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WAYS TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

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INTRODUCTION

The review of U.S. training in the field of the economics of agriculture of the lower income countries (LIC), sponsored by the American Agricultural Economics Association this past year has had several consequences.^{1/} It has developed a greater awareness and sensitivity to the objectives of training [6] and to the comparative advantages of the varied institutions engaged in this work [3]. In addition, papers prepared by participants in seminars held as part of the review, as well as the seminar discussions identified significant ways in which the training can be enhanced. In turn, the purpose of this paper is to identify major recommendations that can be embraced and supported by a substantial majority of the membership of this Association.^{2/}

In considering the worthiness of the approach and the credibility of the recommendations, it is important to recognize that work of members over many years has involved widespread contacts and conversations with individuals from the LIC and with personnel of international assistance agencies who have been involved in similar work. The products of this

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review, including the papers at this meeting, therefore, depend significantly on experiences, suggestions, and innovations of members who have been involved in this work for many years and who have had a wide range of contacts with citizens of foreign countries.^{3/}

RECOMMENDATIONS OF SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

The review seminars identified "Anticipated Characteristics of 1985 Programs for International Training" and "Ways and Techniques to Improve International Training." These concepts were edited and circulated to the 46 participants of the seminars. The participants were asked to indicate their judgment as to (1) the "likelihood" of the characteristics occurring and (2) "priorities" of the ways and techniques to improve international training. The tabulation of the responses received is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

These responses suggest that:

- Funds for related training will decrease
- The mix of LIC students in U.S. universities will shift with an increase in Ph.D candidates and a decrease of M.S. candidates
- The number of U.S. institutions offering Ph.D work for LIC students will not decrease
- The need for agricultural economics training of subprofessionals and nonformal training will expand
- There will be greater communication among professionals of LIC and the developed countries

The expectation of decreased funding is inconsistent with the anticipated increased involvement of U.S. institutions and relationships among professionals of the LIC's and the developed countries. This apparent contradiction may be due to the manner in which the questions were posed. On the other hand, it may be based largely on lack of concern about the "expected decreases" in funds and optimism about how the suggested "ways and techniques to improve international training" will, in fact, give rise to increased funding. Larger amounts of flexible funding was implicit in many of the suggestions.

The following ways and techniques for improving international training were given the highest priority rankings by those responding:^{4/}

- More linkages of LIC graduate students to home country during graduate training
- Follow-up with former LIC graduate students after they return to their home
- Small grants program
- Professional dialogue of U.S. and LIC professionals through workshops and post-doctoral opportunities for LIC graduates in developed countries.

But, the realization of these suggestions will require additional and more flexible funding for participation by U.S. and LIC colleagues. Thus, the expectation of decreased funding is not only inconsistent with other developments expected by 1985, but also inconsistent with the suggestions given highest priority by the respondents.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

We make the following major recommendations:

- Broaden the decisionmaking for training programs financed by international agencies.
- Increase the funds for international agricultural research and education by a quantum amount.
- Foster regional organizations to stimulate and facilitate professional growth and development of agricultural economists in selected regions of the LIC.
- Develop flexibility in U.S. training institutions.

BROADEN THE DECISIONMAKING

The realization of home country theses, post graduate follow-up, subprofessional and nonformal training, and professional dialog on a wide-scale requires a great many decisions. Many of the needed decisions are personal to the particular people involved and their respective institutions and capabilities and often cannot be anticipated. In many cases, they involve only small amounts of money. Yet, they can be crucial to the training of the people participating. A division of labor between the funding agencies and the training institutions needs to strike a better balance than is the case today. More of the decisions now made by the funding agencies should be relinquished in favor of the training institutions.

Unfortunately, the funding procedures and fund limitations for participation in international training and research have led to highly centralized decision-making about activities such as theses research in home country and follow-up with graduates after their return home. Contributing factors have been Congressional attitudes, limited availabilities of management time in funding agencies, and dispersion of responsibilities among field missions, regional offices and central functional offices.

