

THE ICA PROGRAM AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

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The complex system in which technical assistance, agriculture, and the foreign policy of the United States join forces to help strengthen the free world is not easy to explain. Phrases and words bandied about in headlines, such as foreign aid, technical assistance, Mutual Security, Point Four—and how agriculture is a vital unit of this entire idea—need to be clarified to be fully understood.

In more than fifty countries over the world, agriculture is part of a new potent force on a new type of battleground, a battleground where more food and more kinds of food and improved living, together with what men think, is far more important than lead and gunpowder. In some newly independent nations, the agriculturists we send are rapidly becoming the right arm of our foreign policy. The men and women doing a job out there would rarely consider themselves diplomats, yet they are—and oftentimes the very best.

Just how did these seemingly incredible situations develop?

IN THE BEGINNING

When the foreign aid program came into being in 1948, its major purpose was to rebuild the countries of Western Europe that had been devastated by the war. The underlying aim was partly to wipe out conditions which could foster future wars, and partly to resist the spread of communism. Western Europe's agricultural plant had been badly damaged, production had fallen far below prewar levels, and diets were poor both in quantity and quality.

The European recovery program was beamed at a particular set of conditions, and the policy followed was tied to those conditions. Europe had several outstanding research institutions that had conducted high-level basic studies. But no effective means was available to carry those findings to the growers and cultivators constituting the agricultural producers group. No agricultural extension service had been organized to publish or disseminate information about improved agricultural practices.

One year after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the European recovery program had about been concluded, and within the envisioned four-year period. The agriculture of the nations had been so improved that the quantity of food per capita was as great or greater than before

the war and the quality of the diet was very much better. So the goal in agriculture in Europe had been achieved. But on other fronts the United States continued to supply financial assistance to Western Europe, primarily to enable our allies to rearm and fulfill military goals set up in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Part of this aid was given in the form of American farm products, thus using some of the growing U. S. surplus farm products in a beneficial way to promote economic development.

After the start of the Korean conflict, the emphasis on the Mutual Security Program shifted from Western Europe to the Far East, the Middle East, and to North Africa—throughout most of the so-called underdeveloped countries. Although these countries are predominantly agricultural, diets in most of them were at or below subsistence level. Now let us look at the agriculture in these countries. Some did not have a ministry of agriculture or college trained agriculturists. Others had weak ministries and a few generally inadequately trained men. Often no training was provided at all for the farm families, no credit was available for them, and the land tenure system left too little of the small amounts produced on the land, for those who produced it. Cooperatives in the true sense hardly existed. Even though most people in these countries were rural, little progress had been made in farming methods or farm living in the past thousand years. Yet the population was climbing steadily.

In the face of these conditions, the Mutual Security Program had to develop new yardsticks. Inadequate agricultural production is closely related to other problems, such as lack of skills or properly trained people, unstable or ineffective government, inadequate transportation facilities, and lack of communication both within and outside the country.

More recently our attention has been drawn to the rapidly emerging nations of Africa south of the Sahara—where about 140,000 black people are living in the bush. If we look at the conditions from which these nations are emerging, we can readily see that still another new set of conditions faces whoever tries to meet the problems there.

How can agriculture be improved under these varied conditions? Too often poor nutrition and such diseases as malaria, schistosomiasis, and others reduce the productive efforts of the farm families just when that energy is needed for planting or harvesting. Therefore, any agricultural program to help these people help themselves must be coordinated with other programs—health and education. An integrated attack is needed.

Developing a policy to guide such programs becomes difficult.

OBJECTIVES IN ICA AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

The solution of the agricultural problem does not lie in providing new gadgetry or a bunch of tractors, or adding new physical resources. Rather, the solution often lies in better use and management of existing knowledge and resources. Of greatest importance perhaps is the need for thoroughly inculcating the philosophy that knowledge is useful *only* when it is put to work for people—and that knowledge is most useful when it is working for *most* of the people.

American agriculture has always shared its know-how. Today we are sharing something called extension—and that land-grant college system with its triangle of *research, teaching, and extension*. This technology being shared is something typically American, something that neither the Soviets nor any other nation can claim.

Let us see how some of these situations develop. A somewhat typical country is one that has recently become independent. Its leaders are eager to have a place in today's modern world. Many of the political figures guiding the destiny and policies of this new nation have been educated abroad. They know a battle is being waged today for men's minds. They look at their own problems and use a logic something like this:

Agricultural machinery is available from either side. Research findings have been available for some time. Year after year the United States continues to produce a wide variety of farm products in superabundance. Point by point, the situation is studied, and the comparison between nations shows that the United States has something special. It has a practical college curriculum, a practical research program, an effective extension service, and a good farm credit program. The obvious and correct conclusion is that this is the reason for the sustained high level of agricultural production.

