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THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE CONCEPT

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### INTRODUCTION

At the Fifth FAO Regional Conference for Africa held in Kampala, Uganda, in November 1968, a paper was presented by FAO on "Integrated Rural Institutional Development for Providing Government Services to Agriculture". This paper aroused considerable interest and discussion among the delegates and has led to requests from several countries for assistance in setting up integrated rural development projects.

One of the major topics of this paper was entitled "The Agricultural Development Centre - a suggested new approach". In this, the proposal was made to set up in rural areas comprehensive agricultural development centres which would be the focal point of agricultural development in the area.

It was suggested to FAO by ECA that the topic of Agricultural Development Centres should be elaborated in a paper for this Conference and that it should explore the possibility of widening their scope into "Rural Development Centres". This possible wider application was touched upon, but not followed up, in the Kampala Conference paper.

In this paper I would like to discuss three types of development centres which differ in terms of the scope of facilities and services provided:

- (1) the simple agricultural development centre similar to the Veterinary Centres and Natural Resources Centres set up in Tanzania;
- (2) the more comprehensive agricultural centre concept as described at the Africa Regional Conference;
- (3) the still more comprehensive rural development centre concept as mentioned in the Africa Regional Conference and on which ECA has asked for further discussion.

It is hoped that this brief outline will be of interest to delegates, who may wish to describe similar developments in their experience or who may wish to draw from experience elsewhere, in developing such centres in their own countries.

### II. THE VETERINARY CENTRE AND NATURAL RESOURCE CENTRE SCHEME IN TANZANIA

Although the concept of the fairly comprehensive and sophisticated agricultural development centre is a recent one, as far as I know, in this Region, attempts have been made with some success on a simpler and smaller scale in past years. Some 10 to 15 years ago our host country Tanzania

established a number of veterinary centres mainly south of Lake Victoria and some of these were developed to include crop and animal husbandry and even forestry and were known as "natural resources centres". The concept was an excellent one - such a centre can be the focal point for agricultural development in the area, closely associated with the farmers, form a valuable link between the farmers and agricultural research and Government services in general and it can provide a compact unit to supply the various facilities and services that are needed by the farming community.

Where the staff was good and the services well organized, these centres became indeed like the proverbial leaven in a lump of dough and had a marked effect on agricultural development in their vicinity. It was decided that, in order to keep these centres close to the rural people and not just adjuncts of central government, they should be financed by the local authorities. This, I believe, led to the closure of several of these centres, as continued financial support could not be provided. The revenue of local authorities fluctuated with the crops and crop prices so that in bad years they could not support the centres.

The services provided can be determined and varied according to the needs of the area. The following list gives some of the ways in which the centre can act as the focus and stimulator of agricultural development in its neighbourhood:

- (1) Be the place where the extension staff of agriculture and animal husbandry, animal health, forestry, etc. can be contacted when the farmers need help and advice. (This should not mean that the field staff remains sedentary, they must tour their area assiduously, but they can arrange days or times when they are available at the centre).
- (2) Be the place where the farmers can get together informally to hear talks, have debates, listen to radio programmes, attend film shows on matters of interest and importance to farmers. Farmers' newspapers, agricultural ministry and trade pamphlets should be freely available.
- (3) In places where these farm services are not supplied by co-operatives, or the private sector, the centres can serve as distributing points for improved seed, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, agricultural tools (including a supply of spare parts) preferably for payment in cash, but perhaps on credit arrangements with payment deferred till harvest time.
- (4) Be the animal improvement centre for the area by providing selected bulls, rams, etc. for study purposes, distribution of improved cockerels or day-old chicks, fish fingerlings, etc.

- (5) Be the centre for animal health work for the area, providing simple veterinary remedies, first aid and injections for various animal diseases. (It is probably not possible to provide a qualified veterinary surgeon but one should visit the centre regularly and be on call in emergencies).
- (6) Provide demonstrations of certain improved farming practices- say use of fertilizers, early weeding, better animal housing, preservation of animal fodder and the like. (It is not recommended that these centres act as experiment stations).
- (7) Maintain small nurseries to provide the farmers with fruit trees, coffee seedlings, tea stumps, timber tree seedlings, as are required by the farmers.