Responsibilities and authority given to universities and other agencies to make decisions on such things as travel for research supervision, follow-up with former students, and follow-up of previous research activities are extremely limited. Similar rigidities relate to decisions about the time required by students to attain levels of competence.

Some indication of the magnitude of the problem are implicit to the numbers developed by Stevenson and Sperling. Almost 30 percent of the students entering graduate degree programs in the "economics of agriculture" in the 1969-1973 period were from the LIC. Almost one-fourth of these were sponsored by AID. And, one-sixth were sponsored by foundations and nonprofit agencies [11]. Sperling's data shows that over 50 academic institutions and an equal number of nonacademic institutions have been involved in the training of AID participants in agricultural economics [10].

Three steps might be taken in an effort to bring about decentralization:

- AID, Foundations, USDA, and the universities examine the balance of decisionmaking responsibilities with a view toward shifting more decisions to those institutions doing the training.
- Initiate a small grants program.
- Develop a program of automatic allocation of money to universities for research and education related to tropical agriculture.

Discussions in the seminars repeatedly identified instances where a few hundred dollars would make the already approved expenditures for training and technical assistance more productive. Problems of justifying and obtaining approval of these kind of expenditures have been sufficiently difficult to give rise to an expected low probability of success and in turn, reluctance to initiate the process. We are convinced of the merits of these kind of expenditures, but do not think they can be handled effectively in the present centralized decisionmaking systems.

Given the overwhelming role of AID in the training process, we propose that AID finance a supplementary small grants program in agricultural economics along the following lines:

- Extend a block grant to the Social Science Research Council.
- Specify general policy for use of funds. Possibilities are:
 - Monies would be used to support activities supplementary to regular training of people from LIC. LIC student graduate work in agricultural economics at U.S. universities and follow-up work after return of LIC students to their home country would be involved.
 - Grants would be quite limited in size and duration.
 - Allocation of grants would take into account other assistance available, financial need, contribution to home country, etc.
 - Funds could cover travel and per diem of Americans, so long as the activities contributed substantially to the training of people from the LIC.

An AID precedent for this type of approach was the AID financing of the Research and Training Network carried out by the Agricultural Development Council (ADC). ADC officers, in combination with leaders of seminars carried out under the program, make the many decisions required for the effective conduct of the program.

Also, U.S. agricultural education and research has had a significant dimension of decentralized decisionmaking. A prominent feature of this decentralization has been the automatic allocation of federal monies to the U.S. universities.

The automatic allocation of some monies and the associated balance of decisionmaking reflect the inability of central agencies to make the number of decisions necessary to carry out effectively research and education programs designed to service the diverse interests of U.S. agriculture. It also reflects the power of U.S. agricultural interests to assure a dispersion of decisionmaking [12]. Some, like Hightower, argue that the funds are used for the wrong activities [5]. But, adjustments may not be any quicker under a highly centralized decisionmaking approach. Nor is it clear that they would be any more responsive to the social needs related to the changes in rural America.

INCREASE THE FUNDS FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Excellence in U.S. training in the economics of agriculture of the low income countries necessitates involvement in related research by those doing the training. But, opportunities for this type of research have decreased and under present programs are expected to diminish even further. Thus, in terms of objectives of U.S. training,

we see a need for expanded research opportunities and stronger professional linkages among the social science research centers in the LIC and those in the United States. But, a substantial expansion in economic-related research is not likely unless it is a part of an overall expansion of research. Thus, we propose a sharply expanded support of international research and education.^{5/}

There are, of course, other reasons why international agricultural research should be expanded. Evenson documents the small expenditures for agricultural research in the LIC in comparison to that expended in the developed countries [2]. Increasing LIC demands for food and fiber associated with increasing populations and increasing incomes, low crop and livestock yields, and in some countries limitations on expanding agricultural land are among the other reasons. Technical assistance, training, and research programs sponsored by various international agencies focus on these problems. But, in relation to the challenges, their resources are small.

