

# HARAMUTA

A black silhouette graphic featuring the word 'HARAMUTA' in a large, stylized, blocky font. The letters are interconnected and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance. On either side of the word, there are silhouettes of camels and riders, suggesting a caravan or a desert setting.

No. 41, June 2002



**Innovating  
farmers  
inspire**  
*pages 12 -15*



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Cover: Farmer innovator Ali Ouedraogo explaining his work to the ambassadors of the USA (second from the right), USAID forester Mike McGahuey (second from the left) and the German ambassador (left).  
Photo: Chris Reij.

## Editorial

Haramata's centre pages tell the story of Africa's small farmers – their creativity and dynamism – in the face of many odds. It has long been said that 'necessity is the mother of invention'. African farmers have needed to innovate to survive in often harsh economic and climatic conditions. Their own governments have often provided little help, and taxed them rather than supported them.

What a contrast with agricultural producers in rich countries! Here, farmers receive substantial subsidies and their crops are bought at guaranteed prices, often well-above world market levels. Hence, they keep on producing, whether or not prices cover costs, leading to over-supply. A wide variety of schemes allow them to tap into funds to conserve the environment and gain access to cheap credit and inputs. And when crisis hits, as with the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Britain, there are ready funds to compensate those who lose their animals.

The inequalities between rich and poor parts of the world and the gulf in their prospects and livelihoods seem to be becoming more and more acute. The subsidies paid to rich country farmers are pushing hard-pressed Southern farmers to the wall. At the same time, trade liberalisation has led to dumping of cheap food from Europe and North America in markets around the world, further destroying the prospects for poor farmers.

Citizen action is now starting to mobilise to call for fairer trade, and trade justice. It's a message that needs to be heard by leaders of the world's great powers. Globalisation that works only in favour of the rich will bring disaster to us all. We need to design a fairer set of rules with a system of global governance that represents all the world's citizens – poor and rich, young and old. We need to start now – we can't afford to wait!

## Trade campaign

Will free trade bring benefits to the poor and help reduce poverty? This has been the claim of pro-market advocates. Yet, as a new report from Oxfam clearly shows, there are no such guarantees. And while many poor countries have been forced to liberalise their economies and open up markets to outsiders, most rich countries have withstood pressures to do the same, despite their rhetoric.

The Doha round of trade negotiations will take place over the next couple of years, under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation. This set of negotiations has been described as the 'development round' with issues of poverty and making trade work for the benefit of poorer countries said to be at the heart of the bargaining.

In the past, trade has shown itself of enormous strength in raising incomes through providing opportunities for people to specialise and access higher value markets than those available locally. Evidence from China shows how substantial economic growth and poverty reduction can be built on both labour intensive and high technology products. In Bangladesh, large income gains for women have been made possible through exports of manufactured goods. But overall, low income countries, while accounting for more than 40% of world population, generate less than 3% of world trade.

African leaders are arguing in the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) that rich countries should themselves undergo structural adjustment, just as African economies were forced to do in the 1980s and 90s. Developed countries should stop producing

those commodities where they no longer have a cost advantage and allow poorer countries to expand into these areas. Examples include textile production, sugar and cereals.

The policies of rich countries are key to the incomes and livelihoods of poorer nations. For example, agricultural subsidies paid by EU and US governments to their farmers lead to over-supply for many commodities such as cereals, dairy produce, and meat. Such goods are then sold at below cost price which makes it impossible

for non-subsidised farmers to compete. African governments have had to bring down their own trade barriers in return for debt relief and access to loans. Hence, farmers in many poor countries find not only that they cannot sell their crops internationally, but also struggle to sell these goods in their own local markets, which have been swamped by frozen cuts of meat and cheap rice imports.

The rich countries of the world pledged to reduce agricultural subsidies during the previous round of trade negotiations, but far from this happening, they have continued to grow. Currently they stand at \$245b per year, with the EU the worst culprit, followed by the US. In the latter case, a new Farm Bill has just added a further \$100b over the next ten years. Yet protection for agriculture is particularly damaging for poorer nations, since agriculture is the biggest employer and for many countries the largest share of GDP and export revenue. By contrast, the farming community in Europe and North America is only a small part of the population, but they constitute a well-organised and loud lobby group who can shift the vote in certain key states.

Oxfam's report reckons that reducing subsidies and barriers to





imports for poor countries would provide economic benefits three times the value of aid. But it's not a question of aid and trade being substitutes for

each other. Aid funds can be used in ways positively to enhance the ability of poor farmers to gain access to markets, through better infrastructure, provision of information, support to meeting quality standards and development of producer groups.

Equally getting rid of rich farmer subsidies would provide many benefits in the developed world. Currently they go mainly to larger farmers, encourage wasteful use of inputs such as fertiliser, and generate surplus production. Richer countries would do well to find ways of promoting less intensive production, which would be more equitable, better for the environment, and cut back on food mountains. The EU will be forced to go in this direction when it expands to bring in countries such as Poland and Hungary, since these are much lower cost farm producers.

*Rigged Rules and Double Standards* is the title of Oxfam's report which forms part of a broader trade campaign aimed at getting a fairer deal for poorer nations. Working in collaboration with a group of other organisations they aim to build a movement globally, in rich countries and poor to make trade change in favour of the many.

For more information, visit [www.oxfam.co.uk](http://www.oxfam.co.uk), or [www.maketrade-fair.com](http://www.maketrade-fair.com); or get in touch with Oxfam directly at: [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org) *Rigged Rules and Double Standards* is also available in French.

## Praia +9

Long time readers of *Haramata* will remember the Praia Conference of 1994, led by the CILSS and Club du Sahel. The meeting brought together many actors from Sahelian countries, including government, peasant leaders, researchers and NGOs, as well as donor organisations. It generated clear recommendations on decentralisation, land tenure and natural resource management, such as the need to clarify tenure rights, especially guaranteeing access for poorer groups. And it promoted the design of a national legislative framework for land tenure based on equity and social justice.

So what's been achieved since Praia? Have these recommendations been carried through into practice, and has greater tenure security been achieved on the ground and for whom? Has conflict over land diminished and more decentralised management brought fairer access for marginal peoples?

CILSS is launching a process to assess progress since Praia through a series of national and regional consultations to document what has been done, and likely future challenges. The process will culminate in a regional forum in September 2003, to provide strategic advice to the next CILSS Summit in Nouakchott by the end of that year.

*CILSS is the 9 member state Sahelian organisation: Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel, headquartered in Ouagadougou. For more details of this initiative, contact: Mahamane Touré on: [mdtoure@liptinfor.bf](mailto:mdtoure@liptinfor.bf)*



## NEPAD

A major new global initiative has been launched to promote Africa's development – the New Programme for Africa's Development (NEPAD) – to be discussed by the world's richest nations at the G8 Summit in Canada this summer. It represents a

high level political initiative first mooted at the Millennium Summit of the UN in June 2000, and now taking firmer shape.

NEPAD brings together the plans and aspirations of the Presidents of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria in a set of proposals aimed at eradicating poverty, generating sustainable economic development and enabling Africa to participate actively in world's affairs, rather than being pushed to the margins. The NEPAD proposals cover peace and security, democratic governance, infrastructural development, health, education, poverty reduction, agriculture, environment, culture, science and technology.

NEPAD is meant to represent an African-led initiative, recognising Africa's own key role in addressing poverty and encouraging more sustainable development. But its supporters also recognise the particular disadvantages that Africa faces at the start of this new millennium. The continent as a whole has experienced a rise in poverty levels, a falling share of world trade and the lowest life expectancy on earth. The rate of HIV/AIDS is more than 25% in a number of countries and it is reckoned that more than 250 million people still



do not have access to safe drinking water. Prospects for peace remain distant in many areas of conflict, though the example of Sierra Leone, which went to the polls in May, shows that a country can step back from years of violent disorder to re-establish democratic processes, if they get the right kind of help.

The proposals for agriculture highlight the importance of small-holder farmers, particularly women, and state they should be at the heart of the strategy. It argues that too little attention has been paid by donors to agricultural and rural development where more than 70% of the poorest Africans actually live. For example, World Bank lending to agriculture fell from 39% of the total portfolio in 1978 to 12% in 1996 and to 7% in 2000. Improved rural infrastructure will also be needed to help farmers gain better access to markets.

