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*Farmer Involvement and Motivation for  
Diversification Programme Implementation*

Among the great number of books, bulletins and articles on agricultural development which have been published, few have dealt specifically with the farmer as an individual or as a person with definite socio-psychological attributes. When he is mentioned at all in this context the farmer is usually considered as one among a mass of human beings who impact on resource availability and resource use. For example, discussions often centre on the effects of population density and population pressure on agricultural and rural development. In other instances, the farmer's role as a manager and a supplier of labour to the farm firm is emphasised. In those cases in which socio-psychological attributes of the farmer are considered, more often than not he is merely perceived as an individual who is "driven by the desire for increased return or income."

Man is motivated to action to alleviate or correct some felt need or needs. Needs may therefore be considered as the forces which drive or motivate men to act. In his need-hierarchy concept, Maslow states that man's needs are organised in a series of levels - in a hierarchy of importance - such that lower level needs must be largely satisfied before those of the higher levels will act as motivators. Once satisfied, a need is not a motivator of behaviour. The needs levels identified by Maslow are as follows:

1. **Physiological Needs** - needs for food, water, rest, exercise, shelter.
2. **Safety Needs** - needs for protection against danger, threat, deprivation. When man feels threatened, his greatest need is for protection and security.
3. **Social Needs** - needs for belonging, for association, for acceptance by his fellows, for giving and receiving friendship and love. When social needs are thwarted, man tends to become resistant, antagonistic and uncooperative.

4. **Ego Needs** - needs which:

- (a) relate to self esteem - need for self-confidence, for independence, for achievement, for competence, for knowledge, or
- (b) relate to one's reputation - need for status, for recognition, for appreciation, for the deserved respect of one's fellows.

5. **Self-fulfillment Needs** - these are the needs for realizing one's own potentialities, for continued self-development, for being creative in the broadest sense of that term.

These human needs are universal, but each individual's perception of and reaction to a need is based on that individual's value system. Values are a product of culture, and culture is the sum of experiences of a society. Hence two individuals from different cultures may react very differently to the influence of a common situation. For example, in one culture "the desire for increased return or income" may constitute an important ego-need and a powerful motivator, i.e. the need for achievement, for competence, for recognition. In another culture, however, the desire for increased return may operate only at the lower physiological and safety need levels, e.g. need for food or need to protect the family against the danger or threat of hunger and deprivation. Once these lower level needs have been satisfied in this latter culture, other culturally dominant social and ego needs are more likely to be important motivators of behaviour.

Within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), small farming, as opposed to large scale farming, predominates. Two significant experiences in the history of the Caribbean need to be borne in mind in order to meaningfully analyse the culture and value systems of these farmers: colonisa-

tion and the subsequent implementation of the dominant plantation system. In both of these historical experiences, there were two common features. There was a very unequal, lop-sided relationship between the colonial master and plantation owner on the one hand and Caribbean society and more specifically the rural dweller (small farmer and farm worker) on the other. For the small farmer and farm worker, the relationship required a subjugation of self and elevation of "the other;" a superior to inferior, major to minor, mainstream to appendage relationship, with the Caribbean man always in the position of the one being dominated.

Secondly, in both the colonial experience and its derivative the plantation system, the Caribbean man was largely deprived of possessing a meaningful stake in the processes of production and decision making (land and affirmative political participation). For the East Caribbean rural man, and in particular the small farmer, this situation still persists to a large extent, particularly so far as it relates to decision-making on issues of government programming for agriculture. Then, too, there is the sometimes stridently expressed, urban: rural = superior: inferior association; any place or anyone from outside the city centre being considered "out there" or "from out there in the country."

As a result of this historical "marginalisation" the small farmers and rural dwellers feel a strong desire to be recognised as a functional and worthy part of the mainstream of society. They feel the need to be a part of the decision making process in their own country.

In the pre-independence era, the badge of superiority of the colonial and/or plantation boss was ownership — ownership of land and other resources, of power, of privilege. In rural Caribbean society today, therefore, very high value is placed on ownership. In the man-land relationship a very high value is placed on ownership of land rather than on the control of land as a resource for production, hence the strong preference for freehold ownership over all other forms of land tenure.

Ownership and belonging needs among rural dwellers, and their reactions when these social and ego needs are thwarted, manifest themselves in several ways. For example, there is the common complaint about the low productivity of agricultural labour. The reality is that an individual who works hard and productively on his own small plot of land, but who must seek other employment

to augment his income, is often found to be slothful and pays little attention to the observance of necessary cultivation details when working on another's farm. When questioned in private regarding this behaviour, a common response is "it is not my farm, why should I kill off myself to put money in another man's pocket?"

Then, too, there is the characteristic antagonistic "we-they" mindset which farmers and rural dwellers maintain in their association with all whom they perceive as holding positions of power and privilege, e.g. owners of the few remaining large estates; that illusory, amorphous body referred to as "the government," and so forth. A similar attitude exists with regard to programmes and projects developed and controlled by "others."

