Chapter 12

Epilogue

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The decision by U.S. policy makers to assist resource-poor agriculturalists in Africa is one that will not be made in isolation. Instead, it will be made in conjunction with the broader objectives and goals of U.S. foreign assistance. Congressional decisionmaking is affected by these broader concerns. Different regions and different interest groups compete for foreign aid dollars. Congress' decision to provide funds for one purpose may reduce the money available for others. Cuts in domestic spending may necessitate additional changes in foreign assistance, Thus, any decisions Congress makes to support a resource-enhancing approach must consider how this element fits into the nation's underlying rationale for foreign assistance.

Two broad policy questions are raised as a result of the congressional committees' requests for this study'. First, the committees noted that the United States assists African farmers and herders for humanitarian, economic, and political reasons. But the relative importance of these different motives has shifted and the role of development assistance in this context is increasingly unclear (9).

Second, one committee specifically asked how U.S. support for African and global agricultural development affects U.S. farmers. This question echoes recent legislation, supported by various farm groups, to restrict U.S. bilateral and multilateral assistance promoting commodities also exported by U.S. farmers. The question has generated considerable controversy, especially given the problems faced by American farmers in the 1980s, and it deserves clear evaluation.

[1]House Select Committee on Hunger; House Foreign Affairs Committee; House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research, and Environment; and Technology Assessment Board Members Evans, Hatch, Kennedy, Pen, and Udall.

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS IN AFRICA

Humanitarian interests clearly top the list of why the general public believes that the United States should provide assistance to developing countries and 39 percent recognize Africa as a region deserving priority attention (6).[2] An unprecedented outpouring of U.S. governmental and private resources followed the 1984-85 television broadcasts showing starving Africans, and these contributions surely saved many lives. As the head of the United Nations Office of Emergency Operations in Africa, Maurice Strong, said of the recent famine: "Certainly, thousands and thousands did die, and hundreds of thousands suffered. But the big news is that 35 million people who might have died, didn't" (2).

'Africa received about 9 percent of U.S. bilateral foreign aid allocated for fiscal year 1987 (18).

However, the support stimulated by crises fades quickly with improving situations, such as the return of rainfall to drought-stricken regions in Africa. Yet people familiar with the situation know the return of rain is only a temporary respite in a deteriorating situation. Severe famine already threatens Ethiopia again in 1988, where political and economic policies have exacerbated serious drought-induced food shortages.

Humanitarian support will continue to be essential during periods of crisis, but it will do little to provide long-term solutions to Africa's food security problems. Many African farmers, herders, and fishers are now caught in a cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and environmental degradation that increasingly undermines their future. Humanitarian assistance can be effec-

tive in responding to the symptoms of this condition, but breaking the cycle requires promoting sustainable economic development. For most Africans, enhanced agriculture offers the most realistic opportunity to achieve this.

A "bare majority" of Americans supports U.S. economic aid to developing countries (8), a level that has remained steady for almost four decades (6). Such aid is commonly aimed at addressing some of the fundamental economic and social problems affecting poor countries, for example, by supporting agricultural development, family planning, and preventative health care. Many people find that U.S. and African economic interests both can be served by promoting African economic development, particularly through its agricultural sector.

This mutual interest stems from the realization that expanded U.S. trade opportunities depend directly on improved prosperity and purchasing power in developing countries. Conversely, poor economic performance in the developing world has serious repercussions for the U.S. economy. Developing countries bought 40 percent of U.S. exports and represented the fastest growing markets for U.S. goods by the end of the 1970s. Developing countries are likely to remain important U.S. markets because 90 percent of the projected population increase of 2 billion people by 2010 is expected to be there. Mounting debt and falling commodity prices have slowed the growth of developing country imports of U.S. goods since the late 1970s. The impact of the 1980s recession on developing countries is credited with causing one-half the decline of U.S. exports between 1980 and 1985, as well as a corresponding loss of some 1.7 million U.S. jobs (26). Declines in U.S. agricultural exports alone between 1980 and 1986 resulted in the loss of an estimated 500,000 U.S. jobs in farming and related input and service sectors (29).

Whether Africa offers a growing field of trade and economic cooperation for the United States will depend on the future growth of African economies. The continent is not now a major market for U.S. products, nor will it likely become one in the near future (27). Therefore, U.S. economic interests in promoting food security and economic development in the region can only be viewed as a long-term investment—so that in the future healthier economies, improved infrastructures, and larger markets, may lead Africa to a more prominent place in U.S. economic relations.

