Country Progress Report No. R14/P1

Working to Develop Support at the Political Level for National Agricultural Research: the Case of the Dominican Republic

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International Service for National Agricultural Research

The International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) began operating at its headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands on September 1, 1980. It was established by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), on the basis of recommendations from an international task force, for the purpose of assisting governments of developing countries to strengthen their agricultural research. It is a non-profit autonomous agency, international in character, and non-political in management, staffing and operations.

Of the thirteen centers in the CGIAR network, ISNAR is the only one which focuses primarily on national agricultural research issues. It provides advice to governments, upon request, on organization, planning, manpower development, staff requirements, financial and infrastructure requirements, and related matters, thus complementing the activities of other assistance agencies. Additionally, ISNAR has an active training and communications program which cooperates with national agricultural research programs in developing countries.

ISNAR also plays an active role in assisting these national programs to establish links with both the international agricultural research centers and donors.

ISNAR is supported by a number of the members of CGIAR, an informal group of approximately 30 donors; it includes countries, development banks, international organizations, and foundations. In 1985, funding for ISNAR's core program was provided by:

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E. Trigo

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I. INTRODUCTION

Strong political support and a favorable policy environment are necessary conditions for the emergence of vigorous national research systems. The validity of this proposition has been confirmed not only by ISNAR experience, but also by that of others throughout the developed and developing world.

While the importance of a favorable environment is generally recognized, very little is known and discussed about the nature of the institutional processes through which support flows, and the specific dimensions involved. Usually, support is equated with the level of resources allocated to research. The logic and origin of the funding, or the mechanisms through which funds are assigned to research, are often not even considered relevant topics for discussion.

The dangers of confusing availability of funds, at any given time, with effective support for national agricultural research systems, are crudely highlighted by a number of national experiences where there was a failure to recognize that high funding levels at certain times were not the result of long-term national commitments, but rather that of donor interest and pressure. The ups and downs of national research institutes in Latin America can be shown to coincide with the different waves of external assistance. Donor support did not imply real national commitment, and once the externally funded projects had run their term, research organizations were unable to establish a successful claim on domestic resources. There was no policy level constituency for agricultural research; then, with little understanding of the requirements, potential, and limitations of research, the necessary decisions and funds were not forthcoming. Quite often, a vicious circle establishes itself, with a low level of support resulting in low productivity, thereby perpetuating the situation. Similar instances can be cited in relation to the post-independence evolution of the colonial research institutions in Asia, and more recently in Africa.

Long-term support results from understanding, not only the need for a minimum level of stable national resources, but also the role of research in agricultural development and as an integral component of agricultural policy. Outside support should not be looked upon only in terms of the level of resources that are allocated to research at a given time, but also in relation to the willingness of the policy-makers to make and implement decisions in regard to a variety of aspects affecting the development and effectiveness of the research system. Decisions concerning the development of organizational formats that facilitate effective management of the available resources, and the establishment of mechanisms to link research to clients, users and other policy instruments, could sometimes constitute a more accurate indicator of long-term support than high levels of resource allocation.

The level of political support that a research system receives is also greatly affected by a number of events and forces over which the system itself has little or no control. Crisis situations in the agricultural sector, requiring technological solutions, constitute an important

catalyst for action in strengthening agricultural research capacities. Similarly, activities and opinions of external agents, such as donors or international agencies, can at certain times represent important constituencies for local political processes, in support of agricultural research. The history of the development of a number of research institutions in both Asia and Latin America provides interesting examples of such influences. However, it is important to note that for these forces to have an impact, it is necessary that specific proposals be made, highlighting the ways in which research will contribute to the solution of a crisis, or providing a counterbalance to external interests and influences. The development of such proposals is the responsibility of the research system. Unfortunately, the capability for this development has not been sufficiently strong in a number of cases.

