

Changing agricultural policy in Tanzania

by

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Abstract

For many years, Tanzania's agricultural policies were based on government control of trade and production. Insufficient state funds to back up centralised and interventionist policies caused a decline in agricultural output. In particular, over-investment in tractor-related schemes prevented more appropriate technologies from being fully developed.

Subsequent revisions of agricultural policy emphasised exploiting market forces through easing economic controls and providing an 'enabling environment'. The new policies provided for support of appropriate technologies, including animal power, through the well-established extension system.

Non-governmental organisations are likely to play an increasingly important role in targeting aid to farmers.

Agricultural policy in Tanzania

Tanzania revised its national policy for agriculture and livestock. The policies in effect during the 1970s and 1980s were thought to be *national*, but stated they were *government* policies. Nevertheless, they were written at a time when the government felt itself obliged to control all productive and trading activities.

The policies focused on *production* rather than *producers*. Farmers were to be offered *incentives*, while at the same time prices were suppressed, marketing was monopolised, and most of the national budget was poured into parastatal ventures that were sheltered from commercial discipline.

Not only was the natural resource of producer self-interest not exploited, but public resources proved inadequate to finance the high level of state intervention that was prescribed in its place. External assistance was co-opted into financing central management and state production, but was ineffective in arresting the consequent decline of output.

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It is unclear to what extent the donors benefited from policies favouring tractorisation, but over-investment in tractors and tractor services has retarded the evolution of technologies more appropriate to most of Tanzania's farming.

The revolutionary process is now continuing full circle. Economic controls are being eased, and public resources are being focused onto the core responsibilities of government.

The new direction

In future, the government will give first priority to meeting its obligations in law. The Ministry of Agriculture will monitor and regulate the agricultural industry. It will advocate the interests of farmers and stock-owners to ensure that macro-economic, trade, taxation and land policies are optimised to stimulate rural development. Its monitoring function will provide continuous input to policy analysis, enabling public resources to be allocated in the most cost-effective manner.

Extension policy will continue to be based on the *training and visit* system, but applied with greater flexibility as extension workers become better trained to respond to farmer needs. Specific training and intensive campaigns will promote new technologies where appropriate. Weeding with animal power is a new technology of high potential and high priority.

The government will continue to act as coordinator and adviser to donors, but developmental assistance will increasingly be channelled through non-governmental organisations or directly to the beneficiaries.

The government is committed to ensuring food security for all. Otherwise it will devote itself to creating an 'enabling environment' for agricultural development under the stimulus of market forces. The government's monitoring and regulatory functions will ensure that trends can be recognised, and if necessary modified to meet the nation's longer term expectations of social equity and conservation of resources.