

Outline of a Scheme of Research into the Agricultural Entrepreneurship of Upper Income Employees in West Africa

THE Ministry of Overseas Development has recently agreed to assist in the financing of a research project entitled 'Agricultural Entrepreneurship of Upper Income Employees in West Africa' which will involve field-work in Nigeria and Ghana between 1971-3.

Experience in introducing agricultural change through direct government assistance to peasant farmers has not yet shown any substantial break-through in West Africa in spite of very considerable investment in settlement schemes, plantation developments, research farms, and extension services. At the same time, however, there have been many individual examples of highly successful agricultural innovation and development and frequently these have involved upper-income employees whose primary occupation is outside the agricultural sector. Thus the looked-for response has come not from the peasant but from his educated sons and daughters who established themselves, initially, outside the rural environment.

In Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria such developments are most easily observed in the growth of poultry and pig farming in which a great deal of investment has been made by persons who are mainly involved in salaried work, for example, university lecturers, teachers, government officials, and other professional personnel. Investment by such persons in other agricultural activities is also noticeable, but less obvious, e.g. in marketing of food-stuffs, especially in transport, in oil-palm plantations, in vegetable farming near to urban centres, etc. Their involvement in agriculture is usually as a weekend or part-time occupation. They often operate farms in rural areas from which they or their family originated, and draw labour from the extended family or clan. Such entrepreneurs bring to agriculture certain inputs which are not easily accessible or cannot be easily performed by the peasant farmer on his own, notably:

- (a) *Capital.* They are able to use either their own savings and may be in a favourable position to obtain government loans, and preferential credit facilities from suppliers, and import licences for imported supplies.
- (b) *Technical knowledge.* If they do not already have this they know how to acquire it. They often have easy access to government sources of information and assistance and may be able to get preferential advice from the government extension service, universities and foreign firms interested in agriculture (e.g. those selling insecticides, pesticides, and agricultural implements).
- (c) *Managerial ability.* Their higher education enables them to understand and keep accounts, to make foreign orders, to hold bank accounts, to organize marketing, to learn about new advances in agriculture.
- (d) *Family and community status.* Because they are educated they often hold a high status in the clan and extended family. This enables them to demand a certain loyalty and discipline amongst members of a wider group which is very useful in organizing a farm labour force.

Investment and innovation in agriculture could be greatly extended by further involvement from this source of entrepreneurship, but research needs to be undertaken in order to understand the present situation before recommendations can be made for its extension. This study aims to examine the processes by which this investment in agriculture has taken place. While it is specifically concerned with agriculture, the initial study of a random sample of upper income salaried employees will seek information on all their entrepreneurial activities in order to obtain a wider perspective. Questions will also be asked about failures in entrepreneurial activities.

The methodology will involve analysis of data from a random sample of employees based on income levels and places of employment. It is hoped that three cities in Nigeria and two in Ghana will be covered.

The supervisor of this study, Mrs. Rowena Lawson, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Leeds, Leeds, 2, would be pleased to receive any suggestions about the study and to learn of similar research elsewhere.

International African Institute: Research Information Liaison Unit

THE *International Register of Organisations undertaking Africanist Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, compiled by Merran Fraenkel, is now available (£3.00). It gives details of the structure, personnel, and research disciplines of nearly 800 organizations (including university departments, research institutes and centres, and museums) in which Africanist research is undertaken. The information presented is drawn from replies to an inquiry circulated during the second half of 1970, from communications and lists received from a number of national organizations, and from details in the International African Institute's own records. The publication is intended as a general work of reference for Africanists, and also as a framework for the assembly of information on current research projects.

The first of a series of *International Bulletins on Current Africanist Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities* is in preparation. The Bulletins will include:

- (a) Brief listing of the aims, methods and scope of all relevant research projects under way in and on the several regions of Africa.
- (b) Reports on research developments and needs in particular regions or subjects.
- (c) News on the formation of new institutes and centres, on the initiation of large-scale research projects, on conferences and seminars recently held, and on changes in the structure or policies of existing organizations. This is an extension of the service provided up to the present in the 'Notes and News' section of the Institute's journal *Africa*.
- (d) Requests from persons undertaking comparative research on specific topics for contacts with others working on similar topics.

Contributions under these headings are invited by the Research Information Liaison Unit.

Under item (a)—the listing of research projects—arrangements for the exchange of information have been made with the Centre d'Analyse d'Afrique Noire, which collects and publishes information on research in France and the former French territories in Africa, and with the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom. Similar arrangements are being discussed with the African Studies Association of the U.S.A. For other countries, a questionnaire form is being circulated to research workers, either directly by the Unit or through local or national organizations. **It would be appreciated if research workers who have not yet received an inquiry through one of these channels (or who have not yet replied to it) would send to the Research Information Liaison Unit brief information on their current research activities, under the headings listed on the sample form RILU/3 printed at the back of this number of *Africa*.**