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Agricultural Policies

Addendum

GUATEMALA

GENERAL POLICY OF THE AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC SECTOR, 1974

Background

The National Agricultural Development Plan 1971-75 outlines policies designed to achieve the objectives of development by individual sectors that have been approved for this period and which are: (a) to increase production, (b) to improve the level of employment, (c) to raise the income level of small and medium agricultural producers (which basically implies improving the distribution of agricultural income) and (d) to incorporate traditional agricultural producer groups in the monetary economy. It is recognized nevertheless that not all these policies are spelt out in detail and furthermore that some will have to be revised in the light of experience. The sectorial planning system now has the task of clarifying these instruments so that the Head of the Agricultural Public Sector may establish the basic orientations to be followed in 1974.

First of all one may logically assume that whatever the orientation given by the Head of the Sector to future activities, particularly in cases where some objectives are conflicting, having regard to the fact that the resources of the Agricultural Public Sector can be manipulated readily and effectively, the objective of that Sector will be to continue and expand sectorial development efforts, as formulated in the Plan. Naturally adjustments will have to be made as required by current conditions in the country and the experience of two years of implementation. In some circumstances such changes could imply a reformulation of physical targets for some projects, particularly if certain factors inhibiting the scope of action of DIGESA cannot be overcome, for example budgetary considerations, sales, inspection, etc. In addition, for these and other reasons, the Head of the Agricultural Public

Sector will have to make substantive decisions regarding the functional orientation and physical location of the activities of the Public Sector. In the analysis of instruments in relation to activities, some alternative possibilities are presented in this connexion.

Having regard to the foregoing considerations, the Head of the Agricultural Public Sector must define some general orientations in order to be able to determine the activities of the various institutions of the Agricultural Public Sector in the remainder of 1973 and in 1974. Some of these will continue into the medium term. These orientations will be based on the most significant results - and also on the most serious problems facing the sector - that have been observed in the first two years of implementation of the Plan, on the basis, of course, of whatever decisions are made in order to define more specific instruments, as outlined below. For the moment, mention will be made of some policies of general scope that are relevant to the macro-orientation of the Sector.

(a) First of all a determination will have to be made that the financial, human, technical¹, physical and other resources of the Agricultural Public Sector should be channelled into in-depth implementation of the rural development plan and other projects coming under the heading "rest of the Agricultural Sector". It will be possible in this way to reduce to a minimum the allocation of resources to activities that have not been properly programmed and whose impact on agricultural development is consequently not clear although they take up part of the operational capacity of the Agricultural Public Sector. This would imply a decision that some of the physically and functionally transferable resources of the Agricultural Public Sector, in particular DIGESA, should be rechannelled into the Rural Development Plan. This means gives rise to an alternative that must be resolved by the Head of the Agricultural Public Sector: whether to increase the objectives of the Development Plan or to maintain all the programmes of the Agricultural Public Sector, in particular those of DIGESA. The decision will have to take account of the need for the activities of the Agricultural Public Sector to yield results proportionate to the volume of resources employed.

¹Including the capacity of the APS institutions in regard to studies and analysis. Such activities should concentrate on clarifying the problems covered by the plan, rather than on a horizontal extension of research activities.

Once the decision has been made in this respect it will be carried out through various means, including sectorial planning¹; the establishment of a uniform programming and control system at sector level, and the rapid establishment of a computer bank for the data held by DIGESA, the system being extended to the entire sector. In addition, more effective use will have to be made of the information furnished by agricultural promoters.

(b) A second component of the general policy of the Agricultural Public Sector will concern strengthening of the regional organization system and application of all the mechanisms and instruments inherent in this type of organization, or at least the most significant ones among them, in order to ensure implementation of the Plan. This policy implies that BANDESA, INDECA and ICTA will observe the scheme of operational regions established by DIGESA; that these institutions organize themselves in such a way that the regional development committees can operate; and that the programming, control, evaluation, registration, and the establishment of a budget for internal control of the Sector can be effected in the same way as was done by DIGESA. In the short term, this measure will contribute to ensuring functional and territorial consistency among the various services of the Agricultural Public Sector and, at a later stage, to the implementation of regional planning.

