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OXENISATION IN THE GAMBIA

The Project - The Evaluation - The Main Findings

The Project

ODA has been involved in the Gambian oxenisation programme through the provision of capital aid for equipment and buildings for farmer training centres and technical cooperation. Groundnuts are the major cash crop, and two-thirds of dabadas (agricultural compounds of about 10 acres, worked by 5-6 adults) use animal power in the cultivation of groundnuts. Animal draught is much less frequent in the cultivation of other crops.

The Evaluation

The evaluation considered the impact of oxenisation in the rural economy and examines the critical inputs required for oxenisation. It was prepared by Mr Hal Mettrick an Agricultural Economist at Reading University, supported by Papa Cham, of the Gambian Department of Agriculture, Yundum. The work included field visits.

The Main Findings

- The development of an appropriate technology requires sustained testing in the field. After the withdrawal from production of the successful Emcot ridger, the introduction of the Aplos toolframe - a commercial development of a NIAE design - failed because of its complexity and unsuitability to local conditions. The Sine Hoe, a development of Sengalese equipment which some farmers had already been using, was subsequently adopted.
- The ox-ploughing school and mixed farming centres have successfully introduced the technology. A possible improvement of 10-20% in family income is suggested as a result. Returns to the small investment in the programme were high.
- The non-availability of credit for the purchase of oxen and the Sine Hoe has hampered development and reinforced the inegalitarian nature of rural society. At the same time, women, whose major agricultural concern is swamp rice, have been excluded from the oxenisation programme, which has been confined to dryland crops.
- The impact of oxenisation has not been as great as suggested, being confined to groundnut crops and resulting in an increase in the area of cultivation, rather than improved yields.