Aside from the genuine importance of these interests of the lower income countries, the United States has other needs which could be met at least partially through a U.S. program of expanded research and education focused on tropical and subtropical agriculture. There is a need for an expanded international dimension in U.S. university training of U.S. students and an expanded need for international dimensions of agricultural research carried out by U.S. scientists.

Several developments support this:

- The increasing interdependence of U.S. society with world developments with implications for the type of university training "needed" by U.S. students [13].
- The effects and potentially stronger effects the LIC will have on the United States.
- The close interfacing of U.S. markets for agricultural goods to international markets.
- The accelerating improvements in communications and transportation leading to closer contacts by Americans with people of other countries.
- Increased investments by international centers and national governments in tropical agricultural research giving rise to important research findings important to U.S. technologies and social problems.

Again, we argue for a decentralized decisionmaking approach and suggest a federal program of automatic allocation of money by the federal government to universities and colleges for research and education of students and the public on LIC agriculture.^{6/}

The distribution of funds might be based on:

- Total number of students.
- Number of students from LIC.
- Course offerings, related to purpose of program, and enrollment in these courses.
- State funds used to support research and educational activities similar to those encouraged by this program.

Activities might be varied and at the discretion of university officials. So long as consistent with the overall mandate, these might include course development, research, adult education, instruction of resident undergraduate and graduate students, thesis supervision, follow-up with former students from LIC, seminars, and books.

We propose, however, that use of funds for construction, repair, and upkeep of buildings, laboratory and equipment be prohibited. Further, these new funds would be supplementary and would not be used to carry out the type of programs now financed by international agencies such as technical assistance and training.

This type of program could, at least with changes in legislation, be made part of programs carried out by several different federal agencies—AID, HEW, or USDA. We have not explored the options extensively. AID, in particular, might consider embracing this approach. Another option warranting close scrutiny is the program of research and education on tropical and subtropical agriculture authorized by Section 406 of Public Law 480. Amendments to Public Law 480 made in 1966 included a budget authorization of \$33 million to the Secretary of Agriculture for carrying out research and education related to tropical and subtropical agriculture. Contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants to colleges and universities in the United States are authorized [9].

To date, there has been only one appropriation for this program. It was \$500,000 in fiscal year 1974. These funds are being used to finance

cooperative agreements with the universities of Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Florida, as well as selected research in Puerto Rico by the Agricultural Research Service.^{7/}

ENCOURAGE REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DESIGNED
TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN LIC

Several factors give rise to the recommendation to promote regional organizations which would facilitate professional growth of agricultural economists. In many countries, there are a significant, but limited number of trained agricultural economists. Many of these persons are searching for their specific role. The organizations could help overcome problems associated with isolation and limited funds that prevent active professional interchange. But, it is a long-term process under the best of circumstances. In many cases, the reactions to past instances of intellectual colonialism will impede and make more difficult the effective development of these types of organizations. However, we think the potential benefits are worth the effort.

At the same time, we should not ignore the fact that with improved communications and transportation and greater interdependency among the LIC, as well as other countries, there is an increased need for opportunities of U.S. professionals to be acquainted with work of colleagues in other countries. This increased need for effective communications among agricultural economists of the United States and those from LIC encompass (a) research problems which affect their countries, as well as the United States, and (b) U.S. students and professionals interested in working in the LIC and LIC students and professionals interested in being in the United States.

The experience of the Agricultural Development Council in Asia illustrates potential payoffs from "network" types of activity. Michigan State University work in Africa has similarities. Some activities in Latin America of the foundations also have similarities [1].

Also, in implementing this type of recommendation, national and regional organizations of agricultural economists and the International Association of Agricultural Economists should not be overlooked. Olatunbosun's discussion, for example, indicates that regional organizations of agricultural economists may be in a position to play a crucial role in developing linkages and networks of communications that will facilitate professional growth in the LIC [8].