Some observers wonder about the benefits of another global initiative, and stress the need for the NEPAD to dovetail effectively with plans already underway. For example, many African countries are currently engaged with Poverty Reduction Strategies which are intended to constitute the framework for all donor support. Equally, trade negotiations under the WTO's auspices provide an existing arena for tackling unfair trading practices, improved access to rich country markets, and getting rid of agricultural subsidies in the EU and US.

Others argue that the NEPAD process has been entirely 'top-down' with no ordinary Africans feeding into the identification of priorities and directions to be taken. Equally, the emphasis on backward and poorly developed agricultural systems ignores the enormous dynamism, knowledge and responsiveness of many African farmers. Better access to markets would certainly help, but there remain serious problems due to low world market prices and high volatility for many commodities. At the same time, much needs to be done to promote African exports, tackle various barriers to trade, and enhance

negotiating capacity at the WTO and other trade talks.

The NEPAD document rightly notes the need for Europe and North America to go in for structural adjustment, to address their high cost agricultural sector which can only survive through receipt of very large subsidies. Such subsidies must go if African farmers are to gain access to prices and markets to provide the basis for economic growth and investment in agriculture.

We shall follow NEPAD's progress with interest. Its success will depend on mobilising both local and global interests, as well as demonstrating commitment to democracy and human rights. It will need to build on many existing initiatives to avoid duplication and creation of parallel structures. It should add political weight to further debt relief and push for cuts in trade barriers and farming subsidies in rich countries which are blocking Africa's progress.

*For more information, visit the NEPAD website, on: [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)*

## A globalising world

For better or for worse, it's with us. Can we start to discern its effects? What does globalisation bring on the ground? A two week email debate run by ODI in April/May explored the impacts and implications of globalisation for agricultural research and extension, bringing contributions from 166 people from more than 30 countries.

Most debate focused on problems for smallholders gaining access to export markets, and their heightened vulnerability to lower prices and over-supply. Success in exporting requires high levels of organisation and access to information, to get the right product to the right place at the right time. Increasingly high standards are now demand-

ed for many products, with grading and standards that are hard to achieve. Many markets are also becoming more concentrated, with supermarkets wanting bulk delivery of a standard product to fit their shelves. Those farmers who can deliver in large quantities stand a better chance to sell to these buyers. Others must depend on clubbing together in cooperatives and working through middlemen and merchants. All farmers need to shift gear rapidly to adjust to new standards, markets and demands, generating an ever-changing set of pressures.

Developing country farmers are also subject to greater competition from imported farm produce. Examples from the email discussion included frozen chicken legs and rice produced by the US and Europe. These products, often highly subsidised, provide harsh competition for domestic producers, given the removal of trade tariffs that formerly provided some protection for local farmers. While the farmer's loss is the consumer's gain in some cases, in others, strategic behaviour by traders ensures that both lose out.

While some benefits from globalisation were acknowledged, such as extensive take-up of mobile telephones, the overall debate presented an uncertain and difficult future for small scale farmers in an era of globalisation. Many will need to adapt in major ways to find new sources of livelihood to combine with farming, while many will probably leave this sector altogether. There was no evidence from debate that public sector research was able to help farmers address the challenges of globalisation. Most people considered farmer organisation to be key by increasing their bargaining power, improved access to markets through bulk delivery, and gaining political voice.

*For a summary of the debate and access to the detailed contributions, visit [www.rimisp.cl/agren](http://www.rimisp.cl/agren)*



## Get info on food security and Ag-Biotech



The Meridian Institute is an NGO working on the integration of environmental, health, economic, and social issues. It has just launched a Food Security and Ag-Biotech News listserv to contribute to open and constructive dialogue about agricultural issues. The listserv is directed at policy makers, industry representatives, NGOs, scientists, academics, and others who wish to be informed of the most recent and pertinent developments in agricultural biotechnology and food security.

Subscribers will receive daily e-mails that summarize news and resources concerning food security, intellectual property rights, biosafety, liability, technology transfer, and sub-Saharan Africa. As the potential impacts of biotechnology touch many areas of society, Food Security and Ag-Biotech News reports on agricultural research, international trade, environmental negotiations, agricultural policy and food security issues.

The information contained in Food Security and Ag-Biotech News is compiled from a range of sources including peer-reviewed journals, popular press (e.g., newspapers, radio, etc.), NGO publications, international organisations (e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity, World Trade Organisation), agricultural research centres, government agencies, and industry publications. Where possible the news summaries will contain website links so that subscribers may obtain further information.

To subscribe to the Food Security and Ag-Biotech News service which is free of charge, thanks to funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, please visit [www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech](http://www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech)

## Degraded land in southern Africa

*Combining community action with science & common sense: Alternative ways to combat desertification* brought together some 140 people over a three week period in a series of meetings and venues, to explore better ways of addressing dryland degradation in southern Africa. The conference provided a chance for different groups to find ways of combining their skills more effectively, whether community representatives, research scientists, or government administrators. A range of different activities and places encouraged people to exchange knowledge and expertise, discover the value of linking local knowledge with science, disseminate information, identify innovative examples of progress, and gain hands-on practical experience.

As a first step, 30 people took part in a training session on communication, monitoring and development of national action programmes, project development and desertification assessment. The next three days saw a series of oral and written presentations from Namibia and South Africa addressing alternative income generation for rural areas, land tenure, indigenous knowledge, structures and institutions, desertification and land rehabilitation measures. Special attention was paid to ensuring the 'translation' of scientific research and development actions into language which made them mutually comprehensible to community development workers as well as scientists.

The next step in the conference involved community members



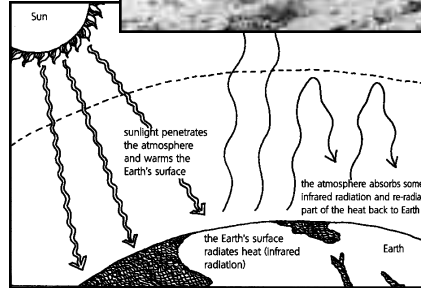
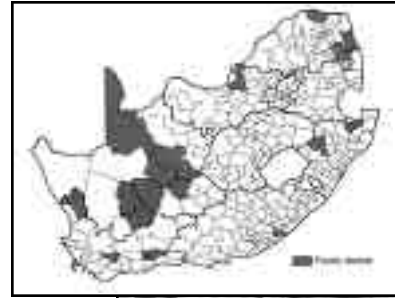
taking home some conference participants to show them how they are involved in combating desertification in their own lands. For five days, visits to six communities in Namibia and South Africa allowed for more in-depth knowledge and discussion of local initiatives, such as tourism and crafts, better farming practices, alternative technologies and methods for monitoring productivity.

The last part of the conference brought people together for a synthesis of findings, to compare lessons from the different communities visited, and propose actions for each to undertake in the coming year. While everyone admitted to learning a lot about how others were working, this workshop process highlighted the diverse perspectives and constraints faced by different groups. Researchers find it hard to combine a community-driven approach with their own reward system which is based on writing peer-reviewed publications, while for community members, rapid improvements in income are the highest priority.

*For more information, please contact: Mary Seely and Petra Moser, Desert Research Foundation, PO Box 20232, Windhoek, Namibia mseely@drfn.org.na and petram@drfn.org.na or the conference website: www.drfn.org.na/des2002*

**Nature divided: Land degradation in South Africa** provides an excellent overview of environmental problems faced and priority areas for intervention. South Africa has more than 90% of its land lying in dry regions, and a history of land division along racial lines which concentrated poor farmers in marginal areas. Communal farming areas are under heavy pressure given the continued high inequality in land ownership patterns and dominance of white commercial farmlands in the most productive areas.

Land degradation is especially acute in communal areas where holdings are inadequate, there are high human and livestock densi-



ties, and few incentives for farmers to invest in their land. In the past, model farming systems based on commercial farming practice were imposed on communal areas, with little success. An alternative

approach is needed which takes into account both biophysical and socio-economic factors. More attention is needed for monitoring

systems which keep track of rainfall, soils, and vegetation. Activities must involve land users in decisions and intervention strategies, since they are ultimately the people with the greatest interest in making their land

more productive. The book has many photos, maps and illustrations which make the text easy to read and learn from.