It is very unlikely that one centre would undertake all these functions - the set-up of the centre must be very flexible so that it is adaptable to the needs of the local farming community.

The size and scope of the centre must be adapted to the needs and to the money, staff, land and equipment available. A typical centre may consist of 15 - 25 acres of land with housing and offices for the agricultural and veterinary field officers and other staff, storage accommodation for seeds, fertilizers, etc., animal houses and a meeting hall with facilities for film shows, radio and library. The land is used for demonstrations, paddocks for animals and tree nurseries and bulking of seed.

The centres in Tanzania were at a sub-district level, undertaking some of the functions and field services of the Agricultural Ministry over a limited area. Depending on their functions, they were responsible to the District Veterinary Officer or Agricultural Officer. For administrative and technical support, they depended on the district Ministry of Agriculture staff and the nearest agricultural research station.

#### The Staffing of the Centre

In a simple centre, the staff can be very limited. For example;

Agricultural Field Officer  
Veterinary Field Officer  
Storeman  
Clerk  
Workmen for stock keeping, field labour and station maintenance.

Naturally, as the functions increase, numbers of staff must increase; (for example, a nursery man, animal husbandry field officer), but the staff should not be numerous nor the facilities elaborate.

Financing

Such a centre may cost little or much depending on many factors -- the standard of building, the services provided, the cost of land and so on. The Ministry of Agriculture may be willing to supply the staff and running costs if some other agency supplies the capital cost. A centre may cost between "20,000 and \$50,000 to establish, which would make it an attractive and worthwhile project for support by a bilateral or multilateral aid agency such as FFHC or the Scandinavian aid agencies.

Again, the annual running costs vary enormously with the services provided. If the salaries and other costs of Ministry staff at the centre are covered by the normal Ministry budget, the non-recoverable costs of running the centre need not be heavy -- say \$10,000. Each centre should have in addition a revolving fund for purchase of seed, fertilizers, implements, etc., replenished from sales to the farmers. (If such services are not already supplied by co-operatives, farmers' associations or the private sector).

The siting of the centre is important. Obviously, it should be sited in a concentrated farming community with good communications to various parts of the area. It should have good communications with the chief centre of the province or district where specialists can be consulted and goods and services obtained. It should be near an urban community or market town so that it is convenient for the farmers and so that amenities such as schools, clinics and shops are available to the staff.

In general, these centres provide useful bases from which many of the extension and field services needed for agricultural development are provided to the farming community.

### III. THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

The Agricultural Development Centre concept as put forward at the Africa Regional Conference at Kampala envisaged a much wider range of activities and responsibilities than were attempted at the Veterinary Centres and Natural Resources Centres established in Tanzania. These proposed centres are indeed the base from which all field level services required by the farming community in a sub-district or area are undertaken and are much wider in scope and of a higher level of technology than the Tanzanian examples described. In addition to the functions described above, the centre can provide:

- (1) Facilities for training farmers: These may be merely facilities for day courses at the Centre for farmers and their wives to hear talks of agricultural developments, see films on agricultural subjects, hold debates, have field-days to explain the demonstrations in crop and animal husbandry. Alternatively, there could be a fully-fledged Farmer Training Centre with facilities for courses for women and rural youth. There are many advantages in this, as the staff, facilities and demonstrations at the Centre can be utilized in the farmer training.