U.S. economic interests, however, seldom assume such a long-term view. And short-term economic goals can conflict with efforts to enhance low-resource agriculture. For example, African urban markets receive approximately $1 billion of U.S. agricultural exports a year, mainly grain (22). American policy to expand grain exports and African policies subsidizing imported grains both act to keep urban food prices low and can reduce or destabilize prices for locally produced food (28), an important source of income for low-resource farmers and herders. It is politically difficult, however, to promote policies to curtail certain U.S. exports and African subsidies as a way to stimulate local agriculture—even in cases where this may be in the longer-term interests of African and U.S. economies alike (35).

The United States also pursues foreign policy objectives in Africa based on a number of *political and security interests* (14, 34):

- Africa, with its bloc of 46 nations, can play a decisive role in international organizations and meetings.
- The United States relies on Africa for important natural resources, now importing more oil from Sub-Saharan Africa than from the Middle East or North Africa (22). The United States also imports at least 90 percent of its cobalt, bauxite, and manganese, with 25-50 percent coming from African countries (10, 32, 33).
- The continent is strategically located, with deep-water ports, good airfields, and controlling positions in relation to major waterways and air corridors.
- Continuing regional conflicts make Sub-Saharan Africa a potential arena for confrontation between external powers and economic stagnation could lead to greater internal instability.

- The U.S. supports democratic institutions and civil rights in Africa. Particular attention is directed to dismantling apartheid in South Africa, for example.

U.S. political and strategic interests usually are pursued via diplomatic channels and shift from Administration to Administration. Congressional and Administration attention to these issues tends to be sporadic and center on single issues or regions with high visibility (15, 30). Volatility is also a function of political instability in many African countries (37). With this, political winds can shift quickly in U.S. relations with African countries, and it is not unusual for long-term development interests to be swept up in the process,

Agricultural assistance programs can be affected markedly when Congress or the Administration cuts or restricts funds or closes AID missions for political reasons. Years of investment in agricultural research and development can be lost because of these disruptions. Poor farmers and herders are particularly vulnerable to these changes because they have few resources to re-invest elsewhere if they lose what they had invested in discontinued projects. Also, such experiences may undermine their willingness to participate in future development efforts.

Some U.S. programs, however, are less susceptible than others to the impacts of political pressures. For example, Congress stipulated that the African Development Foundation be independent of short-term U.S. political interests. This approach seems particularly important for enhancing low-resource agriculture because such support must be long-term and dependable to be effective.

Thus, while it is true that the United States has humanitarian, economic, and political interests in aiding Africa's poor farmers and herders, these interests often have conflicting dimensions that alternately support and counteract U.S. attempts to provide effective development assistance.

THE EFFECTS OF SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN FARMERS ON U.S. AGRICULTURE

U.S. farm trade suffered an overall decline during the 1980s, with some commodities losing market shares to *foreign competition*. Some U.S. farm groups have voiced concern that several developing countries are increasingly competitive in world markets and note that U.S. agricultural assistance has helped these countries improve efficiency (38). Legislators from farm states have used legislation to curtail U.S. support for certain crops in developing countries when the United States exports the same ones.

On the other hand, U.S. farm interest groups generally recognize the importance of assisting developing countries achieve the broad-based per capita income growth necessary to create demand and foreign exchange for buying U.S. agricultural exports. For many developing countries, such economic growth requires agricultural development and, thus, technological assistance to increase production and incomes.

Recent analyses suggest that, in the long-term, stimulating African development will have greater benefits for U.S. agriculture generally than attempts to limit U.S. technical assistance to African farmers. A strong correlation exists between increased farm production in developing countries and increased agricultural imports (20). For example, annual net staple food imports increased in volume by 133 percent between 1961-65 and 1974-76 for 16 agriculturally successful developing countries—those with the most rapid growth rates in staple food production (3). Similar results occurred in a study of agricultural economies in Malaysia and Brazil, usually cited as two of the most threatening competitors to U.S. global markets (16).

Despite rapid agricultural development in both countries during the period 1967 to 1983, Malaysia at least doubled imports of food, feed grains, and oilseeds, and Brazil increased both farm exports and imports, particularly of grains. Generally, the dollar value of per capita agricultural imports in agriculturally successful developing countries grew 47 percent between 1970 and 1980, while it grew only 37 percent among agriculturally unsuccessful countries.

> The conclusion to which all this evidence points is that for developing countries, increases in agricultural production are necessary for widespread income growth, which leads to increases in agricultural imports. Because of this, developing countries with the faster-growing agricultural sectors were the faster-growing markets for U.S. agricultural exports. Thus, American agriculture has nothing to gain and much to lose from slowing down agricultural development in developing counties (12).