*For copies, contact: Seshni Moodley smoodley@juta.co.za fax: +27.21.762.4523*



## Is Burkina Faso getting greener?

The northern part of Burkina Faso's Central Plateau is widely known as an area of high population density, marginal to agriculture and subject to soil erosion and degradation. But some who know this region well perceive signs of remarkable environmental recovery over recent years. Around 1980, most foresters, geographers and agronomists were very pessimistic about the future of the Central Plateau. Writers, such as French geographer Marchal, emphasized the growth of rural population, high population densities, expansion of cultivation into land marginal for agriculture, destruction of the vegetation, the growing proportion of completely bare land, low and declining grain yields, the fragmentation of agricultural land, a lack of technologies permitting intensification of agriculture, and the highly precarious food security faced by many families. Such difficult conditions led many families to pack their scarce belongings and migrate to better-watered and more fertile regions in the west and southwest of Burkina Faso. Many also migrated to Côte d'Ivoire where they settled and developed holdings of coffee and cocoa.

From the early 1980s the

situation on the central Plateau seemed to change. Experiments with soil and water conservation (SWC) technologies started and simple but effective methods which were accessible to local farmers became wider spread. They include the well-known improved traditional planting pits or *zai* and also contour stone bunds. Due to a combination of public and private investment these technologies have spread rapidly.

Early in 2001 the Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) commissioned an impact assessment of SWC, agroforestry and agricultural intensification in this region, which concentrated on the impacts as perceived by farmers in 5 villages. These farmers confirmed the evidence from scattered field observations:

Credit: Chris Reij



*In the village of Ranawa more than 50ha of degraded land have been rehabilitated since 1985. This area used to be barren.*

the decline in cereal yields has been reversed and yields are now substantially increased on fields treated with SWC; household food security has improved, live-stock management has changed (better control and more fattening), and crop residues are managed with much greater care. Farmers are investing more in live-stock, particularly in villages which have seen improved groundwater levels due to the beneficial effects of SWC and water harvesting. More trees can also now be found on culti-

vated fields than 10 – 15 years ago, due to better protection of natural regeneration and the rising water table. Some families who had fled their homes between 1975 and 1985 to settle elsewhere have returned to their villages, because of improved conditions for farm production. Last but not least, farmers who treated their fields with SWC have also started to improve the management of soil fertility on their fields in a much more systematic fashion. A second study carried out in May 2001 in the same region by the GTZ-PATECORE project confirmed these findings.

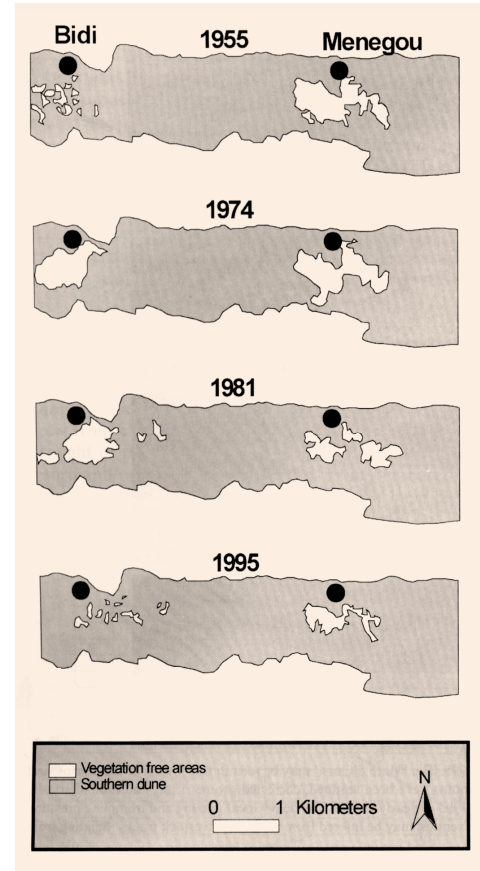
A new study has been initiated to analyse, and to quantify so far as possible, the extent of environmental rehabilitation in the northern part of the Central Plateau from 1980 to 2000. The study is co-funded by the Netherlands Embassy, GTZ-PATECORE and USAID, and is due to report by December 2002. The National Environmental Management Council (CONAGESE) is responsible for the study, which is being carried out by 15 Burkinabe researchers. They are using a combination of PRA tools, conventional surveys and soil analysis as well as satellite images and aerial photos covering 12 study villages to get the best possible picture of environmental change over the last 20 years. One research question to be tested is the following: Environmental rehabilitation is closely associated with villages which have undertaken SWC on cultivated fields, but elsewhere, environmental degradation continues unabated. The study villages have therefore been chosen to cover sites where SWC measures are common, and those where there has been little or no activity.

*If you would like to receive more information, or to share your experience, please contact Chris Reij, CDCS, Vrije Universiteit, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam. E-mail: cp.reij@dienst.vu.nl*

## Desert reversal

In the 1970s and 80s it was widely believed that the Sahara desert was advancing southwards into farm and rangelands. And indeed, there was evidence for sand dune movement in some parts of the Sahel, due to loss of vegetation cover. But since the mid-80s, this decline in cover seems to have been reversed, though the new vegetation is different from what was there before.

This research focused on the fossil dunes in Oudalan province, in the north of Burkina Faso. These dunes



have been seen by earlier writers as undergoing an intense desertification process. A mix of aerial photos, satellite images, field studies, interviews with local people, and literature review were used to assess changes in land cover, the extent of 'degradation' and spatial diversity in such processes. The dunes are extensively used for grazing, crop production, and collection of fuel wood.

In recent years, the dunes have experienced invasion by dense stands of *Leptadenia*. In the period 1974-81, the active dune area expanded significantly. However, since then there has been a steady reduction in bare ground, while a considerable increase in woody vegetation has taken place both south and north of the dune. While tall perennial grasses used to be dominant pre-1972, these are now only found in low-lying *bas-fonds* areas. The spiky cram-cram annual (*Cenchrus biflorus*) now is the main grass cover. Livestock numbers have not returned to their pre-drought levels.

This research supports the view that broad generalisations about increasing degradation and desertification are risky. Rather, environmental change seems to be strongly linked to rainfall fluctuations, with human causes playing a lesser role. However, the type of changes and their intensity are highly variable and diverse, with each dune demonstrating a different environmental history. Thus, for the Yomboli dune, there are cases of continuous cultivation on the dunes without significant degradation found, while for the Bidi dune, clear evidence of degradation can be seen. Each small region has its own environmental history. Actions to 'combat desertification' must therefore be tailored to suit local people and conditions.

*Desertification in reverse? Observations from northern Burkina Faso*, by Kjell Rasmussen, Bjarne Fog, and Jens Madsen. *Global Environmental Change* 11 (2001): 271-282. Contact author: kr@geogr.ku.dk

## Get on-line!

Most African researchers cannot get access to up-to-date research in their subject. University libraries cannot afford the journals, neither can they publish research easily and African journals do not circulate widely. The same is true, to a lesser extent, in other developing regions.

The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) is radically changing this picture. Over the next five years, all researchers with internet connections in up to 40 countries will get online access to over 6,000 journals, and abstracts from another 20,000 titles - from *African Development Review* to the *Veterinary Journal*. Publishers have agreed country-wide access licences at very heavily reduced rates. At the same time, INASP is helping journals published in developing countries to go online and providing the opportunity for a range of 'Internet' training to help ensure that the information available is utilised to its fullest potential.

The UK's Department for International Development has just agreed £1.5m for three years for this Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI), to complement existing funding from the Danish and Swedish governments. Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia already have licences. It is hoped to extend the programme to Bangladesh, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and several other countries during 2002.

Details are available at <http://www.inasp.info/peri/index.html>. Accounts from Kenyan and Ghanaian academics of its impact so far are in INASP's latest newsletter, at <http://www.inasp.info/newslet/feb02.html>.

### Active creativity

This book is about positive developments in Africa that have never drawn headlines in newspapers. Yet they are remarkable and newsworthy. They force those who are unfamiliar with the African countryside and farming communities to reconsider common assumptions about African smallholder farmers. The book describes a wide range of innovations in African agriculture. These innovations were not introduced by ‘experts’, but by farmers themselves – both men and women, who have tried to improve how they manage land and water resources in order to overcome their difficulties.

Based on two Dutch-funded programmes – Indigenous Soil and Water Conservation in Africa (ISWC) and Promoting Farmer Innovation in Rainfed Agriculture (PFI) – the book describes how to involve scientists, field agents and other farmers in joint experimentation to improve the innovations still further, following a research agenda set by farmers themselves. Farmer innovators were given opportunities to visit other innovators, to give them new ideas that they could try out on their own fields.

The conventional ‘transfer-of-technology’ paradigm, in which scientists develop technologies on research stations and extension workers pass these technologies on to farmers, has generated disappointing results. Much that is proposed to smallholder farmers in Africa is not acceptable to them, because it is too costly, does not suit their farming conditions, or fails to address their main concerns. The authors of this book argue that one should first look at what farmers are themselves doing and use this as the starting point for joint experimentation by farmers and scientists.