- (2) Facilities for pre-service and in-service training of technicians: The accommodation and facilities at the Centre can be utilized for running short seminars or practical courses for technical staff of various kinds e.g., agricultural and veterinary field staff, co-operative staff, etc. This can supplement the normal training given at agricultural and co-operative training centres at national or provincial levels.
- (3) Facilities for supply of inputs, saving and credit: The Agricultural Development Centre could serve as a distribution centre for fertilizers, insecticides, farm tools, improved breeds of poultry and other inputs needed by the farmer (provided that there is not already adequate provision of these from other sources). Preferably, the farmers would pay cash for these supplies, but, as so often happens, the farmer may not have the ready money available till harvest time. It is therefore convenient to have, at the Centre, a branch of a co-operative credit agency or farmers' credit union open on certain days of the week, when farmers can obtain credit for the purchase of their farm requirements. This provides the opportunity for the farmers to deposit money when it is available in order to have security and earn interest.
- (4) Marketing and processing: It would be convenient to have the produce markets at or near the centre and to have some primary processing facilities for cleaning, packing, for further processing or export, probably by co-operatives. This would provide the opportunity for farmers to pay in kind for the provision of farm inputs.
- (5) Facilities for a co-operative office, for meetings of co-operative societies and for courses and seminars for co-operative society staff.
- (6) Nurseries for fruit trees, improved seed and planting material of many crops can be provided at the Centre. The centres can serve as bulking centres for seed supplied by the research stations.
- (7) Demonstrations can be given of irrigation practices, drainage systems, soil and water conservation measures, farm planning and management, as well as demonstrations of the improved varieties and better farm practices.
- (8) Stock improvement: Apart from the provision of stud bulls, horses, rams, etc., the centre can be the base for an artificial insemination scheme covering a wide area round the centre.
- (9) Facilities for teaching and demonstration of animal draught, tractors, farm implements and machinery. A workshop for the maintenance and repair of farm tools and machinery and a supply of spare parts are valuable branches of an Agricultural Development Centre.

- (10) Facilities for fisheries development: The Centre can provide facilities for the development of inland fisheries by the demonstration of suitable fish-ponds and fish husbandry methods and by the provision of fish fingerlings to stock the farmers' fish-ponds and by short courses in fisheries work.
- (11) Facilities for forestry development: The Centre can provide facilities for forestry development in the area, by demonstrations of tree planting and care and the provision of seedlings and planting material and by short courses in forestry work.
- (12) Facilities for meetings, conferences and courses run by farmers' associations, district councils, women's rural institutes, 4H clubs, youth groups and other rural organizations and societies. Such bodies can be encouraged to set up their headquarters for the area in or near the Agricultural Development Centre.

These are samples of functions which the Centre can perform. No one Centre will undertake all these functions - they must be fitted to the needs and aspirations of the agricultural community.

The widening of the functions to include non-agricultural activities leads naturally to the rural development centre which is discussed below.

The Centre is not merely the base for providing the services and inputs necessary for agricultural development, but it is the base for organizing, co-ordinating and stimulating agricultural development within its area of influence. It has a vital role to play in agricultural development and should have a definite place in the agricultural development plan of the Region.

#### The need for Agricultural Development Centres

The Agricultural Development Centre is a practical method of strengthening the rural institutions and services whose weakness is a major obstacle to future progress in the Region of Africa South of the Sahara, at least in some areas of all countries and especially in the domestic food sector.

The Kampala paper describes how neither the thinly spread services provided by the Ministries of Agriculture and Co-operatives working on a limited budget, nor the intensive vertically controlled development of one or two crops as promoted by Boards and Corporations have proved satisfactory from the small farmers' point of view. The failure to co-ordinate the various programmes reaching the field-level, coupled with the tendency often to spread available services too thinly, has led to the general situation where the average farm producer does not have access either to the proper combination or the quality of institutional facilities and services which he must have to increase his production and income as rapidly as the needs of his country dictate.

Since widespread establishment of intensive, co-ordinated and high quality agricultural field institutions and services is severely restricted by limitations in organizational capacity, trained manpower and financial resources, the immediate problem for countries is that of setting priorities on the actions they must take to fill short-run needs as well as constructing a sound framework of field institutions for their long-range needs.

Two principles come forcefully into conflict in attempting to set these priorities. Political necessity and social justice both demand that if agricultural services are to be provided at all, they should be given equally to all farm producers. Against this, however, if any farmer is to be furnished with an effective field services programme, it must be in an intensive and complementary enough form so that the essential facilities, conditions and services he requires to increase production and income are in fact provided to him. The solution to this dilemma for many countries of the Region in the recent past has been to devote the main bulk of governments' resources for providing agricultural field services to a very limited group of farms which produce crops and animals for export. In a sense this was and is the logical short-run solution because of the Region's crying need for foreign exchange earnings. This solution, however, will not serve for much longer because of a rising demand for agricultural field services by the main bulk of farmers who grow domestic food products. This Region must begin to build toward agricultural field services which serve all farmers with the minimum combination of facilities and services required to increase production.

