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SOME RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDE-LINES WHICH MAY LEAD TO MORE SUCCESSFUL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LEBOWA AND OTHER BLACK HOMELANDS : PART II*

by

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RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

The role of the tribal authority

The importance of collaboration with existing tribal authorities in undertaking any agricultural development is generally accepted. According to the agricultural extension officers active in Lebowa, the degree of co-operation achieved with the local population in the field of agricultural development is in direct correlation to the extent to which the chief or induna co-operates and exerts his influence. I therefore wish to suggest that renewed consideration be given to this aspect and that an investigation be undertaken to determine to what extent the tribal authority and other local bodies in authority can be more directly incorporated into agricultural development. This also applies to the attempts through the extension campaign to ensure the mutual involvement of the receiving group. In the research results it is, for example, quite clear that it is not enough merely to gain the co-operation and backing of figures in authority (and their followers) in undertaking development plans (Coetzee 1977:429 et seq.). In my opinion there are two options open to us. The local tribal authority and/or local bodies in authority, in addition to supporting these endeavours, must also consider and agree on punitive measures to be enforced against persons who refuse to co-operate (cf. the *lekgotla* decisions of the irrigation farmers - Coetzee 1977:325 et seq.). Alternatively, one can go a step further by also entrusting the implementation of certain development measures to the tribal authority once the authority has agreed to back these measures. Agricultural extension officers and other technical and even administrative staff can then be seconded to the tribal authority to assist in enforcing these development measures. In order to

enforce these punitive measures, in my opinion attention will also have to be given to adequate sanctioning of this action by higher courts, otherwise, in cases of appeal to higher courts, the entire concept may be nullified. In my opinion it may be advisable to consider ways in which the Central Government of Lebowa can take action against a tribal authority when such an authority neglects to act in accordance with its own decisions. This action need not necessarily be negative, but can also be positive in the form of greater development aid if development plans and aims are promoted effectively.

As regards the establishment of agricultural committees, it was also clear, especially in the case of indunas on trust farms, that it is not sufficient to involve these persons in authority indirectly. They should preferably be appointed as chairmen of these committees in the initial stages, to eliminate on the one hand friction with and rivalry by certain informal leaders and on the other hand disunity in the co-operation of the people. Although problems are not experienced with the chief personally, it would also be preferable for him to be the chairman of the agricultural planning committee for his tribal authority area. These traditional leaders authority can then appoint others to assist them or even represent them as acting chairmen. The fact that all the traditional persons in authority in the research area, with the exception of the chief, are illiterate also makes it essential that the children of these people (as their successors) should be among the first to whom a system of compulsory education applies, whether in ordinary schools or in the special schools for sons of chiefs and headmen. In addition to more direct involvement in the various agricultural committees and in the enforcement of punitive measures, the traditional tribal authority, and especially the chief, could also be involved in the concept of demonstration plots. In my opinion these plots, with few exceptions, do not at present serve the purpose for which they

* Part I appeared in the October 1978 issue of Agrekon.

were made available (Coetzee 1977:328 et seq.). Because the lands of the chief's headwife are traditionally cultivated by the entire tribe it is proposed that on each trust farm and tribal farm plots be made available for her, to be cultivated by the people concerned at prearranged times. The chief, as the father of the tribe, can then "decide" to donate the proceeds from these "community plots", which can also serve as demonstration plots, to the community concerned, provided that they use these proceeds for their mutual benefit, for the purchase of seed and fertiliser, the building of store-rooms, etc. There will thus be a link-up with traditional culture in the promotion of agricultural development and people will be indirectly obliged to participate.

Extension campaign

As regards the extension campaign in its entirety, I would like to make the following recommendations:

Without deviating from the community approach, more purposeful attention ought to be given to more successful farmers. Successful farmers can set the pace for others and ought definitely to make a considerable contribution to the more rapid seeping through of new agricultural practices to the doubters and some of the unwilling ones. At the moment it seems that too much time and energy is wasted on people who will not put successful Western agricultural practices or any other form of farming into practice and have no desire ever to do so. If the present nucleus of "successful" farmers do not receive special attention, but are merely fobbed off with empty words and are not given more opportunities, as enumerated above, there is a very strong possibility that an entire generation of young people will be lost to agriculture, because they will observe that their parents and others cannot make a decent living out of farming in spite of their willingness and hard work.

Coupled with this, is the more obvious concentration of extension services on inhabitants of planned trust farms, whereas results in this investigation have shown that the most promising Black farmers are farming on private plots and there are indications that these farmers are receiving less attention (Coetzee 1977:443 et seq.). It is therefore recommended that this aspect be duly considered and corrected as far as possible. Presumably a start could be made by organising agricultural committees on all farms and in all areas where private plots exist. In this way contact can be made with Black farmers interested in extension and aid without the risk of time and energy being wasted on a group of unwilling people.