Within the framework of these two programmes, farmer innovators also had opportunities to present their innovations to others through various mass media, including newspapers, rural radio and national television. The reaction of the journalists who witnessed

farmer innovation was often: ‘This is fascinating! Why did we not know about this before?’ Many of the farmer innovators did not keep their knowledge to themselves, but made considerable efforts to share it with others, by investing their time and energy in training other farmers. This was done on their own initiative and without any external support.

### Farmers are a key resource

Africa thus has a major resource waiting to be tapped in the creativity of its farmers. This is hardly surprising for anyone who knows Africa: it is the local communities that sustain Africa – in spite of and not because of inept governments.

With growing population pressure and growing awareness of environmental degradation, farmers are seeking more productive ways to use the available resources without depleting them. They have to adjust rapidly to changing conditions. If agriculture is to be sustainable, farmers must be capable of actively and continuously creating new local knowledge.

*This book is required reading for all policymakers, scientists and development workers who are concerned with sustainable development in Africa and elsewhere, but have been bombarded by the current superficial negative views about Africa.*

Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

### Experimenting together

Participatory Technology Development (PTD) has developed from this commitment to strengthening farmer capacity. At its heart is farmer-led experimentation to find better ways of using available resources to improve the well-being of families and communities. The purpose is *not* to convince farmers to adopt a new technology, but rather to encourage them to test new possibilities and choose what is right for their circumstances. This kind of interaction

between farmers and ‘outsiders’ reveals a common pattern, which consists of six main clusters of activities: ● *Getting started* ● *Analysing the situation* ● *Looking for things to try* ● *Trying things out* ● *Sharing the results* ● *Sustaining the process*.

Within each country covered by this programme, initial work was concentrated in selected regions, for example, the Southern Highlands in Tanzania, parts of the Central Plateau of Burkina Faso, the Tigray Region in northern Ethiopia, the Kabale District in southwest Uganda. An exception was the Zimbabwe programme, since there was already considerable experience in participatory research and extension in Masvingo Province. The programme thus sought to mainstream the approach throughout the country.

In each country, all partners first had to agree on the concept of innovation and innovators. An innovation was generally defined as something new to the particular locality, but not necessarily new to the world. For example, a refugee who saw a *shadouf* (an ancient Egyptian device for lifting water) in Sudan and who, upon his return to Tigray, developed a *shadouf*-based irrigation system was regarded as an innovator in his home area. Farmers who simply copied what another farmer in the same village had developed or introduced were regarded as ‘second-generation’ innovators (adopters, adapters), even though what they did was new for their particular farms.

The process of identifying farmer innovators was not easy and straightforward, because farmers are not necessarily aware that they are experimenting and innovating. For most farmers, the process of generating knowledge through experimentation is part of their every-



*Sustainable increases in yields are an important motivating factor*

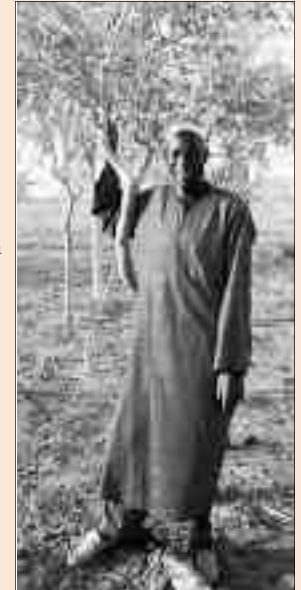
day agricultural activities, not separated from them as it is in the scientific knowledge system.

Many of the outstanding innovators initially identified by the programme were relatively well-off, often having become so through their innovations. Consequently, more attention was focused by the programme on the often overlooked smaller improvements in their farms made by people with fewer resources. When country programmes in such as Tunisia and Ethiopia began to seek out women’s innovations, they

found that these tended to be low-cost, making use primarily of local resources. Such innovations are particularly promising for resource-poor farmers (not only women) and have good potential for spread, but most of these innovators

have less confidence and means to make their ideas more widely known than do richer, male farmers. Extension agents can play an important role in encouraging farmer-to-farmer communication about the low-external-input options developed by the less wealthy local innovators.

Joint experiments were set up between farmers and researchers. Some focused on scientific validation of



*Credit: Chris Reij*

*Ousséni Zoromé has systematically protected natural regeneration in his fields (Burkina Faso)*

local innovations. Here, the procedures were more conventional and it was important to collect data that could be subjected to statistical analysis. In other cases, the process of experimentation was designed to allow the farmers to assess the innovations and investigate ideas to improve them further. Here, it was more important that the procedures and measurements could be managed by farmers, also eventually on their own. Farmers were encouraged to learn about experimentation by analysing their own experiences and mistakes.

Credit: Chris Reif



*Barthélémy Djambou, a key innovator in West Cameroon (left) and Susanna Sylvester, a specialist in composting (Tanzania)*



Credit: Will Critchley

### Spreading ideas and methods to others

The original idea was to disseminate more broadly farmers' innovations that had been scientifically validated, but it soon became obvious that farmers do not wait until a technology has been given a stamp of approval by scientists. After exchange visits, farmers in Burkina Faso who recognized potentials in certain innovations already started to apply them. In Tanzania, seeds and planting materials were informally exchanged during farmer-to-farmer visits and subsequently planted, and some of the local innovations spread rapidly and widely. Follow-up enquiries after an exchange visit revealed that 79 farmers in Njombe District had started applying a maize pit technique developed by a local farmer, and also farmers in

other districts and regions had started using this technique, although scientists had not yet validated it.

The success of farmer-to-farmer dissemination of local innovations depends on whether innovators are willing to share their knowledge and experience with others. A woman innovator in Tunisia began to tell other farmers about how she uses decomposing manure to hatch eggs only after she was invited to present her innovation on the radio. Some individuals are not at all willing to tell

others about their innovations, and some will do so only for payment. In most cases, however, farmers were eager to share their innovations, either because this gave them public recognition and social esteem or because they felt it was their duty to their community.

Women whose innovations go against social norms are initially reluctant to share their ideas openly. The poorer farmers, especially the female heads of household, often find it difficult to spare the time to teach other farmers. In areas like Tunisia, where the communication radius of women is confined, radio may be the best means for them to share beyond their immediate family and female neighbours.

### Raising awareness and lobbying for policy change

The eight countries participating in the two programmes (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe) have pursued various paths to raise awareness about

farmer innovation and to influence policy in its favour. Much attention has been given to documentation and publication in the form of working papers, project reports, workshop proceedings, papers for conferences and articles in newsletters and journals. The programmes in Cameroon and Ethiopia started up local newsletters on farmer innovation. All country teams gained access to radio, television and the press.

In a strategy to enhance policy dialogue, policy-makers were included in programme steering committees and taken on 'tours' to visit farmer innovators. In Ethiopia, for example, staff from the

Federal Ministries of Agriculture and Education have visited farmer innovators in the field. Also in the other countries, meetings and field visits have been organised with senior staff responsible for national programmes of agricultural research and extension, while in the case of Uganda, the President and Vice-President were able to visit farmer innovators identified by the programme.

*Farmer innovation in Africa: A source of inspiration for agricultural development, edited by Chris Reij and Ann Waters-Bayer, Earthscan Publications, London, 2001. To order, contact: [earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk](mailto:earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk)*

### Examples of farmer innovators:

**Ayelech Fikre**, a woman farmer in Amhara Region, Ethiopia has tremendous energy and perseverance. She has spent several decades combining and perfecting soil and water conservation measures on her intensive hillside farm. Ayelech took over her father's farm on his death nearly 40 years ago. Having noticed the damage being done to her land as a result of soil erosion, she started work digging cut-off drains and establishing stone bunds. A mix of manure and compost help improve soil quality, for intercrops of beans, maize, sorghum, teff and barley. Rainfall runoff is directed through the cut-off drain into a small plot of coffee trees, while various other plants and bushes provide her with fuel, hops and fruit.

**Zigta Gebremedhin** is an Irob farmer in Tigray in northern Ethiopia. Having seen water-harvesting methods used elsewhere, he constructed a series of silt traps to catch soil brought down by seasonal flooding. Gradually extending these stone walls has created a series of step-like terraces, some of which are filled 10 metres deep with silt from the plateau above. Transplanting creeping grasses immediately behind the dam walls helped strengthen the structures while also providing grass that could be cut for his animals. Over time, most other farmers have now followed his lead.