So a request comes through the international channels. A mission is organized, and a team of agricultural experts moves into action. Each individual country has a program, with a series of projects tailored to its needs, both from a long-term view and a short-term response such as a "crash" type project to meet immediate contingencies. Such programs and projects are worked out jointly by the U. S. mission and the host country.

Long-range tasks call for the development of new institutional arrangements, often requiring a change in traditional attitudes or customs. Impact projects which yield quick results are needed to bolster the hopes of the people while the slower, more basic improvements are taking place. Certainly, sometimes quick-benefit projects

provide the economic basis for the longer-range programs. Such programs include spreading ideas and distributing better seeds, better baby chicks, and better sires among the host country's farm families.

Another project is the college contract program. Faculty and administrators move from the U. S. campus to the site abroad. Teachers and students come from overseas for training in the U. S. Facilities often are required to enable the newly trained teachers to do a creditable job. The programs provide such commodities also.

Basically, the objective of any agricultural team, or any ICA mission in any country, is fairly broad. The objective is to help that country organize its agriculture to get the maximum benefits from the available water, land, and human resources to raise the standard of living in such a manner that the country becomes an ally of the free world. This contributes toward establishing that peace which we all seek. This is a long and involved objective, and a variety of means are needed to put it into action.

If the program is successful and the country is strengthened, it will take its rightful place among the family of free nations. It can afford to stand for the principles of freedom. It can associate with the free nations and expand its trade with them. By joining the free world, it can help build toward a lasting peace.

Let us briefly examine the program in action in agriculture. Who is doing this job in over 50 countries? Pretty largely, the workers are men and women that were part of either the staffs of land-grant colleges and universities, or units of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Every one has had special training in some phase of agriculture, plus the experience that makes such training valuable, sound judgment, a personality that adjusts easily to a foreign culture, and a zeal for meeting the challenge. Each man or woman who goes overseas is expected to provide guidance and training that will pass on his or her skills to the nationals of that country. Sometimes, this means training a group of leaders who can train others.

In addition to on-the-job training, promising young men and women are selected for specialized training in the U. S. or some third country to prepare them to take part in the government's operations upon their return home. Selecting such young minds to guide a rapidly expanding agriculture requires skill as does making certain the right degree of training is obtained in the right subject to fit into the over-all program.

After the participant is trained and returned to his home country, what then? Some of his colleagues are envious (they did not go

abroad). Every country has political dealings at every level—not always party politics, but politics that either advances or retards programs, even in agriculture.

Our job is to help these countries develop their own system, suited to their own cultures, with their own leaders. These countries need the institutions that will give some degree of permanency to the projects developing now with our help. This is where the new extension services are being born—within ministries of agriculture, patterned after our system, yet adapted to fit the country's conditions. Institutions are needed to provide the schools, colleges, and universities that will make agricultural science secure for tomorrow.

Again let me emphasize the training of human resources. Nothing is as valuable anywhere as people. They will be doing things long after the tractors or machines are worn out.

As schools and other educational institutions are set up to bolster tomorrow's agriculture, we help develop a practical curriculum tailored to local conditions. This is contrary to the time honored European or Asian idea of education where college curriculums are academic and where knowledge too often has been solely for the sake of knowledge. Modernization of the approach to education in agriculture has sometimes caused a "clash" which has slowed progress in those areas where the present leaders were European trained.

The training job is compounded. The job is not only to provide a practical curriculum in agriculture, but to pass on to the young leaders methods of teaching their countrymen in agriculture. The situation is paralleled in agricultural research where the conflict again is between the academic and the practical. Some of these overseas posts have relatively little practical research that develops improved seed, improved livestock, or better methods and practices that can be translated to the cultivators and growers.

New experiment stations are being established to tackle the obvious farm problems. At the same time, trained young men and women are taking over the long-range research in scores of countries that never really knew what the word "research" meant ten years ago.

The extension and information arm simultaneously devises both the organization and the means of communication that can reach from a minister of agriculture to the most remote farm or tribal family in the nation. New agricultural extension services have been established with our help in 32 countries. Looking ahead, rural youth groups have been formed in scores of nations, with three quarters of a million boys and girls now enrolled in 4-H type organizations. These are the

men and women of tomorrow who will develop their nation's agriculture. Home economics work is giving women in the farm families a new status in many places. Home economics workers are moving into the villages to improve farm family living through programs for food production around the home, preservation of foods in time of plenty, and infant care and human nutrition.

Right now well over 800 American agricultural technicians are working in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries in 53 countries. About 200 college of agriculture faculty members are involved in 28 college contract programs in agriculture. Each year over 1,600 young men and women—we call them participants—come to the United States for various kinds of training in agriculture and for varying lengths of time. Another 600 go to third countries for special training. In addition, regional seminars, workshops, and conferences are held to help in this vast training program as we Americans share our agricultural technology.