The Agricultural Development Centre provides a practicable method by which a wide variety of agricultural field service necessary for development can be provided to the rural community.

In former times the centres of agricultural development were the province and the district. The district was however frequently too large and included too many farmers to permit close contact between Government agricultural services and the farmers. Some Ministries of Agriculture have tried to approach closer to the farmers by supplementing the district centres by sub-district or socio-economic community centres and it is at this level that the agricultural development centres can serve their purpose.

Some Ministry of Agriculture activities must remain at higher than sub-district level; for example, research and the more sophisticated technical expertise, and there must remain a close connexion between the provincial and district Agricultural Ministry representatives and their counterparts in the administration and the other Ministries. However, some activities of the Ministry of Agriculture and associated Ministries are effective only if undertaken close to the farmers. The Agricultural Development Centre provides the means to make such close contact and effectiveness feasible. It must be stressed that action must take place simultaneously at all levels, if progress is to be made. An agricultural development centre can, for instance, make little progress if the district agricultural staff is inept and lethargic.



One mundane but nevertheless important feature of the Agriculture Development Centre is that it must provide the staff with acceptable living and working conditions in order to attract and retain staff of the required calibre. Most of us have experience of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining good staff if housing and working conditions are unsatisfactory. It is unreasonable to expect skilled professional and technical personnel and their families to live in uncomfortable and insanitary conditions. At the centre, the houses and offices can be of the standard locally accepted as satisfactory and the Ministry field staff can live and work as a team instead of being scattered in whatever accommodation they can obtain. This in itself means better health, better work output and better morale among the staff.

The Agricultural Development Centre should answer the problem of bringing the Ministry field workers nearer to the farming community and yet of providing acceptable living and working conditions for the staff.

The Centre also brings the agricultural offices together so that a farmer has not visit many scattered offices to obtain the help and services he needs.

Last but not least, the Centre brings agricultural staff together, so that they can support each other and work as a team in co-ordinating the services and advice to the farmers.

#### Staffing of the Centre

The Agricultural Development Centre needs a bigger and better-qualified staff than the small centres described in the first part of the paper.

It will be necessary to have a leader or co-ordinator to supervise and direct the work of the Centre. He would preferably be a graduate in agriculture with a wide experience in many of the fields covered by the Centre and of proven leadership ability.

It will be necessary to have qualified people of at least diploma standard in charge of each of the main activities of the Centre, for example:

- (1) Agricultural extension officer
- (2) Animal health officer
- (3) Animal husbandry officer (if this field is not covered under agricultural extension)
- (4) Co-operative officer
- (5) Agricultural credit officer
- (6) Agricultural training staff
- (7) Fisheries officer
- (8) Forestry officer
- (9) Marketing officer

Plus nurserymen, field labourers, station hands, office staff, and store-keeper.

The staff should be as highly qualified and experienced as is required to do the necessary jobs well. Practical ability and experience are more valuable than academic qualifications. The staff will have the support of more senior or more specialized officers in the District and Provincial Centres, the Research and Experiment Stations and the training centres in the neighbourhood.

#### Organization and Management of the Centre

Obviously the centre must have some niche in the Government structure, it must be somebody's baby if it is to survive.

The Veterinary Centres and Natural Resources Centres in Tanzania were clearly units of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible to the Minister through the normal channels at District and Provincial levels. If agricultural, animal husbandry and veterinary work come under different departments of the Ministry, then some arrangements must be made to determine the place of the Centre in the Government structure.

This can be solved by making the centre responsible to the representative of the Ministry who is in charge of all ministry staffs activity in the district (as opposed to departmental representatives).

The same would apply to the wider agricultural centres described in this section. If agriculture, animal health and animal husbandry are the responsibility of more than one Ministry or if the Centre includes other functions which involve several Ministries, then special organizational arrangements must be made which will be discussed later.

Within the Centre, the organization can be fairly straight-forward with an overall co-ordinator to whom the senior member of each unit is responsible. Apart from the technical units, there should be an administrative and financial unit responsible for offices and stores, equipment, budget and finance and staff matters. This should include a station manager responsible for the upkeep of the station and farm and in charge of outside labour.