In the remainder of this paper, the case of the agricultural research system of the Dominican Republic, between 1982 and 1985, will be used to highlight the different aspects involved in the development of political support for national agricultural research. Drawing upon the findings of the ISNAR review, analysis and planning mission to the Dominican Republic in 1983, Section II summarizes the main characteristics and problems of the Dominican agricultural research system. Section III discusses the strategy followed in developing the political support required to implement the changes needed for the improvement of the system, and the nature of ISNAR participation in that process. Finally, section IV summarizes some of the main lessons that can be extracted from the experience to date.

II. THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEM OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: A CONTRAST OF STRONG POINTS AND LIMITING FACTORS

Agricultural Research in the Dominican Department of Agriculture * is organized as a line department through the Secretary of Agriculture (SEA). The basic unit is the Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria (DIA), which includes five research centers and a number of experiment stations, located in the main agroecological regions of the country, and reports to an Under-Secretary in charge of research, extension and agricultural education. Research at DIA represents most of the country's technology generation efforts, since very little is being done at the universities or in the private sector.

A general overview of this system reveals a picture of contrasts. In aggregate terms, performance has been low, at least in what can be inferred from certain general indicators. During the last decade, the country has been forced to increase its imports as a means of satisfying domestic food requirements, and the national processing industry has continually increased its use of imported raw materials. This situation has resulted from the stagnation, and in some cases the sharp fall, of production levels.

This section is based on section 4 of the ISNAR Dominican Republic Mission Report to the Government, entitled "Agricultural Research in the Dominican Republic: Analysis, Evaluation, and Proposals for an Improved System."

At the same time, it is also possible to quote cases such as that of rice - the staple diet in the Dominican Republic - in which important advances have been made during the past decade, both in productivity and in total production, thus making possible a reduction in import levels and an increase in per capita consumption. Tobacco and coffee have also been relatively successful research programs.

A review of the characteristics and functioning of the research system also reveals a group of contradictory factors. The system undoubtedly contains favorable elements establishing a basis for potentially high productivity. On the other hand, it is possible to identify a number of factors that effectively limit the efficiency of the system. The main reason for a low productivity situation appears to be the fact that the limiting factors outweigh the potentially efficient operation allowed by the positive elements.

Areas of Strength

Within the organizational format that has prevailed up to the present time, a number of positive elements can be identified. Among them is the operational base of the system, a cadre of relatively well-trained researchers, and a set of research programs which a priori appear to reflect appropriately the country's needs and priorities.

The operational base of the system. The structure consisting of the research centers and their experiment stations, and the highly decentralized nature of operations, constitute the principal asset of the Dominican research system.

The terms of reference and spatial coverage of the centers as a whole strike a balance between subsistence and export crops, and between traditional regions and new areas for potential development. This structure reflects the country's problems, its technological development requirements, and the aims of economic policies, in general, and agricultural policies in particular.

The physical infrastructure and equipment of the centers and experiment stations is adequate in general terms; within the existing operational structure, the centers enjoy considerable autonomy in decision-making and problem solving. This facilitates communication with the farmers and the transfer of research results. Also, centers have a relatively short vertical chain of command, and work on the principle of cooperation and interchange. This is reflected in an atmosphere favorable to individual creativity and initiative, which is an essential ingredient in the success of any research program.

Research programs as a reflection of the technical capability of the system. The formal structure of the research programs, summarized in the Plan Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria (PLANIA), as concerns product coverage and specific subject content, is another positive aspect of the system. The present 1980-82 programs cover the main problems in Dominican agriculture, both in terms of products and of regions. In general terms, they appear to be on target, even though some areas, such as the management of natural resources in ecologically disadvantaged zones, and socioeconomic problems, are not covered. Also, the documentation generated by the plans formulated in recent years (PLANIA,

crop programs, etc.) reflects a capacity to relate research to broad national aims and priorities, and also to define appropriate scientific themes for the production problems encountered. This can be taken as an indication that the system not only has certain minimum scientific capabilities, but also the technical skills required to outline and implement the mechanisms required for the fulfilment of some of the essential functions.

Positive experiences, which can be used as models for strengthening the rest of the system. Another important indicator of the potentialities of the system, which at the same time provides ideas and alternatives for improvement, is the existence of some successful cases in the implementation of specific research programs. These successful cases exist within the present institutional conditions, and constitute examples of the system's potentialities. As such, they can be regarded as a testing ground for identifying elements responsible for success, and in searching for strategies to achieve similar success in the whole system.

