

# Approaches to animal power development in Uganda

by

**Henry Smuts E Ojirot**

*Animal Traction Development Organisation (ATRADO) PO Box 6553, Kampala, Uganda*

## **Abstract**

*Factors influencing past, present and future trends in weed control in Uganda are discussed. Efforts made by the government, NGOs and farmers in using animal power for weed control are highlighted. Achievements and problems are described. A multidisciplinary concerted effort using appropriate means is needed for success.*

## **Introduction**

Weeding is a major problem on small-scale farms. The status of weed control is influenced by an interplay of the political, economic, social, cultural, physiological and physical factors prevailing in Uganda. Constraints to the adoption of animal power include small fragmented farms, hilly terrain, perennial cropping systems and cattle rustling.

## **Problems of public sector approaches**

Draft animal technology was introduced to Uganda in 1909. Animal power is mainly used for plowing and to some extent for transport, but seldom for weeding. The post-independence era in Uganda created ambitious tractor-hire schemes that were run at the expense of animal draft power. The youth of today is reluctant to adopt animal power and prefers tractors.

Weeding equipment was tested at Serere Research Station by researchers of the Ministry of Agriculture. Subsequent research and extension relating to weed control was mostly done in government research institutions and District Farm Institutes (DFIs). This institutionalised approach had shortcomings.

The facilities available in DFIs differ from those available to a farmer. DFI farm tests differ from the situation in farmers' fields. This is in agreement with Mbuga (1993): "the engineer should design with the community and not for the community". There was a wide gap between the holders of research degrees, with their technical knowledge, and smallholder farmers who were meant to benefit from the

technology. This was only partially bridged by extensionists with moderate education. Sociologists and economists were not involved with the technology development.

The nationalisation policy (1969–71) which gave the state powers to annex land near DFIs and government institutions worsened relations with farmers. Many farmers rejected any proposed government scheme for fear of losing land. Farmers who did not pay tax or resented the political system did not go near District Farm Institutes.

The institutional approach also suffered from lack of funds, inadequate infrastructure, poor public sector punctuality and red tape at headquarters. Further problems were caused by donors, with delayed funding, technology dumping, exaggeration of potential benefits and the creation of unrealistic expectations among the beneficiaries.

## **Community-based approaches**

Wasike (1992) discussed the importance of community participation in an animal power programme in Karamoja, North Eastern Uganda. Locally-manufactured prototypes of a weeder and cultivator were accepted by the target group. This was associated with community involvement in the project implementation strategy.

The Animal Traction Development Organisation (ATRADO) has been assisting community-based groups and NGOs in promoting the use of weeders and cultivators. The importance of well-trained animals and handlers has been stressed. The implements available to farmers have been farm-tested to ensure they meet proper specifications and appropriate designs have been standardised.

## **Conclusions**

The old institutional approach has not had a big impact. Community participation will be the key to the success of Ugandan animal power programmes. The government should liberalise

and stick to a regulatory role. There have been encouraging statements from the Ugandan government, favourable to animal power and removing the burden on women.

There is a need for action plans and programmes targeted towards the farmer who uses animal power. Women must be involved at all stages. A concerted effort by government, NGOs and the community with donor support should develop a strong weed control programme in Uganda. There should also be continued regional networking.

## References

- Mbuga J K, 1993. Design of animal draught technology: a bottoms-up approach. pp 45-52 in: Kanali C L, Okello P O, Wasike B S and Klapwijk M (eds), *Improving draught animal technology*. Proceedings of the first conference of the Kenya Network for Draught Animal Technology (KENDAT) held 3-6 November 1992, Nairobi, Kenya. KENDAT, University of Nairobi, Kenya. 124p.
- Wasike B S, 1992. Karamoja draught power technology project. pp. 165-169 in: den Hartog G and van Huis J A (eds), *The role of draught animals in rural development*. Proceedings of an international seminar held 2-12 April 1990, Edinburgh, Scotland. Pudoc Scientific, Wageningen, The Netherlands. 233p.