But you want to know about the policy rather than the accomplishments of that policy. How does agriculture serve as a bulwark—shore up the defenses—or fit into the over-all foreign policy? First let me read the declaration of purpose as it is worded in the Mutual Security Act (of 1954, as amended, Title III) which defines the technical cooperation programs:

Sec. 301—It is the policy of the United States . . . to aid the efforts of the peoples of economically under-developed areas to develop their resources . . . and improve their working and living conditions . . . by encouraging the exchange of technical knowledge and skills . . . and the flow of investment capital to countries which provide conditions under which such technical assistance and capital can effectively and constructively . . . contribute to raising standards of living, creating new sources of wealth, increasing productivity, and expanding purchasing power.

Under the revised definition, technical cooperation is limited to surveys, demonstration and training in the enumerated fields, and similar projects that serve the purpose of “promoting the development of economic resources, productive capacities, and trade.” This involves all areas of activity, not merely agriculture. But in agriculture many complex things need to be considered. A nation's soil, water, and human resources must be used to make the nation “self-supporting” not merely “self-sufficient.” A goal of self-sufficiency can lead to unwarranted waste of the resources in uneconomic uses. On the other hand, the concept of “self-supporting” means the most economic use—all things considered—of the soil, water, and human resources. In achieving this objective, the complicated surplus commodity complex that now confronts several of the leading agricultural producing nations needs to be kept constantly in mind.

Farmers and cultivators in the underdeveloped countries are encouraged to put their efforts to crops which are needed in the free world as well as to developing an animal agriculture. This way the chances of gluts on future world markets can be lessened and at the same time the world can be better fed and better clothed.

In many countries, the commodities in surplus in the United States are being used to augment the technical assistance. This use of surplus commodities helps in many ways—over and above reducing our enormous stockpiles. Usually this arrangement, under Public Law 480, provides direct food for the people, and in a few cases feed grains for developing the livestock industry.

Great strides forward can be made in the livestock industry and also in the poultry and fish industries. Too many people still have diets with little or no animal protein. Poultry, fish, and livestock enterprises are badly in need of development and where developed have greatly improved the health of farm families. These enterprises boost the income of the workers and thus aid economic progress. This changes the attitude of the people toward life itself and makes them better citizens of their nation.

Animal agriculture is also important in restoring tilth to the soil to increase crop production. In many areas, animal wastes have not been returned to the soil for centuries. Instead, the dung is carefully gathered and used as fuel for cooking or for heat in the village homes.

If the operations in underdeveloped countries are to be effective, they must reach the people. Not only must the information and support get down to the village or tribal family physically; they must also be in a form which can be accepted psychologically. Oftentimes this is even more important.

Remember, centuries are being bridged in a span of say ten years. Merely introducing some practice or gadget that worked back in Nebraska does not make the village people jump up and down with glee. Maybe for some valid reason this idea would not click here. At any rate, the idea being introduced must be simple; it must be in terms that villagers and tribal people understand—and that means more than the mere translation of words.

The cultivators in these countries have extremely limited finances, and supplies are often either non-existent or if available are too high priced for use. Farmers cannot buy fertilizer or insecticides even though that might be an obvious answer to a specific problem. Furthermore, the size of the farms is very limited in most areas, either be-

cause of population pressures, available water supplies, or merely the available energy or manpower of the family.

The conditions that prevail took centuries to develop. One lecture or one demonstration does not change the habits of centuries. Traditionally, the man of the soil has been extremely conservative, almost stubborn at times. He has seen starvation come; he has lived in the wake of many disasters. He cannot afford to take chances with novelties; he adheres to the practices and methods that have proved useful in the past. But he is willing to be shown, and he is willing—yes, even anxious—to learn if he can be sure of the results.

The American technicians serve as the catalytic agent in providing change in many agricultural fields, in many nations, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Altogether, the evidence indicates that man is making some gains in his fight against hunger and starvation, and some gains can be recorded in the battle against ignorance and superstition. The resulting nutritional improvements aid in the battle against disease and low vitality. Agriculture has been in the forefront of this unsung and little-known battle.

But we cannot boast, and we cannot halt our endeavors. The same ignorance, superstitions, hunger, and disease that breed discontent and political instability exist among millions of people in many parts of the world. A constant, seething change challenges the best minds to cope with new problems before the old ones near a solution. Sometimes that element of change can be utilized in moving toward a better world, and sometimes it looms as a roadblock.

Thus, it is apparent that the policy guiding agricultural programs in the International Cooperation Administration cannot remain fixed or stagnant. Broad guidelines exist, but the spelling out of day-to-day activities is influenced by economic shifts, commodity surpluses, political activities, and the entire complex of international relations.

However, if the agricultural policy must be defined in its simplest form, I would say it is to “help farm families to help themselves.”