The cases of rice and beans, although very different from each other, provide experience on certain central aspects. Rice is an example of the importance of continuity and the efficient use of international cooperation. It also provides a possible model for relations between research and technology transfer, and underlines the importance of direct relations in the field between the two services. These experiences should be taken into account in any effort to strengthen research activity.

The bean program and, specifically, the cooperative project funded under US Aid Title XII, is a small-scale example of the operational potential of the system. Available experience supports the appropriateness of the planning and programming methodology used, and the feasibility of program coordination at the national level. This situation also shows that, if funds are available on a stable basis, and if they are managed in accordance with the requirements of approved work schedules, the system has the technical and administrative capabilities necessary to keep a research program operating.

Limiting Factors

In addition to the positive elements discussed in the preceding section, the ISNAR review, analysis, and planning mission identified a group of factors which limit the functioning and effectiveness of the agricultural research system in the Dominican Republic. Some of these relate to the operation of the research system itself and the nature of the staff; others are of a more general nature, and refer to relations of the research system with the rest of the Dominican Republic system, the resources received, and the services provided. All of this is, to a greater or lesser degree, interrelated with the institutional nature of the system and its overall limitations. The central factor at this level is the operation of the DIA National Department.

The availability of financial resources. The lack of financial resources has constituted one of the main limiting factors in the functioning of the research system. Without an adequate and stable flow of funds, it is virtually impossible to expect results from research. In the Dominican

experience, funds have been neither adequate nor stable. Historically, the funds granted to agricultural research have not only been very much less than the country is able to afford but, in recent years, they have been markedly reduced. Moreover, the actual disbursement of funds has been highly unstable and based on non-technical considerations.

As a result of difficulties in adjusting personnel costs in the short-term, reductions have resulted in a continuously increasing proportion of the budgets going to personnel costs, and an almost total disappearance of funds for operating expenses. In 1983, personnel costs represented 97% of total expenditure and only 3% went to capital and operational costs. As a consequence of this situation, the system can only carry out a minimal part of its activities, which does not reflect its potential. Even at this reduced level, the system faces problems because of the unpredictability of payments. As a result, programming priorities have been disregarded, and the lack of continuity has resulted in the loss of important measures in some areas.

A low productivity image. The system has an image of low productivity. This is partly the result of the funding problem, which necessarily means that few programs are carried out, and that there is a lack of continuity in research. This problem is not, however, the most important, since it can be solved as the financial situation improves and the flow of funds is regularized. Other factors, of a more structural nature, contribute to an image of low productivity. The first is the lack of attention given to publication of research results. Only a small proportion of the research carried out is eventually documented, and little of the information generated becomes accessible to the various groups concerned. This shortcoming significantly limits the productivity of the resources invested in research. The failure to document research results reduces the possibility of its being known and eventually used by farmers. This hinders the continuity of effort, causes repetition and duplication of research, and makes effective assessment virtually impossible.

A second important aspect in the low productivity image is lack of effective links with higher levels of the planning and policy-making system. This is partly the result of DIA's institutional situation and its lack of an administrative chain of command, which has hindered the establishment of the required channels of communication. In the opinion of the mission, it is also certain that the research system does not produce information relevant to these levels. In the cases where this information is available, the lack of adequate documentation and distribution limits its usefulness.

In this way, the various elements combine to create the vicious circle within which the present system is trapped. Undoubtedly, financial factors have caused considerable restrictions, but it must also be recognized that the problem goes beyond limited resources and is attributable to aspects inherent in the operation of the system.

The lack of a personnel policy and the imperfect functioning of the planning, follow-up, and assessment mechanisms. The development and maintenance of a highly qualified scientific workforce, and the maintenance of work programs oriented towards the country's objectives, undoubtedly constitute essential aspects for the success of a research system. Achievement of this goal requires the capacity to formulate and

establish a staff policy consistent with the requirements of research and researchers, and mechanisms for planning, programming, follow-up, and assessment, which produce relevant information on a continuous basis.