The activities of such regional organizations would vary, but might include:

- Follow-up with students who return to home country after studying in the United States.
- Workshops and seminars.
- Facilitating arrangements for sabbaticals.
- Facilitating professional dialog among agricultural economists of region and among these economists and U.S. agricultural economists.

This recommendation should not be interpreted as calling for substitute organizations. The Association should not be hesitant to support and enhance those features of current regional activities which appear appropriate. The important consideration is active efforts to foster professional

development and linkages among agricultural economists of the regions and agricultural economists of the United States.

FLEXIBILITY OF U.S. TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Implicit to our recommendation for decentralization of decision-making is greater flexibility of the international agencies in the implementation of the training programs they finance. More decisionmaking by the training institutions about training programs of LIC students means in many cases adaptation of program execution to the particular needs and circumstances of those receiving the training. There is a corollary also of great importance—flexibility of the U.S. training institutions.

The needs for flexibility especially relate to:

- The need to adapt to the improved capabilities of LIC universities.
- Need for development of non-formal short courses

As Fienup indicates, there have been significant changes in the capability of LIC universities. An increasing number of them have developed high quality M.S. programs, and in some cases, Ph.D programs. Consequently, U.S. universities will increasingly be asked to admit holders of M.S. degrees from LIC universities. A positive response to this demand will require better knowledge about the foreign universities.

In many cases, the screening and selection of U.S. and LIC students for U.S. Ph.D programs have been based on the record of M.S. training in U.S. universities. Formal and informal linkages have made possible intelligent consideration of applicants. These linkages have not only

made possible the consideration of the overall capability of the applicants, but also in some cases awareness of the content of the courses that the applicant has taken to fulfill the M.S. requirements. Substitute means of obtaining information for use in considering applicants will be required. It may also be necessary for the universities to be flexible about the initial part of the Ph.D training program for these students in order to accommodate the increased heterogeneity of the previous training of the students. Summer programs such as those conducted by the Economic Development Institute, whereby incoming students take selected course work, may also be an important approach to these changes.

There are other prospective developments which will call for flexibility. An increasing number of LIC students will be asking to take Ph.D course work at U.S. universities to contribute to the requirements of a Ph.D from a university in their home country [7]. In other situations, they will be asking for post-doctorate training opportunities in U.S. universities after receiving Ph.D's from their LIC universities. In many cases, changes of U.S. graduate rules will be needed.

Steps might also be taken to include LIC economists on committees guiding home country dissertations of LIC Ph.D candidates at U.S. universities. Many are highly capable and especially in terms of home country theses have a great deal to contribute.

In still other situations, foreign students need to be able to do their theses at the U.S. universities with staff familiar with their country and with needed library reference material on their country. These universities may not be the one from which they are receiving their degree. Thus, again unusual flexibility is called for if we are to maximize the payoff to the foreign student.

The importance of non-formal training opportunities is generally recognized. Promotions into administrative positions have come quickly for some. Formal course work in some cases has not focused on the particular short-term needs in the home countries. In other cases, degree recipients of earlier years have needs for additional study which is often not available in formal academic courses. Thus, there are frequent needs for skills and knowledge not ordinarily incorporated in U.S. or other graduate training programs in agricultural economics.

Flexibility is again required since non-formal training is designed to be complementary to formal training available in the LIC and in the United States and since it is designed to equip those participating to better meet nearby job requirements. Further, these types of activities increasingly need to be conducted in the LIC with their institutions centrally involved, thereby requiring the adjustment of course content to particular country situations and effective integrating of LIC and U.S. staff responsibilities.

In some cases, these short courses can be complementary to the formal academic training of LIC students at the time they are obtaining their degrees. In other cases, the more appropriate timing is after they have returned to their country and worked for a period of time. Further, the benefit of LIC, and incidently American students, learning about techniques of agricultural production should not be overlooked. Programs developed at the international research centers such as CIMMYT and IRRI could be utilized to the advantage of many agricultural economics graduate students, especially those who have not had an opportunity to be involved directly in the production of agricultural products.

