

FOURTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF SAFGRAD

13 FEBRUARY 1989

OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE USAID

SAFGRAD II MID-TERM EVALUATION

NARD/2/89 e12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a summary of the findings and recommendations of consultants employed by USAID/Burkina Faso through Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc., under contract number PDC-0085-I-00-6097-00 (Delivery Order No. 38). The consultant team consisted of John H. Sanders (Senior Agricultural Research Administrator and Team Leader), Joseph Y. Yayock (Agricultural Scientist) and Ruben H. Puentes (Research Agronomist). The team's assignment was to conduct the mid-term evaluation of the Semi-Arid Food Grains Research and Development (SAFGRAD) Phase II Project. The evaluation took place in July-August 1988.

SAFGRAD II is concerned with increasing food production in the semi-arid tropics of Sub-Saharan Africa. SAFGRAD II phased out its direct agricultural research activities at two International Agriculture Research Centers (IARCs), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The project subsequently provided substantial resources to these same IARCs and to a regional unit of the Organization of African Unity/Scientific Technical and Research Commission (OAU/STRC), the SAFGRAD Coordination Office (SCO), to set up four regional crop Networks.

The problem of increasing food crop productivity in 26 countries through agricultural research is an enormous one. By reducing the focus to establishing four effective crop research networks, SAFGRAD II attempted to increase the impact of the IARCs on the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in a manageable, well defined manner. A primary goal was for African scientists to have more impact in defining realistic research priorities in their own systems and ultimately in the international agricultural research institutions.

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the four crop research networks and to assess the performance of the African regional management unit, the SCO. Two secondary purposes were to increase the effectiveness of IARC support to the Networks and to evaluate the field research of the IARCs in the transition period. The evaluation method entailed reading file documents and conducting extensive interviews with scientists and research administrators in several countries.

One principal finding was that the IARCs provided very effective Network Coordinators and the SCO provided commendable administrative and political support. The Evaluation Team identified the principal constraint to the evolution of African leadership in the Networks to be the formal training of the NARS Network scientists. One principal recommendation is that plans for the obtaining of M.S. and Ph.D. degrees by NARS scientists be developed by the SCO in collaboration with the leaders of the various NARS.

The Evaluation Team recommends the continuation of the SCO at its present USAID funding level for the duration of SAFGRAD II. It is further recommended that major new functions in pursuit of donor funding or in direct implementation of other activities, besides Network support, be deferred until the re-evaluation of 1991 for a SAFGRAD III. A critical component of SCO maintenance of present and future Network support will be an SCO/USAID budget re-allocation to pay for the two top management personnel supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) until April 1989. If increased funding can be obtained for the SCO without major management effort, the SCO is encouraged to pursue this. Certainly both the OAU/STRC and the African Development Bank should be approached for some supplementary funding. Various other management suggestions have been made for both the SCO and the IARCs to improve their support of the Networks.

Among lessons learned, the Team believes that SAFGRAD II was appropriately designed to have a narrow focus on crop specific networks in the NARSSs. In many of the countries of the Semi-Arid Tropics of Sub-Saharan Africa, the development of the scientific capacity of their research institutions is a critical component of their agricultural development. This project directly focuses on improving that management capacity, on obtaining more indigenous scientific capacity, and on better utilizing the well trained African scientists already in the field. Future projects may benefit from observing the narrow focus of the Network concept, especially its emphasis on national human capital development. The regional focus of this project also seems to be appropriate. In planning for SAFGRAD III, the Evaluation Team is concerned with the recent A.I.D. initiative calling for all regional projects to be funded from operational year budgets (OYB) of country missions.

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