As regards tribal farms still refusing to accept planning, but nevertheless in need of agricultural extension, it is proposed that only those agricultural extension officers who have proved themselves able to gain the co-operation of the

people be specifically assigned to activate the people on such farms. These officers could also, if need be, gradually enlighten the people on the advantages of planning their area of land, or at least discuss this aspect with them.

Because the receiving group does not remain static as regards the acceptance of improved agricultural methods, follow-up research ought to be undertaken on a continuous basis as regards the applicability and success of the existing method of extension and methods used in a specific area. The findings of this investigation do in fact indicate that in some cases, especially as regards the field of empirical, rational extension, the entire method of extension is of too static and general a nature.

In many cases the people are convinced of the advantages of the demonstrably better new agricultural techniques and require extension of a more practical nature, for example, how to get things done with the least possible expenditure and equipment. More attention can definitely also be given to extension on simple book-keeping and a record system, if necessary on an individual basis, for those persons who can make use of such advice, as there is a relatively high level of literacy among farmers on private plots (Coetzee 1977:384). Courses in the maintenance and handling of agricultural equipment would also meet a great need. Written extension pamphlets (preferably in the local Bantu language) dealing with aspects such as pest control measures, hints on the use of fertiliser, better seed, programme planning, etc., could also be introduced on a selective basis. Although illiteracy is a great problem, the help these farmers receive from their school-going children seems to be going a long way towards solving this problem. It is, however, strongly recommended that when using this method it be applied not only selectively, but also in a specialised basis, depending on specific needs. Because it has been found that all Black farmers use calendars, which are in great demand (Coetzee 1977:369), it is recommended that an agricultural calendar be distributed annually on a general basis. On this calendar useful farming hints of a more general nature could be printed and recommendations could also be made as to when and how certain crops should be cultivated. The times and dates of farmers' days, agricultural shows, demonstration, films and agricultural courses in each separate district could appear on this calendar and in this way it could become one of the most useful and appreciated ways of distributing information.

In view of research results, the importance of personal follow-up work by agricultural extension officers cannot be over-emphasised. This applies especially to farmers with individual problems or those evincing special interest. Even if staff shortages make follow-up work difficult it ought always to be high on the list of priorities of an agricultural extension officer in a developing situation.

Exploiting traditional crops, ect.

Because of the Black man's love of vegetables (not only in the research area) and because of the importance of vegetables in their traditional and present diet (Coetzee 1977:121 et seq. and 155 et seq.) it is incomprehensible that the exploitation and commercialisation of traditional wild leaf vegetables (*merôgô*), in particular, have not yet been investigated. In my humble opinion the field of research into the possibility of commercial cultivation of two types of vegetables, in particular, has been left to lie fallow. The first and most important of these vegetables is *leroitho* (*Gynandropsis pentaphylla* D.C.), which has been fully described and analysed by Quin (1959:64 et seq.). These wild leaf vegetables are extremely popular not only in the research area, but also throughout Lebowa. As far as can be ascertained this vegetable realises high prices when sold dry. One of the Black farmers in the research area who cultivates and dries this plant on a small scale for commercial consumption has reportedly realised up to R50 a bag. The possibilities inherent in this vegetable result from its hardiness, the fact that it is easy to propagate, its great popularity,¹ the fact that it is eaten fresh or dried, its relatively high nutritive value and its labour-intensive nature if it is cultivated and dried (dehydrated) on a large scale. Because few Blacks in the homelands or in the White urban areas have refrigerators the availability of dried vegetables is of great commercial importance. If one bears in mind the astonishing results achieved with Nguni and Pedi cattle, *leroitho* could, with the necessary seed selection, develop into an exceptionally successful cash crop.² To a lesser extent, an equally popular leaf vegetable, namely the leaves of the traditional bean *manawa* (*Vigna sinensis*), also has possibilities. This leaf vegetable is also eaten fresh and in dried form.

The same argument applies as regards certain insects, with special reference to the extremely popular mopani worm (*conimbrasia belina*) and the similar *cerina forda*, which are found in large numbers in mopani trees and wild lilac trees in the early summer. In dried form these popular foods can also be stored for long periods. It is also well known that these foods are sold even in White urban areas at high prices.

One could also point out the possible good genetic characteristics of traditional poultry at this stage. The fact that at least two Black farmers have "tame" guinea-fowl (those with the white breasts) in their farm-yards, also gives rise to questions as to their potential in the field of egg production, their fertility and survival rate, their resistance to disease, etc. All these aspects and possibilities need to be investigated by agriculturalists.