(c) Another general element in the policy of the Agricultural Public Sector would be improvement of the coordination machinery already existing within the sector, between the latter and the other sub-divisions of the General Public Sector, as well as with the private sector, and in addition the establishment of appropriate coordination machinery where this is lacking. This policy orientation involves various problems. First of all the functioning of the Coordination Committee of the Agricultural Public Sector must be made more flexible so that it may become a really efficacious coordination body. In this way some questions could be solved which at present, in the absence of adequate functioning by the Coordination Committee, have to be dealt with in the governing bodies of the various institutions, at which level the overall aspect is lost sight of. By using the Coordination Committee, the presentation of certain questions to the governing body could become a purely formal matter and furthermore some problems could be solved through the Coordination Committee which have arisen in the implementation of the plan, particularly where matters concerning the plan have not been considered from the aspect of the Sector as a whole, as they should

¹The operational problems of each institution will have to be analyzed by the Sectorial Planning Unit and if the results are not concordant, by the Coordination Committee of the Agricultural Public Sector.

be, but from the aspect of individual institutions (for example the preponderance of the interests of INDECA and BANDESA in regard to situations that are of general interest).

Consolidation of the sectorial planning system is another kind of difficulty inherent in this policy. In this connexion the decision of the Head of the Agricultural Planning Sector must be oriented towards gaining recognition by the institutions of the Agricultural Public Sector, first of all, of the rôle that the programming units must play in the planning of institutional activities and, secondly, of the leadership of the Sectorial Planning Unit (Communta).

A third area of difficulties concerns coordination in the field. DIGESA has made substantial progress in programming its activities at regional and sub-regional level. A local information system has been established, and if the data can be computerized, it may be possible to assemble a really valuable bank of information on the progress of the various projects. INDECA and BANDESA will also have to establish data of this kind, from which comparable information can be obtained from the aspect of an entire sector rather than at the institutional level. Furthermore if these institutions can be organized on a regional basis, it will be easier to use the Regional Committees and create other consultation machinery at the sub-regional or local level under the auspices of the Committees. Lastly, the fact that DIGESA has decided to centralize assistance functions around the activities of the regional promoter - and rightly so - implies that INDECA, BANDESA and ICTA will have to align themselves with this approach.

(d) Another aspect that orients the activities of the Agricultural Public Sector is improvement of regional and programme supervision. This can be achieved through a uniform programming and control system for the sector, to be applied in respect of each region, programme and institution. It would also be desirable to establish a common, systematic line of action, defining an objective orientation for the various technicians of the Agricultural Public Sector so that these can be better situated in the development processes and in their own areas of action, and better co-ordinated with each other.

(e) The prime element of the action policy of the Agricultural Public Sector must be to project its image - as a sector - toward the rest of the national community, while consolidating the sector concept as such. This concerns the handling of problems of agricultural development - not merely those of the rural development plan - which must be envisaged from the sectorial rather the institutional angle - and in addition the image which the institutions project toward the national and international community. For the ordinary citizen and the rest of the public sector, the Agricultural Public Sector does not exist.

The general notion - which has been encouraged by the sector itself - is that there is a Ministry of Agriculture, BANDESA, INDECA, ICTA, INTA, etc. but no single sector of which these various institutions each form a part. The current language of relations and the general terms of reference of each institution correspond to a sector comprising various sub-divisions rather than to one integrated sector. This situation will have to be remedied definitively in the short term, because in the future, having regard to changes in some of the country's political and historical circumstances, the absence of a sector concept within the sector itself and outside may make it more vulnerable to progressive sub-division than may now be thought.

Symbology, the customary terminology used in governing bodies, in inter-institutional relations and in the exercise of the functions of the Head of the Sector: in all these aspects implying communication, the concept of the Agricultural Public Sector must be embodied in explicit terms.