There should be an advisory committee to advise the co-ordinator. This should include representation from local leaders, farmers' associations and co-operatives, and representatives of government and quasi government organizations associated with agricultural development. In this way, the needs and aspirations of the farmers are known to the co-ordinator so that the work of the Centre can be planned accordingly.

#### Financing of the Centre

The Centre may be financed under the regular or development budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Ministry may be responsible for staff costs and some other body such as a Country Council or District Council may provide the land, finance the building, and pay for running costs. It is possible that such centres may be attractive projects for bilateral or multilateral

financial support, as they are of fairly limited cost (say \$50,000) and could have a decisive impact on increasing agricultural productivity and improving the level of living in the rural areas. It would be highly desirable if a way could be found of inducing farmers to make a financial contribution, however small, to the centre. This has been found very effective in the Comilla Development Centre in East Pakistan in encouraging the attitude among farmers that this is our development centre.

#### Association of the Agricultural Development Centre with other Agricultural Work in the District

The Agricultural Development Centre is intended to facilitate and make more effective Ministry of Agriculture field work and to supplement district work by work at sub-district level. The Centre provides a base giving the staff acceptable places to live and work, providing means for their working as a team and making them more readily available to the farmers.

Although the Centre provides a place where field staff can be consulted by the farmers, it does not mean that the staff is sedentary. The staff must continue to tour in the villages and farms and meet the farmers on their own ground. Furthermore, under each unit of the Centre there will be a cadre of junior field workers in the rural areas maintaining contact between the farmers and the Centre. The farmers are encouraged to visit the Centre regularly, and to regard the staff there as their guides and teachers. For this reason, it is desirable that the Centre has no part to play either in enforcement of agricultural regulations or in the collection of farmers' debts (other than the normal work of the credit provision at the Centre).

Under the Agricultural Development Centre set-up, there will be less likelihood of branches of the Ministry working independently and even at cross purposes. The farmer is less likely, therefore, to be confused by numerous, sometimes conflicting instructions and advice given by the various branch representatives.

The Centre can serve as a valuable medium for promoting government plans and programmes for agricultural development, whether it is to grow more millet or improve the quality of copra or produce better hides or encourage tractor ploughing.

Furthermore, the Centre can perform a valuable function in making the farmers' needs and aspirations known to research workers, planners and policy-makers who are in a position to take action to meet these needs and aspirations.

The paper prepared for the Kampala Conference goes into some detail concerning the strategy which may be adopted in a given country to establish a system of agricultural centres. This, of course, can be adapted or modified according to the administrative system and the agricultural conditions in the country concerned.

I quote from the Kampala paper, "Even though the approach described indicates promise of highly favourable returns on investment, is it too expensive in terms of both financial and trained personnel requirements for countries of this Region to afford? The answer to this is no, if it is installed by stages. It is proposed that Agricultural Development Centre be built up in districts or regions of highest agricultural potential first and then gradually be spread to all other agricultural areas. In this way the prevailing approach of provision of facilities and services for agricultural development would continue at the present or slightly increased level until completely replaced by this more comprehensive system. This reorganization of administration of agriculture would involve changes extending from the central to the field level and would involve steps roughly as follows:

- (a) A ministerial level policy committee would be established to formulate policy, mobilize resources and establish broad guidelines for inter-ministerial and inter-agency co-operation in implementing the new programme. The Minister with primary responsibility for agricultural development, normally the Minister of Agriculture, would chair the committee and assume overall responsibility for implementation of the programme.
- (b) The Minister in charge of the programme would appoint a senior administrator to execute the programme.
- (c) The Minister in charge would assign senior personnel from each of the various field services involved in operating an Agricultural Development Centre, such as agricultural extension and co-operatives to comprise a secretariat to assist the Administrator in implementing the programme.
- (d) The first project area (equal to a sub-district or rural community area), representative of a large segment of the nation's agriculture and easily accessible to farmers within the area, would be selected for establishment of the first Agricultural Development Centre and pilot area.
- (e) The Co-ordinator for the Centre and surrounding pilot area would be appointed and given staff to establish the minimum package of field level services and facilities for the project area.
- (f) Within two or three years, farmers in the pilot area should be adopting improved practices, and increased product on and income should be forthcoming. Once a fair number of farmers in the pilot area have made use of the facilities of the Centre

to increase their incomes and the project is generally operating smoothly, teams to staff second, third and fourth project area may be brought in for training.