In its present situation, the system does not have a coherent personnel policy. Even though personnel have remained fairly stable, the productivity of the available human resources has been seriously reduced. The lack of incentives and prospects for a professional career has induced researchers to diversify, and reduced their interest in obtaining higher qualifications in research.

The planning-programming-monitoring-evaluation cycle is central to the efficient management of any type of system. It is by this means that specific activities are linked with the whole, and are related to the outside world. The information produced by monitoring and evaluation allows adjustments to be introduced to particular activities, where necessary, and relates the results to financial management, personnel policy, and decisions. Within the field of agricultural research, the medium and long term can be related to immediate tasks and results. This is imperative, given the long-term nature of most research, and the necessity to produce results in the short-term, in order to retain the political support essential for obtaining a regular and adequate flow of funds. Under the present operational structure and instability of funding, this process has broken down. Planning is not carried out on a continuous basis, and virtually no mechanisms exist for follow-up and control. This has hindered the planning process feedback. As a result, the usefulness of the major effort involved in the establishment of PLANIA and the crop programs has been significantly reduced. Moreover, the annual cycle of planning is seen by researchers to fulfill functions which are more bureaucratic than technical.

<u>The operational weakness of the DIA National Department: common denominator of the factors limiting the effectiveness of the system</u>. Following on the above discussion, the situation of the Dominican agricultural research system can be presented as being the result of trade-offs between a number of positive and negative factors. A relatively good physical infrastructure and adequate human resources, combined with a reasonable program structure, are undoubtedly extremely important assets. The scarcity of resources, low-productivity image, and lack of a personnel policy and planning, follow-up and assessment mechanisms, are limiting factors, and can be identified as the active elements within a vicious circle of low productivity which more than offset the high productivity potential linked to the advantages.

Any action seeking to break any one of the links in the vicious circle should be useful to strengthen the system and make better use of its good points. Efforts have been made at various levels, in the form of detailed proposals for implementation of operational policies, and instruments for the orientation and implementation of research activities. The available documentation on personnel policy and the planning, programming. monitoring, and evaluation procedures, show unequivocally that these aspects have been acknowledged as shortcomings of the system. Proposals have been put forward to improve the situation, with the support of donors and technical assistance from agencies such as the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), IICA, FAO, and various other bilateral aid organizations. This raises the question as to why these proposals have not been implemented, or why their implementation has not

been more effective in those situations where attempts have been made.

The central element seems to be the DIA National Department's inability to implement the aforesaid mechanisms, and to fulfil other central functions, such as ensuring a continuous and adequate flow of funds, coordinating the activities of the various operational units, and maintaining communication channels between the system and the political leaders on the one hand, and the farmers on the other.

Within the present institutional structure, the DIA National Department, as a dependency of the Secretary of Agriculture, lacks the chain of command and administrative independence necessary for making decisions on certain essential aspects, such as personnel policy and conditions of service of researchers, and management of funds for research. In this respect, it has had to adapt to the guidelines and general administrative procedures of the SEA, which are intended to meet the requirements of large-scale administrative processes where bureaucratic criteria prevail over technical criteria.

Without the possibility of making decisions regarding research personnel, and without direct management of funds, the planning, monitoring, and evaluation process loses value as an instrument for effective administration. The possibility of rewarding or penalizing personnel, and of managing the disbursement of funds adjusted to the needs of the work programs of the operational units, are necessary conditions for the assessment process to provide effective feedback to planning-programming.

This situation is not resolved at the level of the Under-Secretariat for Agricultural Research, Extension and Training, to which the DIA reports, as this body does not have any greater control over personnel decisions and financial management. Personnel decisions are essentially the prerogative of the Secretary of Agriculture, and funds are centrally managed through the Administrative Under-Secretariat in a context that allows little consideration for technical criteria.

These shortcomings have effectively prevented the DIA National Department from fulfilling other functions incumbent upon the central unit of the system. Without control over the essential management instruments - personnel policy and management of resources - it has lacked the basis for coordinating the activities of the system and establishing channels of communication with the political leaders, and with the current and potential clients of research. Furthermore, its position in a third-level hierarchy within the Ministry has placed it on the sidelines in crucial decision processes, such as that concerned with resource allocation.

