improved rice seed every year. Hybrid corn seed are produced in the region and planted by large farmers. Hybrid sorghum seed is imported and sold to large farmers. Cotton producers have made provisions for supply of cottonseed, and so on. This suggests that the problems of poor supply and usage of improved seed of basic grains among small farmers are more socio-economic than technical. The capability to supply rice, bean, and corn seed for the subsistence farmer can be developed but such programs have special requirements. Demand for and usage of good seed are two different matters. The report about the study

made in Columbia that subsistance farmers accept and use good seed of new varieties at only 10% the rate of acceptance and use by commerical farmers should cause each of us to think a second time when establishing seed production or distribution goals.

4. Planners of various agricultural sector plans and intensive action programs generally require an input of improved seed, but seed supply is assumed. Often, little or no provision is made for assuring such supply or supporting efforts to develop this supply. Fertilizer and pesticide procurement procedures are usually specified in detail but improved seed are, in a sense, assumed to spontaneously materialize in the needed quantities, at the right time and place. This simply doesn't happen. A comprehensive seed industry is a "new industry" for most of your countries.

5. Considerable assistance has been given Latin American countries in seed program/industry development, and MSU has been involved in many of these efforts. With one or two notable exceptions, however, concentrated assistance has been received then stopped before all facets of the seed program were functional. Considering the rapid turnover in personnel involved in seed programs and the many organizational changes, etc., periodic follow-up assistance could be of unestimatable value. A seed program/industry is not established in a year or even in five years. It is a long term undertaking and we trust that the MSU/AID assistance program is geared to meeting this need.

You may or may not agree with these observations and certainly not all of them apply to every country but some of them apply to the U.S. as well as your country.

Before closing, let me outline the manner by which you may obtain the technical services of one or more of our staff, since delegates from at least five countries represented here have already contacted us concerning this procedure.

1 Determine the specific needs that you have, when and how the the consultant can help you, and what support your organization can give.

2. Contact the Agricultural office of your local USAID Mission and discuss your needs and planned use of the consultants. If the USAID officer agrees the services are needed you will need to make an official request in writing and he will make the request for our services to Washington, D. C. These requests are relayed to Mississippi State, usually by phone, and you should receive confirmation in one or two weeks.

3. Once we receive authorization from Washington, we can arrange the specific details of the technical services directly with the Mission's agricultural office and you.

The key is for you to plan your needs and make the request through your local USAID office. Keep in mind, and you may want to mention this to the AID Officer you contact, that the salaries, international travel,

and per diem of our staff members are without charge to the local Mission or your government for visits up to six weeks.

In closing, should you have any requests for further information concerning the services available through our technical assistance contract, let us know. We look forward to working with you even more frequently in the future than in the past.