**Yacouba Sawadogo**, a farmer in north west Burkina Faso, started to improve the traditional planting pit, or *zai*, in 1980. Since 1984, he has been organising twice yearly meetings for other farmers to exchange their experience, seeds and views. Such meetings are organised around themes – such as growing trees in *zai* or farming sesame. As president of the *Zai* Association, Yacouba has gained recognition as an important innovator, but the many visitors who come to visit his farm cost him a lot of time. In nearby Gourcy village, Ali Ouedraogo has invested heavily in digging *zai* and building stone bunds on land that had been abandoned, due to its eroded, gravelly surface. But now it produces excellent harvests, thanks to such soil conservation measures, combined with compost. Ali has been training individual farmers to test out these methods on their own land.

**Wilbert Mville** in Njombe district of southern Tanzania has developed a system for growing maize in pits, rather than rows. His stall-fed cattle provide a ready supply of manure for large planting pits, 60-120 cm in diameter and 30-60cm deep. Sown with 20-25 seeds and thinned to 15-18 plants, these pits help concentrate moisture and nutrients much more effectively. Each season he digs new pits. Yields are 50% higher than when maize is planted in rows, but many farmers face a bottleneck in gaining access to sufficient manure to ensure a good yield.

## NGOs and land rights

Can NGOs help influence government policy in favour of pro-poor land rights? Or are institutional and political constraints too great? Does engaging with government mean NGOs lose their independence? A recent study in Mozambique and Kenya assesses the achievements and limits of NGOs in affecting the design and implementation of land policy. In both countries, it was seen that even the best new legislation can be modified, reinterpreted or ignored when it comes to implementation. Local level power relations are crucial at this stage. Building the capacity of community groups to take informed action is essential to achieve long term pro-poor change. NGOs need to spend at least as much time engaging at local level to monitor how changes in land policy are carried through in practice, as walking the corridors of power at national level.

The study also found that NGOs need to clarify the basis and terms on which they work with government before proceeding, to ensure that the position of each side is understood. Well-researched arguments to support pro-poor land rights would strengthen the claims and influence of NGOs in this field. Better means are also needed to assess the effects of advocacy work, to judge how best to attain change.

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## Securing land rights

The meeting “Making land rights more secure” was held in Ouagadougou March 19-21, 2002 to consider the results of recent

research and practical experience in the area of land tenure security. Over three days, some eighty people – researchers, decision-makers, leaders of farmers’ organisations and elected councillors from ten West African countries – debated the notion of tenure security and new approaches which might improve the situation for rural people. In his speech, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture of Burkina Faso insisted on the importance of land tenure policy for the sustainable agricultural development. The issue of tenure security has increasingly come to the fore in the 1990s, given processes of economic liberalisation, structural adjustment, democratisation and decentralisation. With the advent of globalisation, further wide-ranging changes are underway, and it is therefore all the more essential to work out appropriate rules governing competition for land.

Ensuring security for farmers is emerging as a fundamental economic and social issue. If it is to be achieved, there needs to be a break with the legal dualism derived from the colonial period, which has generated much uncertainty and insecurity. What is needed is “local” management of land and resources, giving greater responsibility to rural communities and their representatives (elected councillors or local associations). This is not to deny the role of the State in land tenure regulation, but to challenge a certain mode of government intervention. Governments need to clarify the general principles which should guide land matters, and reaffirm their intention to delegate effective responsibility to rural communities and their representatives, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The workshop discussed different approaches being followed within West Africa, their strengths and limitations. These include:

- Rural Land Tenure Plans (*Plans fonciers ruraux*), tried out since the early 90s. These raise a number of questions, such as the problems of establishing and maintaining land registers. Nowhere have



they actually issued certificates, so their effectiveness in providing tenure security is not as yet proven.

- A transaction-based approach which responds to the increasing prevalence of informal written contracts. Helping to encourage such arrangements, while insisting on including certain clauses to avoid ambiguity, seems a promising way forward, but there are as yet few concrete examples to go by.
- For common property resource management, there are some good examples of local agreements where local people and the administration have defined and negotiated suitable rules. State recognition of such agreements is essential if they are to be effective. Rather than trying to codify everything, generally it is sufficient to establish a few crucial principles, for example access to water points and livestock grazing routes.
- Decentralisation offers a valuable opportunity to strengthen local land administration systems, which can be more closely tailored to local conditions and priorities. People's elected representatives can draw up local agreements, recognised by the State and having the force of "local law", provided they comply with the relevant legislation.

Although there is now a consensus on the need to begin with the local realities of land tenure, there is still a great deal of argument as to which of two basic options is preferable:

(i) "Incorporation" which begins with the recognition of local rights, then seeks to incorporate them into a public system by the issue of land tenure certificates.

(ii) The "linking" option, which believes that systematic codification or registration is neither possible nor desirable, preferring greater autonomy in the definition of the rules. The issue in this case is primarily one of finding ways of linking together different methods of land tenure regulation.



Behind these two options are different visions of relations between central government, rural communities and local authorities, as well as questions of relevance, duration, and practical feasibility. For example, some would challenge the relevance of the first option and the ability of governments to ensure reliable, maintenance of land tenure registers and systems to cover the whole country.

These are matters of political choice for each country, depending on the political and institutional pathway being taken. In countries undergoing democratisation, local people need to be involved in taking such decisions, as is borne out by the experiments in the participatory formulation of policy discussed during this meeting. New approaches to land policy are still very much in process, and it is too early to judge them definitively. It is vital to monitor current experiments, carry out in-depth evaluations, and find opportunities for sharing and comparing notes.

*For more details, contact [drylands@iied.org](mailto:drylands@iied.org) and [lavigne@gret.org](mailto:lavigne@gret.org). The papers and proceedings from this workshop will be available shortly.*

## Consulting on land policy

The World Bank held a large consultation meeting in Kampala on land policy in Africa, April 29th to May 2nd. It brought together more than 150 researchers, government administrators, tenure professionals, NGOs and donor organisations. Its principal aims were to provide inputs to the preparation of the World Bank's Policy Research Report on land which is in preparation; to allow for a wide ranging debate and exchange of views from many parts of the conti-

# LAND MATTERS

ment; and to discuss how land matters might be brought more centrally into the current range of policy reduction strategies being drawn up as part of the debt relief process.

A very tightly packed programme covered design of land administration systems, the social and legal basis for land and property rights, land as a source of conflict, land market development, from customary to modern systems, land reform, ensuring women's access to land, pastoral land rights, peri-urban land issues and land taxes. Additionally time was spent in regional groupings to discuss particular challenges to land issues for certain countries, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe. A final day's meeting brought together Landnet Africa groups to discuss strategy and a way forward.

*The World Bank is now committed to work with a group of African land experts in drafting the PRR. For further information please visit: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) or contact: [kdeininger@worldbank.org](mailto:kdeininger@worldbank.org)*

## Pastoral networks for East Africa

Throughout East Africa, the voice of pastoralists has rarely been heard at policy level, from colonial days onwards. Not only do East African pastoralists live on the margins of their countries, they are also on the margins of national debate. Governments and policy makers see pastoralism as an archaic system that needs to be transformed, or as they see it... *so that pastoralists may settle down and live civilized lives.*

Strong national frameworks are needed to lobby in favour of pastoralists. At the height of its influence, the Kenya Pastoral Forum (KPF) got the Kenya government so worried that the president insisted that it was a subversive political organisation. But more recent difficulties with the KPF have led to a meeting hosted by the Kenya Land Alliance in March 2002 to revive this once-versatile

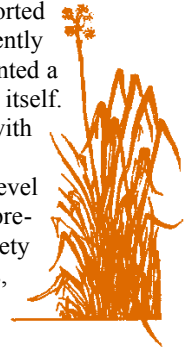
network for Kenyan pastoralists.

In Tanzania, a national pastoral network has been established, following a meeting in Arusha mid-2001. A decision was made to form the Tanzania Pastoralists and Hunter-Gatherers Organisation (TPHGO) and a steering committee formed to draft a constitution for the organisation.

In both Kenya and Tanzania, it has not been easy to establish such networks. Part of the problem lies in the diversity of pastoral organisations, ranging from CBOs to national and even regional NGOs. There has also been a strong interest in pastoral issues on the part of international NGOs and donor organisations, whose role can be tricky. They were major players in the formation of KPF, but have also been partly blamed for its problems, on account of the way they withdrew their support when the Forum experienced problems.