Recognising this prevailing set of conditions in the OECS, the Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project (CAEP) is helping agricultural extension organisations of the Eastern Caribbean, to adopt an approach, which gives farmers a sense of "ownership" of rural and agricultural development programmes, in which they are required to participate.

CAEP is a collaborative project of the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA), and the Agriculture Ministries of the OECS, viz: Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and The Grenadines. The project is largely funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The purpose of the project is to assist participating Governments to improve the overall effectiveness of their agricultural extension services. The underlying concern is the need to increase efficient agricultural production among small farmers in the region, to increase farm incomes and to raise the level of living of the small-farm family. The small farmers' main link with agricultural development in general is the frontline extension officer, hence the need to improve the effectiveness of the extension services, if farmers and their families are to benefit from agricultural development programmes.

Very early in the project life, it was recognised that it was necessary to have farmers feel that this was not merely a project "for" farmers but in reality was also a project "of" the farmers. They were to believe

that the project in some way "belonged" to them, if they were to respond positively and participate fully in project activities.

The first major activity of the project was the establishment and meeting of a Regional Agricultural Extension Coordinating Committee (RAECC). Membership on the Committee included representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, agricultural extension services, farmer groups, agricultural commodity associations and agricultural marketing boards. Representatives from regional and international financial institutions and agriculture related organisations also participated in the meeting. There was at least one farmer representative from each participating country on the Committee.

During the 3-day meeting of RAECC, the discussions and deliberations of participants resulted in the production of conference papers which expressed a consensual regional view on:

1. The Targets of Extension
2. The Extension Officer's Job
3. Extension and Small Farmers
4. Training Needs in Extension.

Farmer participants made significant contributions in all deliberations, provided meaningful insights from a farmer's perspective of the role which extension workers need to play, and themselves began to get a grasp of the problems of national extension organisations as well as the purpose and objectives of CAEP.

To date, there have been five meetings of RAECC. Farmer representatives at these meetings continue to make very important contributions in monitoring the progress of the project, evaluating its achievements and charting desired directions for project activities.

Following the first meeting of RAECC, all participating countries established National Extension Planning Committees. These Committees brought together various segments of the agricultural community, private sector as well as public sector, to discuss, analyse and make decisions about agricultural development in general, and agricultural extension in particular. In every participating country, farmers were represented on this Committee and were often the most outspoken critics of current extension practices. Their contribu-

tions significantly influenced the content of the final National Extension Improvement Plans developed by the Committees and which were approved for implementation by the various Governments. At the regional (OECS) as well as at national level, farmers were being made to feel that their views were valued and respected, and they were being required to play important decision making roles in matters which affected them. This began to fulfill some of the powerful ego needs of these farmers - the need for recognition, for appreciation, for the deserved respect of others. The few farmers per country who were involved in those planning and decision making exercises had been selected because of their community leadership roles. Their acceptance and ownership of programmes, they had helped develop and which they understood, meant that they would willingly influence their farmer constituents to participate in any relevant programme activity.

The final and perhaps most important step in the involvement of farmers in CAEP has been their involvement at the local district level. In one extension district in each participating country, CAEP field staff assist frontline extension officers to get District Committees of farmers established. Extension officers work with these Committees in making decisions about all aspects of district extension programmes. Farmers are involved in the district programme planning from the information gathering and analysis stage (extension sondeos), in the establishment of programme priorities, in discussions with agricultural specialists to make choices from alternative courses of action, to establishing operational objectives for these programmes.

Once the programmes have been established, the District Farmer Committees monitor the progress of implementation. In effect they take command of the extension programme and make demands upon and require action from the frontline extension officer rather than, as previously, casually and passively regarding the extension officer as "doing his own thing."

The results to date have been very encouraging. Because of farmers' positive response to programme activities, extension officers have become more motivated and demonstrate heightened interest in their work. There is being developed a more positive, cooperative relationship between farmers and their district extension officers. This has

made it easier to introduce certain interventions which hitherto had proved very difficult (e.g., farmers providing sensitive financial information and keeping regular farm records for use in farm and home management enhancement).

In brief, the CAEP experiences have shown that involving the farmer in every stage of the process of programme development, (i.e., pre-planning, data collection, data analysis, consideration of alternative courses of action, decision-making on programme content, monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation), develops in him a sense of ownership of the programme and ensures his greater participation in programme implementation. However, extension officers have had to work assiduously at creating and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between themselves and farmers. Unless the farmers feel that their participation with extension officers and other agricultural specialists in programme development activities is based on mutual acceptance and respect, they are likely to revert to an attitude of antagonism and non-cooperation.

The lesson from this experience for the process of agricultural diversification

in the Caribbean is clear. Very often, the impetus for diversification will come from the State or agencies of the State, who surveying macro-perspectives in agriculture may promote this strategy as the surest path to the achievement of agricultural development.

However, particularly in the context of the OECS, it is the farmers who are the individuals to make diversification work by taking decisions to change their particular enterprise mixes. It is clear, therefore, that there will be need for adequate farmer involvement in the formulation of diversification policies and programmes. The absence of such farmer involvement may predispose the diversification efforts to failure.

#### REFERENCE

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