Given the decentralized nature of the system and the high degree of operational independence allowed to the centers, full control over personnel and resource management, and the planning and coordinating functions, are essential for the efficient operation of the system. The non-fulfilment of these functions is the main reason for the low productivity image, and for the fact that the country is not receiving the benefits which should accrue from the Dominican agricultural research system.

III. THE STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM

The reasons for the situation described were political and institutional and beyond the control of the research system itself. The necessary action was to remove institutional restrictions impeding full realization of the system's potential. It was not a matter of increasing resource allocations to agricultural research - this route had already been followed in the mid 1970s, when substantial funding for research activities was included in a series of rural development projects financed by IDB. The increased funding coming from these projects contributed temporarily, by increasing the capacity of the system, but had no lasting positive effect, as it was not replaced by regular funds at the end of the projects. Furthermore, there is evidence that, in many cases, funds earmarked for research did not even reach the centers carrying the programs.

In such circumstances, the strengthening strategy emphasized structural change in the institutional environment, to obtain a more efficient and effective research process. The key element in this strategy was the recommendation to transfer research responsibilities from the Secretary of Agriculture to a new semiautonomous research institute, the "Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuaria" (IDIA). The expectation was that a new organization, administratively independent from SEA, would be able to control and link key management processes, such as personnel policy and administration, planning, programming, evaluation and fund administration, etc., and thereby create conditions conducive to effective research. The necessary increase in funding support would come, in the long-term, from the increased capacity to sell research at the national level: with better results, it is easier to make a strong case for research. In the short-term, an autonomous institution will be better positioned to attract and make more effective use of international assistance opportunities.

Actions taken and ISNAR's role

ISNAR's involvement in the Dominican Republic started in late 1982, at the request of the Secretary of Agriculture. The request was prompted by a number of circumstances, all of which influenced the events that followed. The research system was deteriorating rapidly, and had a very poor image. That few results with an impact on production could be expected was a widespread conviction, even within the research system itself. However, at the same time, the need for an aggressive technology generation effort in support of the country's development efforts was stressed. An example of this tendency was a comprehensive study to analyze the science and technology situation and requirements in the agricultural sector, developed by the Science and Technology Department of the National Planning Office (ONAPLAN). Finally, there was a group of people, led by a very influential person, who were capable of interpreting the situation correctly and recognizing the need for action, and who exercised sufficient influence to activate the policy-makers into making the decision to invite ISNAR.

Given this context, in November 1982 ISNAR agreed to organize a review, analysis and planning mission. A team of six persons visited the country in February and March 1983, in order to diagnose the system and to develop a set of recommendations for its improvement. In doing so, the mission worked in close cooperation with a counterpart team and officials from the Secretary of Agriculture and the research system. The proposal to create IDIA resulted from this process.

At the implementation level, the strategy required legislative action to ensure decentralization of the administration. Operationally, first there was the need to develop a proposal for the new Institute, satisfactory to all parties involved; second, it was necessary to prompt the Dominican congress to approve the law needed to create IDIA, and to secure the additional resources needed to implement the new structures and programs.

Working to develop a proposal acceptable to all parties involved. In regard to the first step, the intention was to obtain agreement from the different interest groups over the draft law, and for the Secretary of Agriculture to forward it for approval to the President and then to Congress. Three areas of action were involved in achieving this objective. First, acceptance of the idea had to be gained within SEA and within the research system itself. Second, because of high politicization, the top echelons of the research system had a rapid turnover rate. Consequently, there was a need to brief new appointees on the role and importance of the proposed Institute and to obtain their commitment. Third, as the discussion progressed, new partners came into the picture (universities, extension, donor agencies); they had to be briefed, and specific adjustments had to be made to ensure their support. Activities in this initial phase concentrated around the improvement of the proposal and the discussion of its implications. The responsibility for action lay with a special task force, which was to provide leadership and continuity of action. This group was partially integrated by members of the counterpart team to the ISNAR mission and operated within the National Agricultural Council*.