In Tanzania, the formation of TPHGO was justified on the ground that the previous network – PINGOs Forum – had failed to represent the interests of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers effectively. For over a decade, it had received substantial support from international NGOs and donor organisations, but started to experience problems with one of its major funders a couple of years ago. Now the same organisations that previously supported PINGOs Forum are fronting the TPHGO. Recently however, the Forum has reorganised itself, appointed a new Coordinator and is working hard to revitalise itself. It will be interesting to see how it relates with TPHGO.

Effective pastoral organisation at the national level is only possible with the existence of strong, representative and accountable pastoral civil society organisations at the local level. Without this, donor funds merely support an empty shell.



## Partnership or profits?

Are Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) just the latest development fad, or a brilliant innovation to get new money and expertise flowing into neglected public services? From biotechnology and transport, to health care and water supplies, PPPs are being strongly promoted as a means to direct private sector capital and know-how into areas of broader social concern. Seeking to combine the virtues of both public and private sectors, they have generated much debate North and South. It is clear that PPPs form part of the global push in favour of privatisation and the market economy currently dominating the world. Alternative visions of collective action and responsibility have failed to attract the same attention. A special initiative for promoting PPPs is included in the New Programme for African development (NEPAD) described in NEWS page 5. They are likely to be very busy over the next few years given the popularity amongst donors of PPPs.

Typically, with PPPs, government provides certain safeguards for companies so that they will invest in a given activity and meet a set of targets, with the hope that their expertise and access to capital will lead to improved effectiveness and investment in public services. Contracts are drawn up, often for 25 years or more, during which the private company gains a return on the investment so long as certain targets are met.

'Private-public partnerships' are based on the view that the public sector has neither the money nor the expertise to deliver a service as effectively as a private company. In theory, the profit motive imposes a discipline on companies which in turn leads to more efficient performance. Those in favour of PPPs and privatisation bolster their case by arguing that government-run operations are ineffective, slow and bureaucratic, with little responsiveness to users of the serv-

ice. By contrast, much is made of the private sector's dynamism, access to capital, flexibility, cost-effectiveness and focus on satisfying the customer.

## But who really benefits?

Those who argue against PPPs claim they represent a giant sell-off of public assets to private companies who will, in practice, seek to maximise their profit at the expense of local people. While governments may set targets, such as annual levels of investment in infrastructure, they will find it very hard to ensure these are met. Many of the companies involved wield enormous economic and political power and will be able to escape sanctions. Local and national governments will find it very difficult to put pressure on giant companies, the incomes of which are several times larger than the national income. Instead, the public sector can and should be transformed to become more efficient, better able to mobilise resources and with greater commitment to deliver for the poor.

Opinions are divided as to the real distribution of benefits from such arrangements. In some cases, these deals do no more than shift monopoly power from a public to a private company. The end result depends very much on whether the government can exercise effective monitoring of the company's activity. A recent look at the much vaunted 'success story' of public-private partnership for water supply, concerning *Aguas Argentinas* in Buenos Aires, shows results are far less impressive than had been advertised, in terms of impacts on the poor and capacity of local government to enforce strict targets (Loftus & McDonald 2001).

Pragmatists reckon that PPPs are here to stay, at least for the next few years. The current policy swing in favour of privatisation seems unstoppable, given the political weight which lies behind it. The IMF, World Bank and most western governments are firmly in sup-

port of such measures which have also been placed as central conditions of the Poverty Reduction Strategies being negotiated as part of the global debt relief programme. Thus, for example, donors are willing to provide funding for water supply but only on condition the service is sold off to the private sector.

For many parastatals, PPPs seem now to be the only option, given years of government mismanagement, interference and under funding. Parastatals are frequently heavily in debt, suffering continuing losses and find themselves with a large, unionised workforce far in excess of what is needed, yet unable to be sacked. Being government-owned, they may also find it very difficult to reclaim high levels of unpaid debts by customers with political power.

So, if PPPs are here to stay, how can governments and communities make the best of them? How best to strengthen civil society to monitor actual performance and keep a check on the agreed targets? Establishing a minimum level of provision for the poorest groups is one possible measure pursued. Thus, for example, the South African government has ensured in its PPP for water supply that poor households gain guaranteed free access to 6,000 litres a year, after which they must pay. Commitment and ability to monitor the arrangement, through civil society and public structures is key. The private sector needs to demonstrate its willingness to embrace high standards of transparency and accountability, while some flexibility is needed in contracts to allow for changing circumstances.

## **Campaigning against privatisation in Ghana**

In Ghana, plans to restructure the water company and conclude a long term contract with a large French-owned group have provoked strong opposition. President Kufuor emphasizes the need to balance

responsibility for supplying all citizens with clean safe water with ensuring sustainable economic management of the system. But others argue that water is such a vital resource, it should never be put in private hands. The National Coalition Against Water Privatisation has led a campaign to push for greater public debate on the options and to ensure guaranteed rights to water for the poor. Rather than selling off assets to a large, powerful foreign company, alternative options should be sought, such as use of small local firms, or collective provision by community management of standpipes in poor areas. Private foreign investment raises particular difficulties because of their need to repatriate profits. In practice, it will also be very hard to terminate contracts for unsatisfactory performance. A further question concerns whether it makes sense to privatise water separately from sewage, given their strong interlinkages.

## **Harnessing biotech for poor farmers?**

Biotechnology represents a case where PPPs are seen as particularly promising. Currently, almost all technology and skills relating to biotech and genetic modification are held in the private sector. But private companies have no commercial interest in developing biotech products suitable for poor farmers who cannot pay for them. Hence, in order for the biotech dream to be fulfilled, and such technology to bring benefits for poor farmers, governments and public sector bodies will need to make deals with private companies. It is argued that 'there is no greater incentive for collaboration between the public and private sectors in agricultural research than the enormous challenge posed by global food security...' (ISAAA Brief no.4, 1997).

The private sector makes clear its own position. 'At present pri-

vate industry accounts for most of the research being done in the field of genetic technology. Whatever results from such research is thus patentable for commercial purposes, and consequently often too high-priced for the poor countries. While one could envision special agreements being worked out for life-saving medicines – an AIDS vaccine for example – or for seed varieties vital to survival, it would be unrealistic to expect private enterprise to forgo market-oriented pricing of the fruits of its research for charitable reasons.’ Thus, if the scientific assets held by the private sector are to be made available for the global public good, terms will need to be negotiated.



USAID’s Agricultural Biotechnology Program has been supporting a programme of public-private partnerships in the biotechnology field since 1990 (Lewis, in Persley, 2000), based on the recognition that tools and expertise are largely held by private companies.

Partnerships include work in Costa Rica, Egypt and Indonesia, as well as Kenya between Monsanto and KARI on sweet potatoes. Components include development and transfer of a particular technology on free or low cost terms, training of scientists from the country concerned, and a continued business relationship after the end of the project funding. PPPs are seen as being of value to companies since they help defray risk, and enable the private sector to establish and develop relationships in new markets. Developing

countries are considered to have benefited by gaining access to technology and training opportunities for their scientists in developed country research centres, as well as exposure to a new management culture with a greater focus on outcomes and clients (Lewis, 2000). Constraints experienced have included differences in patent protection between countries which have discouraged the transfer of certain technologies since the commercial interests of the companies concerned were felt to be at risk. As a result, getting through national legislation in support of US patenting has been a pre-condition for gaining USAID support.

Critics see these sorts of partnership in less favourable light. They argue that the private sector is only willing to take part if they can shift most of the costs and risk to the public purse. The establishment of PPPs provides a means to force through legislation on intellectual property rights in developing countries which will then be in line with US patent legislation, which is considered to be particularly favourable to corporate interests. It must be recognised that the underlying strategy and motivations guiding private capital are always going to be self-interested. Some companies are better able to present their strategy in a publicly acceptable fashion. Equally, some may have greater leeway to pursue social policies which present a more favourable image, and some may be able to take a longer term view. But no-one should be under any illusion of their charitable intent.