Cases exist were the positive link between agricultural development and agricultural imports in developing countries has been severed. Macroeconomic factors (e.g., world commodity or energy prices) and national policies (e.g., those that distort free-market mechanisms) are considered the major causes (20, 38). These exceptions do not negate the strong potential for encouraging mutually beneficial partnerships between U.S. exporters and developing countries but they do suggest the need for close, case-by-case analysis. Such analysis, however, may be hampered because the United States monitors and evaluates other countries' agricultural policies inadequately (24).

Other problems can arise because net benefits to American agriculture does not mean only that all farmers and ranchers will benefit or benefit equally. For example, Brazil is a growing market for U.S. grain but it also is a growing soybean exporter, which U.S. soybean growers note with alarm. The benefits of expanding trade tend to be spread over a large segment of the population (e.g., to U.S. consumers), whereas the costs tend to be more concentrated (e.g., among the producers of a given commodity). The latter groups are more likely to rally support and lobby for favorable policies, tipping public debate in one direction.

U.S. commodity groups have effectively restricted U.S. foreign assistance from supporting commodities that compete with U.S. exports. Restrictions on bilateral assistance appear in the Bumpers Amendment to the FY 1987 Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill and a similar statement in the Continuing Resolution for 1988 (HR 3750) restricts U.S. support for multilateral development banks. The Bumpers Amendment states that no funds shall be expended under the Foreign Assistance Act for:

> . . . any testing or breeding feasibility study, variety improvement or introduction, consultancy, publication, or conference training in connection with the growth of production in a foreign country of an agricultural commodity for export which would compete with a similar commodity grown or produced in the United States.

Such restrictions protect particular interests but their broader effects can be problematic. Sometimes U.S. interests in increasing exports may require supporting commodities grown overseas that are also grown by the United States. Also, the United States generates significant ill-will by trying to block all World Bank loans to developing countries to grow certain crops that will compete with U.S. agriculture (17).

Also, broad-brush bans do not adequately address how American policy should vary based on different countries' development needs and competitive position. This issue has particular relevance for Sub-Saharan Africa where development needs are great and where countries are unlikely to threaten U.S. exports. African export capacity is not a significant threat to U.S. producers and the types of crops grown are not, for the most part, major U.S. export commodities. Some provisions exist in current legislation to address such circumstances. For example, the Bumpers Amendment contains provisions to allow research and other support for competing crops if the production is deemed necessary for the internal food security of the developing country in question (38). However,

indications exist that once broad research restrictions are in place for a given commodity, a de facto research ban may result for countries where increased production presents little or no threat to U.S. exporters.

Africa cannot be isolated from the adverse impacts of existing restrictions on global support for U.S. agricultural assistance. Of particular concern are prospects that restrictive legislation could have negative effects on the international research networks that have an important role to play in improving African agricultural development. In particular, concerns exist regarding the consequences for the various International Agricultural Research Centers (IARCs).

The IARCs are institutions created specifically to develop new information and technology on the world's major food commodities, with specific attention to developing country needs. A number of these commodities are also major U.S. exports, for example, maize and wheat. Since the United States contributes 20 to 25 percent of the IARC's core budget, a major reduction in contributions could deal a severe blow to their capacity to generate, adapt, and transfer technology to developing countries and bolster national research in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere (38). Reductions could also undermine the important role these institutions play in international agricultural research and in conserving and distributing germplasm. Many future improvements in agriculture are likely to be based on the IARCs' work—including improvements in U.S. agriculture.

Much debate regarding the U.S. role in agricultural assistance has focused on international competition for export markets. U.S. agriculture has additional, non-competitive relationships with the rest of the world, however, and the U.S. farm sector receives *direct and indirect benefits from U.S. development assistance.* Approximately 70 percent of funds for direct bilateral assistance are actually spent in the United States (36). The figure for agricultural aid may be as high as 90 percent (38). Expenditures for technical assistance, commodities, and training are paid to U.S. citizens, companies, and schools. These figures belie the perception that agricultural assistance only benefits its recipients. They also raise questions whether this high proportion of budget expenditures used for U.S. products and services is the most efficient and sustainable means of supporting African development.

American farmers also derive direct benefits from government purchases of U.S. agricultural commodities for food aid, as established under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1984 (Public Law 480). Since their inception, Public Law 480 programs have purchased U.S. farm products from virtually every state at a total of at least $35 billion (31).