The terms of reference of the task force covered a broad range of issues, including the development of the organizational and operational mechanisms for IDIA, as well as the search for additional funding.

ISNAR staff participated through periodic visits, to consult on specific issues that emerged as the proposal was discussed at different levels. Events proceeded at two very distinct paces. At first, action was slow, since altering the research system was seen as necessary, but of impact only in the long-term.

The food riots of April 1984 (prompted in part by increases in food prices following an agreement with IMF) highlighted the need for technical change and agricultural productivity increases, and attracted attention to the proposal. At the same time, a cabinet reshuffle brought to the SEA an administration, highly sensitive to the necessity of

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* The National Agricultural Council is a multisectoral advisory body on agricultural policy, chaired by the President of the Republic.

providing an adequate organizational environment for agricultural research. These two events provided the appropriate context for the President to accept the draft law and send it to the legislature for final consideration.

Prompting Legislative Action. At the legislative level, two questions constituted the focus of attention: whether research is a valid element of solution for the problems facing the country; and whether the creation of a new organization is an appropriate way to achieve the desired results.

Two methods were used to work with the legislators. Initially, the task force and other officials under the Secretary of Agriculture contacted some key law-makers, on an individual basis, to brief them on the nature and objectives of the proposal for a new research institute. Once all parties involved had agreed on the draft law, a national workshop was organized to discuss the pros and cons. This event centered on the agricultural committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and included the participation of the present and several past Secretaries of Agriculture. the present and past heads of research and extension, and other influential people connected with the agricultural sector.

The areas covered in the workshop agenda ranged from discussions on the role of research and technology in development, to the consideration of the proposal to create IDIA. Also debated were the priority areas for technological development, and some examples of how research could be used to increase production. The workshop methodology relied heavily on study cases, constructed so as to highlight the problems of the present structure of agricultural research within the SEA, and the reasons why it was expected that the proposed organizationnal change would provide a basis for more effective research. ISNAR helped to organize the workshop and provided materials in the form of case studies; members of the original mission also participated as resource persons.

The workshop proved highly successful, as the cases presented provided a good basis for discussion of the main issues involved, and gave the opportunity to all interested parties to express their views. The result of the event was the tacit support of the agricultural committees of both the House and the Senate, and an agreement to the modifications that should be made in the proposal sent by the President to Congress. Furthermore, it was also agreed that, to facilitate the adjustments, the SEA task force would also work with the legislators and assist them in developing the modifications and the background material needed for public sessions and floor discussions of the bill.

In late March 1985, the Senate unanimously approved the law. The next step was to obtain the approval of the House of Representatives; at this point the project has encountered some difficulties. A group of Representatives, while supporting the creation of the new Institute, objected to the composition of its Board of Directors on the basis of the balance between public and private representation. To solve the impasse it was agreed that the Agricultural Committee would have a public hearing on the project. At the hearing, held in mid-May 1985, speakers from all sectors supported the creation of IDIA, but called for an increase in the number of members representing the public sector, to facilitate the integration of research and agricultural development policies. In line

with these views, the Committee report recommends the House should approve the project, but conditional to the modification of the article about the structure of the Board. The new article proposes a composition similar to the one offered as an example in the ISNAR Report of 1983, and assures a simple majority to the public sector representation. This modification implies a further delay for the implementation of IDIA, since the proposal will have to return to the Senate after its approval in the House. At the time of writing (early June 1985) efforts were being made to secure its final approval during the present legislative session which ends July 1985.

Working to Develop Donor Support for Implementation of IDIA. As the process evolved, it became clear that there was a need to change the style of operation, and to move from a general approach to one of concentration on the development of specific subjects and issues. With the imminence of IDIA's implementation, it became necessary to prepare for the operational stage of the organization, on short notice, to take advantage of the momentum that its formal creation would initiate.