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ISAAA Briefs –

visit [www.isaaa.org](http://www.isaaa.org)

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***The Drama of the Commons*, edited by Elinor Ostrom et al. National Academy Press, Washington DC, 2002. For details, go to [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu)**

Managing common resources has long been recognised as at the heart of many environmental problems, whether global or local. This landmark collection of papers brings together key writers and thinkers to examine commons management in various contexts, and the limits of privatisation, such as through tradable permits. Scientific uncertainty, and the design of institutions able to deal with complex systems are examined before laying out clearly where substantive lessons have been learned. These include recognition that the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ model is only apt under fairly restricted conditions, and that one institutional model does not fit all common-pool situations. Rather, there will be serious trade-offs to be made in outcomes sought from different management systems. Amongst key challenges to be addressed, the authors include improved conceptual development, understanding the dynamics of resource management institutions, ways of dealing with conflict, and assessing impacts of globalisation. There has been an enormous literature developed on common property management, over the last 15-20

years, yet the forces in favour of privatisation seem ever stronger. This book provides the theoretical underpinning to support more collective action and provision. It needs to combine with much more active lobby and policy work if commons management is to survive the 21st century.

***Access to land, rural poverty and public action*, edited by Alain de Janvry et al. Oxford, 2001. For details contact: [enquiry@oup.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@oup.co.uk)**

You will need to wear spectacles to read this thick book of 450 pages in tiny font. But it is worth it! It covers a broad range of key issues on land relations, research and policy from different parts of the world – Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The introductory chapter by de Janvry and others presents an excellent summary of past and current thinking about relations between land, welfare and productivity. They note the resurgence of interest in land reform issues in the late 90s, following a period when it was considered too hot to handle for political reasons. Key questions concern: what form of property rights is best able to ensure efficient use? How can land markets work more effectively and are they always hostile to poorer groups? How can the transition from community to market

systems of allocation be achieved in ways which protect the rights of certain groups?

Other important writers in the collection include Platteau & Baland on inheritance issues in Africa and Europe, Ostrom on common property regimes, Sadoulet on land rental markets, and Binswanger & Deininger on the evolution of the World Bank’s land policy. Cases from Eastern Europe where land has been de-collectivised, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, provide an interesting counterpoint to other forms of land reform in Brazil and South Africa. The book’s contributors demonstrate clearly that land reform is not an isolated technical intervention. It must be deeply embedded within broader institutional changes, and proper provision made for support to rural development interventions.

***African voices, African visions*, edited by Olugbenga Adesida & Arunma Oteh, Nordic African Institute, Uppsala, Sweden. 2001. For copies contact: [order@city.akademibokhandeln.se](mailto:order@city.akademibokhandeln.se)**

This book presents the views of Africans who will be the leaders of tomorrow. It helps counteract the tendency for non-Africans to dominate debate over the future of this continent. Aimed at providing a platform for younger generations to present their views,



contributors were asked to think 30 years into the future, about the kind of world they would like to live in, and how they might play a role in achieving such a future. All authors were optimistic about the prospects for Africa in the next three decades. Some argue for the federation of African states into a much stronger union, to escape current patterns of marginalisation, others note the importance of achieving more effective participatory democracy which checks the powers of dictatorship and shifts power downwards to foster local initiative. Innovative use of technology could provide a means for Africa to close the gap with richer nations, but this needs greater attention to education and knowledge policies. The authors argue that Africans must find a means to combine the culture and values of their society with fundamental tenets, such as justice and freedom, in a system of governance which recognises its multi-ethnic nature and need to ensure group rights.

***Rethinking rural development.*** Development Policy Review, vol.19, December 2001. Contact: [dpr@odi.org.uk](mailto:dpr@odi.org.uk)

With falling interest and declining aid budgets devoted to agriculture, what is to be done? Given a long term downward trend in prices for many farm products, farmers

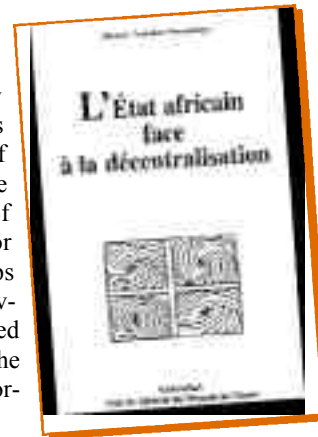
around the world are facing a squeeze on incomes and profits. While subsidies have provided some cushion for those in OECD countries, in most of the developing world, times have got tougher. How might the agricultural sector and broader rural economy adapt to such changes? These are some of the questions raised by a thought-provoking set of papers edited by Simon Maxwell from the Overseas Development Institute, London.

With continued high levels of poverty in many rural areas, agriculture may no longer be an appropriate engine for growth in rural incomes. The future of agriculture might better be served by consolidation of holdings into a small number of large farms, able to benefit from substantial economies of scale and with easier access to global markets. In future, most rural people may become effectively landless, and dependent on work as farm labourers, as well as a range of non-farm incomes. Although the small farmer has been at the heart of much rural development strategy for the last two or three decades, perhaps this is no longer valid, given high levels of rural diversification, improved connections to markets and the development of other economic opportunities.

***L'Etat africain face à la décentralisation,*** Antoine Sawadogo, Karthala, Paris, 2001. To order, contact: [karthala@wanadoo.fr](mailto:karthala@wanadoo.fr) or visit [www.karthala.com](http://www.karthala.com)

The author of this book knows a lot about trying to make decentralisation happen, having spent several years as president of Burkina Faso's National Commission for Decentralisation. It has clearly not been an entirely easy time, with many different interests pushing for and against this process. A large part of the book concerns the general malaise of African states and the lack of fit between African social norms and western structures, concepts and ways of carrying out government business.

Decentralisation was in part a response to the dysfunctional highly centralised nature of the state. However, decentralisation has started from the wrong end, and established a set of structures at national level which then have been imposed at commune level. Sawadogo argues it would work much





better if one moved upwards from below, building on institutions which are considered locally legitimate.

Of particular interest is the chapter on decentralisation in Burkina Faso, the background, legal texts and programme, as well as pattern of competing interests within and outside government which have marked the progress achieved to date. He notes that it has been the donor community that has been especially keen on supporting decentralised government but that neither donors nor governments necessarily believe in its efficacy as a process. Rather, both sides know the money has to be spent and hence close their eyes to the multiple problems being encountered. A considerable range of stakeholders are opposed to the setting up of such new local government structures, such as customary structures who feel their power contested, government administrators and technical staff who do not want to devolve control to this new body, and NGOs who would rather be the local source of patronage.

Given the unfinished nature of decentralisation in Burkina Faso, the author cannot present a final balance of what has been achieved. However, he does provide a cautious and well-informed approach of value to many engaged with support to decentralisation in African and elsewhere.

***The Dynamics of Resource Tenure in West Africa*, edited by Camilla Toulmin, Philippe Lavigne Delville and Samba Traoré. James Currey and Heinemann, ISBN 0-85255-419-2, 2002. Price £15.95.**

The fruit of anglo-franco collaboration, these edited papers cover West African land tenure issues from a variety of perspectives – analysis of national policies, assessment of social and economic impacts, description of pilot projects, and new legal and administrative approaches to managing land. The book sheds light on a wide variety of tenure situations, with examples ranging from the pasture lands of the Senegalese Ferlo to the forests of western Cameroun, from the fisheries of the inner Niger Delta in Mali, to densely populated farmlands of southern Benin.

The contributions show clearly that current approaches to land tenure can only be understood in historical perspective, with the successive impacts of colonial conquest, national independence and strong assertion of state ownership of land, followed by structural adjustment all strongly evident on legal and administrative provisions. The arguments being put forward today in favour of land titling and privatisation equally bear witness

to the dominance of liberal market economics as the vehicle for western interests around the world. Nevertheless, there has also been an opening up in favour of local mechanisms for managing land, whether it be through local conventions, village based committees or district councils. While not a panacea, such local approaches stand a better chance of tailoring policy to the needs of their own locality than the highly centralised systems

of previous years. But there are many tensions to resolve, between customary and statutory sources of power, and in designing a decision-making process which is seen by all to be legitimate and fair.

Research has an important role to play in helping assess the strengths and weaknesses of the diverse approaches being fol-

lowed. Researchers need to walk a fine line between maintaining high standards of rigour and objectivity, and communicating their findings by reaching out beyond an academic audience to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. As the editor of *Haramata* is also one of the editors of this book, we think there is much of value to gain from this collection of papers by West African researchers and urge you to get a copy!





## Managing conflict

The video *Cooling the Earth in the Karamoja* presents efforts to bring warring communities to talk peace. For centuries the inhabitants of the Karamoja cluster on the borders of Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia



have raided one another for cattle. The widespread availability of automatic weapons has turned such raids into a deadly nightmare for all. The process for initiating peace talks is shown here, starting from grassroots level to inter-governmental meetings.

