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THE PLACE OF ACCELERATED PRODUCTION CAMPAIGNS IN EFFORTS TO EXPAND AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Delane E. Welsh

Abstract

The accelerated production campaign has become popular in recent years as a vehicle for increasing the aggregate output of a particular crop by substantially raising the per hectare yields on enough farms to make an impact on output at the national level. One could almost say that production campaigns have become a "style of development." Masagana 99 is selected as an example of a successful campaign, and those factors which appear to be necessary preconditions are available technology, a credit system, incentive prices, and political support and leadership. Activities that must be set in motion once a decision has been made to initiate a campaign include: organizing for planning, implementation, and control with a structure that goes from the local village to the highest level of government; selecting target areas and concentrating effort in them; training farmers and field technicians, and making the technicians mobile; supplying and coordinating inputs and credit; and publicity. If the preconditions are not in place, resources should be used to establish them rather than on a campaign that is likely to fail. While they require to be backed up by research and extension, accelerated production campaigns are basically promotional activities, and can be incompatible with research and extension organizations. Overshadowing all of these factors is weather, which can make or break a campaign.

OPENER'S REMARKS--M. Rafiqui Islam Molla

In its essence and outlook, Welsh's paper reflects the philosophy that if growth occurs, rural welfare will improve automatically. But for the families in the rural areas characterized by a segmented social order and an unequal land distribution, the outlook depends as much on distribution as on production. This latter view is so widely and strongly held that this has become commonplace sociopolitical judgment of the day in these countries, and, according to this view, the crux of the problem is not growth per se but how to attain growth with equity.

I, however, support the view that the main hope for supporting the expanding (and poor) population in these countries lies with rapid agricultural growth through high yielding technology. In a basically poor country, equity cannot be substituted in any manner for growth. Moreover, the effect of growth through high yielding technology in these countries, in reality, does not seem to pose any serious problem of the rich getting richer. Most of the farmers there have either subsistence or marginal land holdings. In addition, the existing high rate of population growth largely neutralizes the wealth accumulating effect of such growth towards the rich gaining more and more economic and social power, as indicated by the fact that the large holdings are continually being subdivided into small units. With the effects of growth, most of the farmers with large holdings are at best merely able to maintain their holdings, income, or both.

If the underlying objective of equity and welfare goals is not one of sharing the poverty, I believe that in these countries the emphasis on equity related growth is a self-defeating and futile approach.

The crop campaign as a strategy for accelerating agricultural growth is found to be consistent with the classic example of the programmatic approach to development policy in the developing countries. It is a highly effective and promising tool for rapid expansion of aggregate production. It has the inherent

ability to promote rapid and wide application of modern high yielding technology.

Modern high yielding seed and fertilizer technology has the feature of flexibility in use. It can be usefully applied even in part. Therefore, weather variation, with which Welsch is overly concerned, is not an overriding factor seriously limiting the scope of crop campaigns. Weather changes can cause fluctuations in production only up to 20 percent. Moreover, early maturing and drought resistant crop varieties and small scale irrigation can be included in the technology package as adjustment elements to overcome the problems of uncertain weather situations.

Welsch has not talked about the duration of the campaign. In my opinion the campaign efforts should last for two years to be followed by supportive programs on a regular basis.

Accelerated agricultural production growth in the face of an ever increasing population is a critical, sensitive, and perplexing problem confronting these countries. The problem, however, is made unduly complex by the untimely introduction of distributional equity as a goal in the development process.

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT--Max T. Colwell

Production campaign programmes are most appropriate where a country has a production crisis, and they are a frequently used mechanism for mobilization of people.

Contributing to the discussion was Anthony E. Ikpi.