IBRD and USDA with AID support have been active in these efforts. The participation by U.S. universities has been more limited, although there are significant exceptions [4]. The greater involvement of IBRD and USDA personnel in these type of programs likely stems from the greater involvement of their professionals with policy, program and administrative issues and problems. These organizations also have more flexibility to fit nonformal training programs into their activities than do most universities. Thus, there appears to be significant opportunities for greater cooperation among USDA, IBRD, and the universities in the preparation and presentation of nonformal training courses.

The need to adapt to improved capabilities of LIC universities and the need for nonformal short courses raises questions, of course, about the degree orientation of U.S. universities. Wunderlich points to the effect of degree requirements on limiting the flexibility of educational

institutions and briefly explores the implications of eliminating the "terminal degree concept" [14]. Most universities are not likely to go this far. But surely, the changes in the LIC justify U.S. universities closely examining the possibilities of accommodating more non-degree activity by their faculties and their students.

The review sponsored by the Association points up the inconsistency between (1) the expected decreased availabilities of funds, and (2) the expected increased involvement and relationships among U.S. institutions and professionals of the LIC's and the developed countries. We judge that the expected involvement could be realized, but not without additional funds and significant changes in the way we approach this work.

Broadening of the decisionmaking, increased funds, regional organizations, and flexibility of U.S. educational institutions will be required. There are undoubtedly other recommendations that merit support. And, the above surely requires refinement.

But, active efforts are required if the gap between what will happen and the expectations of the membership is to be closed. The Association obviously confronts the question as to if they should actively advocate the implementation of these and other related recommendations. Our question is—if they don't, then who will?

TABLE 1. ANTICIPATED CHARACTERISTICS OF 1985 PROGRAMS
for
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
in the
ECONOMICS OF AGRICULTURE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

<u>Characteristic:</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents rating characteristic as:</u>			
	<u>Most Likely</u>	<u>Likely</u>	<u>Not Likely</u>	<u>Highly Unlikely</u>
1. Funds for related training in U.S. universities will decrease.	24	59	17	
2. Funding for university training in the LIC will rise, although wide immobility of students among countries will persist.	31	66	3	
3. The demand by LIC students for a U.S. MS degree will decrease.	24	45	17	14
4. The demand by LIC students for a U.S. Ph.D degree will decrease.		22	39	39
5. There will be more effective selection of LIC students attending U.S. universities.	10	66	24	
6. There will be increased training at the International Research Institutes such as CIAT, IRRI, and CIMMYT.	21	51	28	
7. Fewer U.S. institutions will be offering Ph.D work for LIC students.	11	29	46	14
8. Training in U.S. universities will increasingly focus on rural development and therefore, be more relevant to the LIC student.	4	30	62	4
9. Research opportunities in the LIC will be increasingly difficult to arrange.	10	45	41	4
10. There will be increased need for training of subprofessionals.	25	61	11	3
11. Demand for short courses conducted in the LIC and in the United States will expand.	25	61	14	
12. More regional journals will be prepared and more widely distributed.	18	71	11	
13. There will be more two-way communication among professionals of LIC and the developed countries.	29	61	7	3

TABLE 2. WAYS AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
in the
ECONOMICS OF AGRICULTURE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