- (g) If a country is large, necessitating division into a considerable number of project areas, there may be a need for one or more of these areas to supplement the one initially established as a training facility.
- (h) Once the pilot and training areas are functioning smoothly, expansion to other areas may take place at a rate determined by the availability of trained agricultural manpower and financial resources. At this stage agricultural staff who have been employed in providing a minimum of services throughout the country are withdrawn from their former areas and evaluated as to suitability for use in the new programme. Those who are found suitable are given on-the-job training in one of the project training areas.
- (i) From the economic point of view, the areas to be covered first by the new approach should be those with the greatest production potential so as to facilitate accumulation of resources for expanding the approach as rapidly as possible. There may, however, be cases where political and/or social considerations dictate the choice of areas which, from the standpoint of potential productivity, may be of marginal character."

In most countries in the region the services which could be undertaken by the Centre are already in existence, but they are often prevented from being fully effective because they are scattered or independent or understaffed. The Agricultural Development Centre gives the opportunity to strengthen, co-ordinate and unify these services.

#### IV. THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

In the FAO paper at the Kampala Conference the suggestion was made that the Agricultural Development Centre could be developed or incorporated into a larger and more comprehensive Rural Development Centre which deals with all aspects of rural development in addition to agriculture and closely allied subjects.

This idea was not developed in the paper and the suggestion was made in ECA that this idea should be developed further. This I do with some diffidence as it is getting beyond my field of experience, but I put forward some ideas in the hope that they will be developed and enriched by contributions from other delegates, from my colleagues in the sister agencies of the United Nations and by Mr. Riby Williams, the Director of the ECA Human Resources Development Division, who raised the suggestion.

##### Functions

As in the Agricultural Centres, the functions of the Rural Development Centre must be flexible and adapted to local needs but they may include (in addition to those functions mentioned for the Agricultural Development Centre) facilities in the following fields:

- (1) rural health services;
- (2) family welfare service (including family planning);
- (3) adult literacy unit;
- (4) village polytechnic;
- (5) communications and transportation;
- (6) land reform;
- (7) information services.

The Rural Development Centre can be a natural expansion of the Agricultural Development Centre, as there is no hard and fast demarcation between agriculture and other rural activities. Similarly, a rural development centre may result from the expansion of a village polytechnic. Its growth must follow the needs and aspirations of the rural people.

##### The organization of a Rural Development Centre

The wider we make the functions and services, the more Ministries and quasi-government organizations become involved. Similarly, the wide range of functions involves the interests and responsibilities of the United Nations agencies other than FAO. Thus both within and outside the country the organizational aspects become more complex.

One suggestion is to make rural development projects the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture (as is done in one country of the Region) on the grounds that agriculture is predominant in the rural areas. This may be effective in the short-run but, if such projects proliferate, then the Ministry of Agriculture becomes more and more powerful in rural areas at the expense of other Ministries and there is bound to be resentment and lack of co-operation.

Another suggestion is to set up a new Ministry of Rural Development. This too has its drawbacks as it would be a compendium Ministry of numerous diverse interests, it would widen the gap that already exists between town and country, it would cut across the disciplines of many other Ministries and so cause confusion and opposition. This has been tried in several countries in Asia, for example, and to my knowledge has never been successful.

The suggestion made in the Kampala paper was to make the Centres responsible to a Council or Committee of Ministers with the Minister of Agriculture as Chairman. This could be an effective method provided that there is good-will between the various Ministries right from Minister down to field worker level. The problem lies not so much in achieving agreement on an action programme, but on putting this into effect.

In a recent mission of FAO and SIDA (the Swedish Aid Organization) to Kenya this problem of responsibility for an integrated development project involving many ministries was discussed at length with the Kenya authorities. The conclusion reached from these discussions (which has still to be ratified by the Government) that the most suitable person to co-ordinate such multidisciplinary projects, in the situation pertaining to Kenya, is to make the Provincial Commissioner responsible for integrated rural development projects in his Province.