Indirect benefits are more difficult to quantify but clearly are substantial. They include "reverse technology transfer" from developing countries generally and Africa in particular, often gained through U.S. involvement in international research. These benefits come in many forms, from specific technology, to research insights, to genetic material collected while working with traditional varieties of crops overseas. Examples include:

- Barley is worth $140 million per year to California farmers. Current varieties' resistance to yellow dwarf virus, a potentially devastating disease, is due to a single barley gene from Ethiopia (23).
- Genetic resistance to wheat rust, another major crop disease, comes from Kenya (5).
- A sizable portion of Nebraskan sorghum was derived from parental varieties introduced from Nigeria in 1951 (7).
- In 1986, USDA released new pearl millet germplasm that is resistant to two major U.S. diseases based on a wild subspecies discovered in Senegal (1).
- U.S. ranchers from Texas to the Carolinas may benefit from a new breed of cattle that has greater tolerance to hot and dry weather, like its West African and English parent stock (11).

Genetic resources provide benefits to American agriculture beyond their use as breeding material for improved yield or resistance. Leaf

miners, an agricultural pest, cause at least $15 million damage to California's crops. A newly-approved pesticide controlled up to 95 percent of these pests in USDA tests. Its active ingredient originates in tropical African and Asian neem trees where it has been a traditional means of fighting insects for centuries (4).

Other indirect benefits to U.S. agriculture come from supporting agricultural research in Africa. U.S. researchers, stimulated by experiences with different kinds of agriculture overseas, exchange knowledge and research approaches. The new ideas coming from returning university scientists, Peace Corps Volunteers, and from foreign visitors to the United States clearly are important:

> We need to forget the idea (rhetoric) that we are the technological leader in every area and that our perspective should be to share our technology rather than to obtain it from others. To preserve our own competitive position it is imperative that we tap into the new knowledge being generated elsewhere (24).

Farming systems research originated overseas, with much of the early work occurring in East Africa. Now, because of growing concern for small farms in the United States increased effort is being directed to applying farming systems approaches here: Colorado State University has farming systems work underway in western Colorado, and researchers at Morehead State University see applications in eastern Kentucky. Much of the universities' expertise was first gained in Africa. Interest in reduced pesticide use has attracted growing attention to integrated pest management. Farmers in developing countries, including in Africa, have developed many agronomic practices to reduce pest problems without pesticides. These practices may offer important information for devising U.S. approaches (21).

CONCLUSION

The main goal of U.S. development assistance, although it is sometimes forgotten by expatriates but seldom by Africans, is to work itself out of job. The Agency for International Development lists 15 countries, in 4 regions of the world, as "graduates" from development assistance (8). So the U.S. record is not without its successes. Considerable frustration has emerged, however, due to the general ineffectiveness of development assistance. The disappointing record in Africa, despite considerable infusion of funds, is a major source of this frustration,

It is almost inevitable that people looking at development assistance in Africa will try to make comparisons to the successes of the U.S. Marshall Plan to support rebuilding war-torn Europe and assistance to Asia in the 1950s. But such comparisons are misleading. Institutional and other constraints—not to mention a diverse and challenging environment—make development assistance to Africa fundamentally more difficult than was the case elsewhere.

It is also important to remember that U.S. foreign assistance reached as high as 3 percent of the U.S. gross national product (GNP) in the late 1940s (25). It has fallen to about one-tenth that level today, and it is one-half of what it was only 20 years ago. The United States now ranks near the bottom of industrialized countries in terms of percent of GNP devoted to development assistance, although the total dollar amount of U.S. aid is the highest (26). Some experts fear that U.S. foreign aid budgets are now too low to meet U.S. interests in Africa's development, as well as broader U.S. interests and responsibilities overseas (19].

Much of the American public, however, perceives that the United States spends too much on foreign assistance (6). Some Americans believe that as much as 40 percent of the U.S. budget goes to development aid. In fact, this figure is 1 percent or less (8), and farmers in Iowa alone received more federal loans and aid in 1987 than the World Bank provided for all of Africa (13).

Whether the U.S. invests too much or too little in meeting its interests in Africa is a subject that will continue to be debated. Expectations that dramatic short-term results are possible are misguided, though, even if increased funding was available. Further, when frustration over the slow pace of progress leads to frequent shifts in U.S. development priorities, long-term impact is undermined. Stability of funding, then, can be as important as funding levels. The creation of the African Development Fund as well as Congress' continued emphasis on agricultural assistance are promising steps in what can be a resource-enhancing approach for U.S. development assistance.

Nevertheless, the road to African food security seems long and difficult. Decisions on how to address the challenges are African ones. But the United States has stated, in its foreign assistance legislation, a desire to be a partner in this work. And an approach that enhances low-resource agriculture will be an important component of any effective U.S. development assistance effort.

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