		Percent of Respondents rating ways and techniques as: a/		
		Highest	Medium	Lowest
1.	Develop greater linkages between research of LIC graduate students in United States and actions programs of LIC.	62	31	7
2.	Improve existing Ph.D programs at 6-8 U.S. institutions with agreement on specialization of geographic areas of LIC.	14	31	55
3.	Content of training should continue to emphasize theory and quantitative techniques, but should be broadened to include attention to institutional framework of development, as well as "unsophisticated" methods of analysis; e.g., farm budget studies, simple regression, and so on.	54	39	7
4.	Provide students who lack a background in practical agriculture some basic information to fill this void.	7	38	55
5.	Provide for a follow-up of Ph.D graduates through first six years on the job, rather than casting loose upon graduation.	59	28	13
6.	Facilitate access by LIC students to data and research reports on LIC countries already at U.S. universities, USDA, and AID.	36	50	14
7.	Encourage LIC government support of thesis research.	45	52	3
8.	Encourage more funding for field work for LIC students.	66	28	6
9.	Develop small grants program for U.S. professionals and LIC counterparts, perhaps administered by AAEA.	52	38	10
10.	Develop greater emphasis on workshops and other techniques to foster communications among equals from LIC and the United States.	52	41	7
11.	Give support to programs which link 5-10 individuals in different countries, rather than institution-wide participation in cooperative international development programs.	30	35	35
12.	Facilitate courtesy appointments of LIC professionals at U.S. universities.	10	52	38
13.	Enlarge contacts of U.S. institutions beyond agricultural institutions of LIC.	10	34	55
14.	Increase and enhance post-doctoral opportunities in the United States and other countries and arrangements for LIC professionals.	59	31	10
15.	Develop better system for evaluating academic records of LIC students applying to U.S. universities	24	31	45
16.	Develop international standards for all Ph.D degree programs.			100
17.	Develop a handbook with suggestions and guidelines for departments receiving LIC students.		17	83
18.	Develop journal exchanges.	17	35	48

a/ Respondents were asked to select 6 for the "highest" category, 6 for the "medium" category, and 6 for the "lowest."

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FOOTNOTES

- 1/ In 1973 the International Committee recommended to the Executive Board of the Association that a Review of International Training be conducted. The Executive Board approved and asked the International Committee to be responsible for it. Three seminars of members of the Association and other interested people and a series of specially prepared papers were central to the review. Of great importance in facilitating the seminars and the dialog essential to the review was a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.
- 2/ To a large extent, the recommendations incorporated in this paper are a synthesis of those developed by the seminars. Thus, this paper owes much to the members of the International Committee and the many others who participated in the seminars. On occasion the recommendations of this paper go beyond those articulated during the seminars. Thus, responsibility for any errors of logic, fact, or feasibility of the recommendations rests with the authors. Further, the recommendations incorporated in this paper do not represent at this time recommendations of the International Committee. Discussions at the 1974 AAEA Annual Meetings and deliberations of the International Committee will determine which ones are embraced by the Committee.
- 3/ In addition to the perspectives of seminar participants based on personal experiences, there are several writings which are also of

great relevance and contributed importantly to the viewpoints expressed in the seminars and in turn, to this paper.

- 4/ Responses were constrained with the requirement that each individual respondent could identify only one-third of the 18 suggestions identified in the earlier seminars as "highest priority," another third as "medium priority," and the other third as "lowest priority."
- 5/ We purposely encompass research, as well as education. In our judgment, the educational abilities of university personnel are enhanced greatly if it is possible for the individuals involved to also participate regularly in related research activities.
- 6/ This proposal for monies for U.S. universities is not intended to detract from what we perceive to be very significant needs for international assistance to national research efforts of the LIC. Funding of both is important and monies for U.S. universities would in our judgment make it possible to both support U.S. assistance programs and relate to the LIC educators and colleagues on a professional basis, as well as do a much improved job of instruction of both foreign and American students.
- 7/ Legal interpretation would be necessary to determine if legislation would need to be amended to carry out the approach outlined above. Also, other legislation could be developed. But, consideration of the budget process would seem to argue for use of current or slightly

modified authority contained in Section 406. There is, of course, the danger that the appropriations under this approach would be so small that the automatic allocation would dissipate any potential impact simply because there would not be a critical mass at any one university. Further, there is a chance that the universities would not use the funds as intended. But, these chances would seem worth taking.