This takes advantage of the existing situation in Kenya, where the Provincial Commissioner is acknowledged as the leader and co-ordinator of the various Ministry activities in his Province, he has direct access to all Ministries and is directly responsible to the Prime Minister's Office. Therefore, making him the responsible authority for rural development projects (which would include rural development centres) is merely an application of the powers and responsibilities which he already has. The co-ordinator of a Rural Development Centre would be responsible to the Provincial Commissioner through the District Commissioner of the District in which the Centre lies.

The advisory council or committee of the Co-ordinator would, of course, have to include representation from all the major fields covered at the centre, including Health, Education, Community Development, Public Works, in addition to those mentioned for the Agricultural Centre. Furthermore, a wider representation from the rural community is required so that a comprehensive programme can be worked out leading to a balanced development of the rural community.

The organization of the Centre itself would be more complex than that of the Agricultural Development Centre and it may be necessary to establish chiefs of the main groups of disciplines, for example, Agriculture, Education, Health, Community Development and so on.

Much will depend on the quality of the Co-ordinator. He must be a man of very wide experience who will not favour any one branch of the centre at the expense of others, and is capable of leading a very diversified team. In the UAR, combined units have been set up which endeavour to combine and integrate the services of education, health, social welfare and agriculture at rural centres. A problem encountered there is that the individual loyalties of the separate service agents to their respective national ministries have not been conducive to realistic integration at the local level despite the fact that the Agriculture Centre, the Health Centre, the School, the Social Centre, etc. (including living quarters for officials) are all situated close together.

#### Staffing

Undoubtedly, there will be problems to overcome in welding together a team from a group of people with different backgrounds, different loyalties and levels of training. It may be advisable to recruit the staff from those already known and accepted in the area of the centre and to concentrate on middle level trained personnel who are accustomed, or can adapt themselves to local conditions. This would mean a certain dependence for technical backstopping on the staff at District and Provincial levels, research stations, colleges, etc., but this is probably feasible. It is important to select staff from people who have already achieved some local influence or leadership or who seem likely to achieve it.

#### Legal Status of the Centre

All three types of centres, but particularly the Rural Development Centre, must have the backing of Government laws and regulations to avoid future sources of dispute and confusion concerning its status, duties and responsibilities. Such legislation should include:

- (a) The Rural Development Centre - its functions, area of jurisdiction, its relationship with district and provincial Government offices, village councils and the public;
- (b) The Co-ordinator - his duties and responsibilities, his relationships with the staff and the chain of responsibility both within the Centre and to the Provincial Commissioner (or whoever is the senior Government officer responsible);
- (c) The advisory council of the Centre - its functions and membership, its rules of procedure.



### CONCLUSION

Three types of rural development centres have been described. The first is a simple unpretentious centre for undertaking certain functions in field services of a Ministry of Agriculture, the second is a broader and more advanced centre undertaking all the field services in agriculture and allied fields of activity and finally a comprehensive rural development centre. The flexibility and adaptation to local needs have been stressed for all three types of centre. A start can be made simply and cheaply at the first stage, this can develop into or be incorporated into the second stage which in turn can be developed into or incorporated into the third. Each step will require careful consideration on the subject of functions, staffing, financing, legal and organizational problems.

The success of the centre will depend to a large extent on the acceptance of its aims by the rural people, the influence it builds up to induce the people to modify and improve their traditional methods. It should establish itself as an integral part of the rural community, striving to improve it from within, not as a system of improvement imposed from the outside by central government. It should act as a major connecting link between the farmer and government both in passing on government advice and services to the rural people and in making the needs and aspirations of the rural people known to Government.

These centres are not ends in themselves, but are effective tools for improving the institutional support necessary to achieve the ultimate goal which is to raise the standard of living of all rural people through increased agricultural production.

Much of what has been said has not yet been proved in practice and may be modified in various ways in the light of such practices. Various ideas and suggestions are put forward for debate at this meeting and, I hope, development of the ideas into further practical trials in various countries. I trust that at some future date there may be an opportunity to discuss together practical experiences in the actual establishment and development of such centres.