For copies, contact Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics and Ace Communications, PO Box 15182, Nairobi, Kenya. [acecom@africaonline.co.ke](mailto:acecom@africaonline.co.ke)

## Evaluating development actions

The manual provides NGOs working in the South with an approach to evaluating their development activities. It begins with a

series of concepts and discussion of evaluation methods, which is followed by clearly laid out tools for undertaking the evaluation process. Well-designed and presented, the manual is a model of clarity.

Available in French from COTA, price 5 euros plus P&P, contact: [sandra.descroix@cota.be](mailto:sandra.descroix@cota.be), fax: +32.2.223.1495



## In brief

*Brèves* provides a new concise summary of findings on policy and practice of decentralised natural resource management. Building on experience from IIED's Sahel programme, the first issue covers ways to strengthen participatory approaches to community development, based on work in Pulaar amongst pastoral groups in Senegal. These tools, known as LOHU in Pulaar, have strengthened debate about priorities within the community, between all groups, whether literate or not, young and old, women and men.

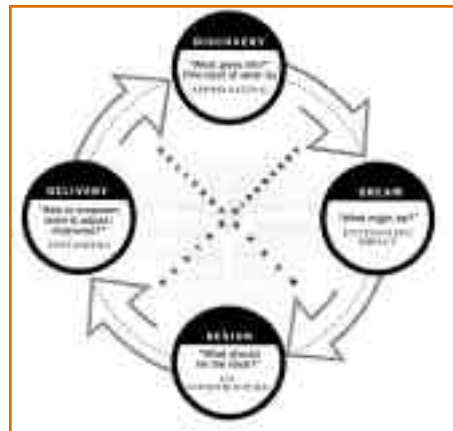
Contact: Awa Faly Ba, [iiedsen@sentoo.sn](mailto:iiedsen@sentoo.sn), or visit [www.iiedsahel.org](http://www.iiedsahel.org)

## Positive pathways

How best to design and deliver community based development programmes? How to reinforce strengths, visions and skills at

local level? *Appreciative inquiry* offers a range of training approaches developed by IISD-Canada and Indian NGO Myrada, which build on earlier work with PLA and PRA. Discovery, dream, design and delivery constitute the four stages within the inquiry cycle aimed at achieving change and development. Overcoming the significant challenges present in poor communities can be a daunting task. People have more confidence to carry them forward when they recognise their past successes and that they have the power together to build a better future.

For copies, contact: [myrada@vsnl.com](mailto:myrada@vsnl.com) or [www.myrada.org](http://www.myrada.org) or [www.iisd.org/ai](http://www.iisd.org/ai)



## Pastoral research

This series of short research summaries provides key findings about livestock systems in East Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America. Risk mapping for northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia, cattle population dynamics in the southern Ethiopian Rangelands, climate forecasting for pastoralists, livestock trading networks in East Africa, micro-finance and income diversification amongst pastoralists are amongst the subjects covered in the first set of Research Briefs. Produced by the Global Livestock Collaborative Research Support programme, they offer an excellent first stage in addressing these topics.

For copies of PARIMA Briefs, contact: [glcrsp@ucdavis.edu](mailto:glcrsp@ucdavis.edu) or visit [www.glcrsp.ucdavis.edu](http://www.glcrsp.ucdavis.edu)

## Africa food studies

Michigan State University has a very well-stocked website of papers covering many aspects of food security in Africa. It covers research commissioned by USAID from researchers at MSU and covering agricultural development in a large number of



African countries. Items are usually available in Adobe Acrobat format to be downloaded. The site can be searched by country or author, or subject matter.

Visit: [www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2](http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2)

## Trees for women

This set of simple manuals on growing, management and use of trees on farmlands has been developed to help non-literate farmers. The illustration techniques have been developed over several years in collaboration with a large number of non-literate women farmers. While focused on tree planting and care, the process followed for their development could be copied for many other topics. Its principal aim has been to ensure more effective communication



between local people and field staff, by involving end-users in their development, and using materials which can be produced cheaply by local organisations.

For more information contact Rose Clarkson on: [R.Clarkson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:R.Clarkson@ed.ac.uk), fax: +44.131.650.7214



## Looking for Africa facts?

*Africa at a glance* provides facts and figures for 2001/2002 on social, economic, and political issues – whether rates of urbanisation, literacy, debt, trade, military strength, regional economic groupings, or election updates.

Order from: Africa Institute of South Africa, US\$20 plus P&P. ISBN: 0 7983 0156. Contact: [ai@ai.org.za](mailto:ai@ai.org.za) or visit [www.ai.org.za](http://www.ai.org.za)

## Green gardens

Keeping plants in good health is central to the concerns of small farmers. The various publications produced by Terres et Vie show that making the most of biological diversity is one excellent means to protect crops from disease and pests, and ensuring plant growth and access to nutrients.

Relying on chemical methods is both costly to the pocket but also to the environment, human beings and other living creatures. Their series of manuals cover a range of topics from dealing with parasites and salinisation, to stemming wind and water erosion. Photos and illustrations used in their publications are also available, as are videos on promoting agro-ecological approaches to managing land and crop production.

Many publications are available in both English and French. Visit: [terres.et.vie@linkline.be](http://terres.et.vie@linkline.be) and [www.terreenvie.com](http://www.terreenvie.com)

## Prajateerpu – giving voice to the poor

*Prajateerpu* means ‘people’s verdict’. It describes a means by which small and marginal farmers can get their voices heard. In the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, the government has prepared a new ‘Vision 2020’, intended to modernise agriculture and the rural economy, with funding from the World Bank and several other donors. This vision

anticipates that over the next twenty years, the proportion of people making their living from the land will fall from 70 to 40%. Land holdings will be consolidated into larger farms, and mechanisation spread to replace farm labour. Contract farming is expected to increase substantially and GM crops to become widespread.

But many poorer people feel they do not share this vision. Last year, a 19 person citizens jury, drawn from small farmers from across the state of Andhra Pradesh, considered evidence from a range of witnesses to assess alternative visions for the future. They asserted their desire for food and farming for self reliance and community control over resources. They argued in favour of maintaining healthy soils, diverse crops, trees and livestock, and building on local knowledge, skills, and institutions. They felt that Vision 2020 had been drawn up without any input from more marginal peoples, and would damage their livelihoods. The citizens jury process shows great promise in generating debate and providing a channel for less powerful groups to gain access to information and get their views heard.

For a copy of the report: *Prajateerpu* – contact [Michel.Pimbert@iied.org](mailto:Michel.Pimbert@iied.org), or [t.wakeford@ids.ac.uk](mailto:t.wakeford@ids.ac.uk)



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## Can cotton survive?

West African cotton producers have faced a big fall in prices in the last season, with cotton fibre falling from nearly 1000FCFA/kg at the start of 2001, to 600FCFA/kg by the end of 2001. Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Benin are particularly hard hit. For them, cotton provides 50% or more of their export earnings, a major source of revenue for government and a livelihood for millions of farming families.

Farmers' unions from these countries have launched an appeal for help in cutting the very large subsidies paid to farmers by US and EU governments, which are partly to blame for the drop in world market prices. Rich country farmers, protected by subsidies, can continue to produce large amounts of cotton and sell at a loss. For example, farmers in the US are guaranteed 72 cents per pound of cotton, while world market prices are less than half this figure. It is estimated that West and Central Africa would gain the equivalent of US\$250million a year if the US did not subsidise domestic cotton producers.

For West African farmers and their governments, a fall in world market prices spells ruin. With no agricultural subsidies in



Mali, Benin, Chad and Burkina Faso, farmers fall further into debt, while governments are forced to go cap in hand to the World Bank and other donors to ask for help. One estimate reckons that Burkina Faso will lose 40,000,000,000 FCFA this year due to the fall in cotton price.

In theory, the new round of negotiations being held by the World Trade Organisation are meant to address agricultural commodities, and present an agreed timetable for abolition of most farm subsidies. However, there is currently little prospect of such changes. Rather the reverse has occurred, with the recent passage of a new Farm Bill in the US which will increase further the subsidies going to farmers. When it comes to 'economic liberalisation' – much espoused by OECD

governments in their dealings with Africa – there is clearly one set of rules for the rich and another for the poor.

*If you want to find out more about the cotton producers of West Africa, visit [www.abcburkina.net](http://www.abcburkina.net) and [www.dagris.fr](http://www.dagris.fr). To add your voice to the campaign to save cotton farmers, send a message to: [campagne.coton@abcburkina.net](mailto:campagne.coton@abcburkina.net)*