This entire interesting field at present unexplored can very easily be incorporated into the idea of establishing an experimental farm or farms in Lebowa where Black agricultural officials can be initiated, through experimentation, into the

methods and secrets of Western agricultural research and experiments. If need be, less important tests and experiments could also be carried out at the various training centres for Black farmers. The acceptability of new knowledge on the usefulness of these indigenous crops and foods can be virtually guaranteed by the present state of cultural practices and judgement of values.

Partial planning

In view of what has come to light in the field of research as regards resistance to physico-biological planning measures on tribal lands, planners ought in such cases to adopt a much more flexible policy and attitude as regards the position and allocation of lands, pasturage and the laying out of residential area. Here one could refer to an *orderly* duplication of the traditional residential layout, for example, in the form of several semi-circular residential layouts with streets forming the spokes of a wheel, if this appeals to the inhabitants. As regards the allocation of lands on a tribal farm whose inhabitants refuse to accept modern planning, and *orderly* sanctioning of the traditional system of small plots to each married woman, together with the necessary extension and organisation of modern tractive power and other equipment could definitely lead to increased production. In the case of the Bantwane, partial planning, cast in the traditional mould and with the fencing-off of grazing could lead to an immediate increase in production on tribal farms, as it has been ascertained (Coetzee 1977:380) that the lands on two of these farms are no longer even cultivated because the cattle destroy all seedlings.

Uniqueness of local conditions

The previous aspect leads one immediately to the question of the unique nature of local conditions, not only at district level, but also within each district. In order to ensure the co-operation and trust of the receiving group, cognisance must be taken of this uniqueness of local conditions both in historical perspective and as regards present problems. Ignorance in this regard could greatly hamper development in the field of agriculture and in general. As regards the Bantwane, it is obvious how the history, origin and occupation of the territory of these people throws light on some of their beliefs (Coetzee 1977:371 et seq.). The same applies as regards a knowledge of their internal socio-cultural environment. It is therefore recommended that a knowledge of these aspects be an absolute prerequisite for magistrates and agricultural extension officers and the existing district records concerning these matters (including a detailed definition of the area of each tribal authority) ought to be brought up to date correctly and reliably.

A lack of knowledge and understanding of the fact that the receiving group is involved in various fields in a never-ending process of cultural change and is adapting to the overwhelming effect of the

Western way of life is also a specific deficiency in the training and approach of White agents of change (Coetzee 1977:417 et seq.). An ability to give adequate guidance in this process and to make correct evaluations of progress and problem situations requires a wider education than mere scientific or administrative training. However, it appears to be unrealistic to expect an intimate knowledge of local problems and attempt to give the necessary attention to these aspects when officials are transferred within two years or less.

In this regard it may be repeated that it is recommended that as Black agricultural officials take over agricultural positions now held by Whites, demands for higher academic qualifications should gradually be made for certain promotion possibilities. For example, one thinks of matriculation being a requisite for the post of senior agricultural official, otherwise there is the risk that qualifications for posts in the Department of Agriculture of Lebowa will compare unfavourably with those for posts such as Black clerks in the Department of the Interior of Lebowa.

Agricultural extension officers as farmers

My final recommendation, which, in my modest opinion I feel should receive special attention and consideration, is the possibility of training some of the serving Black agricultural extension officers as a nucleus of true farmers in the Western sense of the word. These people are not only completely literate and theoretically well versed in Western farming practices, but have absorbed this knowledge particularly well, because they have had to relay and demonstrate it to other people. With sufficient land (for agriculture or stock-farming) and enough support, they ought, in my opinion, to be one of the best investments for future farming developments in Lebowa. Newly-purchased trust farms would offer an ideal opportunity to give some of these people, if necessary together with other promising Black farmers, the opportunity of showing their capabilities. Interest should not be lacking since 93% of the Black officers in Lebowa who were asked if they would like to farm, reacted favourably. One of those questioned stated enthusiastically that he was willing to start the following day. To avoid disrupting the extension service one would have to proceed selectively and give preference to people who have been agricultural extension officers for 10 years or longer. These people however, are sceptical of the present prospects of survival offered by the economic units of the Tomlinson Commission.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it should be clearly stated that the time is ripe for accelerated agricultural development in the research area. The existing culture certainly does not place insurmountable obstacles in the path of progress. Major changes, however, will have to be made in the way

agricultural development is stimulated. The three most important of these, are firstly, creating possibilities for development of true farmers over and above the existing Black small farmers, secondly creating alternative work opportunities outside agriculture and thirdly involving tribal authorities more actively in agricultural planning and the implementing of improved practices.

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1. Some White farmers in the Northern Transvaal specially plant this vegetable for their seasonal labourers.
2. After I mentioned this possibility to officials of the Department of Plural Relations in a lecture and report, this aspect was investigated in Lebowa. The results of this investigation are not yet known.

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