Given the economic situation facing the country, it was not realistic to expect a substantial increase in domestic support for agricultural research. Consequently, increased external donor assistance became a necessary condition for IDIA's success. Donor assistance is needed in the short-term, to set in place the new central coordinating structure and to upgrade and utilize existing research capacities; medium- and long-term support is required to implement a new set of research programs addressing the country's priority problems.

Starting in August and September, ISNAR assisted the task force efforts to secure additional funding support from donor sources. In order to strengthen the capacity of the task force to develop the necessary concepts and projects, and to interact with the legislative process, ISNAR placed in the Dominican Republic a consultant to work full-time with the group. During September and October, two projects were developed for discussion with UNDP-FAO and European donors. In both cases, the focus was on the development of the central planning and coordinating capacity, and the short-term in-country training, so as to acquaint research personnel and administrators with the requirements and opportunities offered by the new structure. ISNAR's view was that before a long-term plan and project could be envisaged, a minimum of planning and priority-setting capacity should be established. Efforts with European donors have been unsuccessful to date, but progress has been made with UNDP-FAO, and in March 1985 an FAO mission visited the country, to discuss the project prepared with the assistance of ISNAR staff and consultants.

In the first half of 1984, USAID started to show interest in supporting the improvement of the Dominican agricultural research system. Their initial emphasis, however, was on the promotion of a structure similar to that of the Land Grant Universities; high priority was given to the development of an institutional model, which would bring together the research at SEA and the universities and extension activities. To this purpose, AID invited several consultants to review the situation of the research-extension systems and the viability of such a proposal. On several occasions in the course of this process ISNAR staff interacted with the AID consultants to brief them on the reasons that had lead to

the recommendation to create a research institute functionally linked to, but administratively independent of the country's university and extension institutions. The consultants' reports stressed the validity of ISNAR's Review and Planning Mission recommendations, and proposed that AID should consider providing long-term support, conditional to the creation of IDIA. In late 1984 those recommendations were summarized in a project identification document, which considers support for a ten-year planning period. In the course of March and April 1985, ISNAR staff and consultants collaborated with USAID to develop a project strategy. While concentrating on the long-term support, this strategy also attempts to assure short-term resources necessary to make IDIA operational immediately after its creation is approved by Congress. At the time of writing, ISNAR and USAID are working to develop a cooperative agreement for the implementation of such strategy.

IV. SOME LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DOMINICAN EXPERIENCE

The process described highlights a number of aspects that must be taken into close consideration, when working to develop support at the political level for national agricultural research. The first is the importance of the presence in the country of a group of people capable of understanding the problems and potentials of the research system, and working for its development. External assistance, in this case ISNAR's, can provide a crucial input, but the necessary continuity must come from the research establishment itself.

The food riots of April 1984, and the impact they had on the on-going process to strengthen the research system, emphasized the important role that a crisis situation can play as a catalyst for action, if it is linked to technology and consequently to research. But once again, the Dominican experience also highlights the importance of the system having the capacity - people with an interest in research - to take advantage of the opportunity, and generate the necessary proposals. At this stage, ISNAR played an important, but essentially supportive role; taking advantage of a crisis situation implies entering the arena of local politics, and that can only be done by local people.

The variety of different constituencies with which it is necessary to work and the need to develop different methods of operation to suit their particular characteristics, is another important issue. As the discussion moved beyond the research system, it became necessary to work with people not fully convinced of the value of research, and with special interests, not necessarily compatible with those of the Secretary of Agriculture. The existence of a comprehensive analysis of the system, such as the ISNAR Mission Report, was a major element, providing a starting point from which specific aspects or proposals could be discussed. The organization of a national workshop also proved an important element, as all parties involved were given a chance to come together and argue their specific points of view. The case study method proved an extremely useful system for orienting and supporting the discussions.

A final consideration concerns the time scale involved. The process described has taken over two years, and to date the proposal is only halfway through the legislative process. This fact should be kept in

mind when initiating efforts to strengthen research that require the development of support at the political level.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DIA	Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
IDB	Interamerican Development Bank
IDIA	Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuarias
IICA	Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Cooperation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ONAPLAN	Oficina Nacional de Planificación
PLANIA	Plan Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria
SEA	Secretaría de Agricultura
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development