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Agricultural Policy and Performance in Liberia (1920-1990): Implications for Policy in Post-Civil War Liberia

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Résumé: L'agriculture libérienne est en déclin depuis le début des années 1920, et les politiques n'ont pas été réellement capables de remédier à une telle situation. Sur le plan historique, il y a eu des tentatives majeures de renverser cette tendance à la baisse de la production vivrière, caféière et cacaoyère. Malheureusement, ces plans essentiels ont échoué depuis longtemps. Jusqu'à présent, aucune alternative politique n'a été pensée pour l'après-guerre civile au Liberia. Contrairement aux auteurs qui se sont focalisés sur les facteurs économiques pour analyser la politique agricole, cet article se propose d'aller au-delà. Il prend en compte des facteurs économiques et non économiques qui sont à l'origine de l'échec de la politique agricole au Liberia. Les conclusions de cet article indiquent, «ceteris paribus», que: a) Les facteurs économiques et politiques ont beaucoup influencé la politique et les stratégies agricoles du début des années 1920 à la fin des années 1980, et b) Le manque d'égards envers la sociologie rurale existante a dû avoir un impact négatif sur la restructuration cognitive du cultivateur en ce qui concerne la politique du gouvernement. Cet article propose des options et des stratégies politiques qui pourraient favoriser la production agricole au Liberia d'après-guerre civile.

Introduction

Agriculture, like other industries, is usually saddled with production, distribution and sometimes managerial problems. Accordingly therefore, an agricultural policy is mostly concerned with price stability, structural questions and marketing in order to attain a certain degree of self-sufficiency in food production, maintain the incomes of the farming community and improve agricultural production and marketing (Hallet 1971; Knutson *et al.* 1983; Ellis 1992).

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A number of attempts have been made through studies to assess the impact of government policy on Africa's agricultural performance. Jaeger (1992), for example, has worked on nine African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe. He examined the trends and magnitudes of policy distortions in Africa and their effect on agricultural incentives and explained the responsiveness of African agriculture to these policy change. Jaeger also assessed the importance of these policies in explaining Africa's poor agricultural performance both for food and export crops since 1970, and evaluated the evidence of a link between Africa's policy reform and recent evidence of recovery in Africa's agricultural growth. His results are mixed. For some countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi, agricultural supply has a negative response to producer price. Coleman *et al.* (1993) have assessed the impact of structural adjustment programmes on cocoa supply in Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. Ghana's cocoa sector seems to have responded well to the adjustment programmes.

There are also some studies on Liberia's agricultural response to policy. Gedeo (1982), for example, attempted to review the historical development of Liberia's agricultural policy between 1950 and 1980. His analysis is seriously beset with historical omissions. Zinnah (1985, 1989) shows great concern for the neglected food crops such as rice and cassava as opposed to policy emphasis on export crops grown through the assistance of integrated agricultural rural development projects. Kamara (1987) traces food insecurity in Liberia to the appearance of foreign concessions that deprived peasants of their lands. And recently Toe (1994) has assessed the impact of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate, trade, and external aid policy on agricultural performance between 1980 and 1990. His conclusions are that macroeconomic imbalances restricted the contribution of the agricultural sector to the overall economic progress during the period.

This paper, unlike others, offers an agricultural policy profile of the Liberian economy dating back to the early 1920s up to 1990, and even beyond. The paper uses an interdisciplinary approach in its analysis to acknowledge that traditional farm problems are not only economic but are also tainted by values, beliefs and group behaviour as well as politics (Knutson *et al.* 1983; James 1971).

First we discuss early policy attempts to diversify the economy through plantation agriculture, and later on estimate the opportunity cost of plantation agriculture for the farmers who were recruited to work in these plantations. This is followed by discussions of government policies that have attempted to boost food production in the country either through rural spatial reorganisation, or through both small and large scale rice farming. The fifth section of the paper explains the failure of the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects in the mid-1980s. This is followed by a discussion of the effect of Liberia's civil war on the policy since 1989 and beyond. Finally, the seventh and eight sections draw agricultural policy implications in a post civil war Liberia and present the final conclusions of this study respectively.

Early Attempts to Diversify the Economy Through Plantation Agriculture: 1920-1964

Until 1926, Firestone was probably the only major foreign investment in the country and thereafter there were policy attempts to diversify the country's agricultural export-oriented output.

Early policy efforts in this direction encouraged the participation of foreign investors such as Le Tourneau Foundation in 1932 in crops, grains, rubber, cocoa, palm oil, tree fruits, coffee and fertiliser production. Other companies that followed included the Liberian Company in 1947, the African Fruit Company in 1952 which got itself involved in the development of bananas as well as other tropical fruits and products, and in 1967 the West African Agricultural Corporation which was interested in oil palm plantation. By 1960 government also invested in large scale oil palm plantation (Kraaij 1983),[1] after having tried unsuccessfully to diversify the country's agricultural sector with the participation of foreign investors (Kraaij 1983).

Actually, most concessions that came under this diversification policy were mostly interested in iron ore mining, cultivation of rubber, and timber exploitation for exports as well as other basic staples such as rice. And this probably marked the genesis of the current lack of symmetry between what is produced and consumed at home. Liberia seems to have developed an early dependence on international trade which depended on foreign investment and which in turn focused on the export-oriented production of raw materials (iron

1 Some years later the Government decided to discontinue these experimental operations. This plantation was sold for $125,000 as one of the measures taken to solve the financial crises of the early 1960s.

ore, diamonds, rubber, logs). Thus, on the average most revenues go into imported goods. Between 1976-1978, while exports accounted for nearly 74 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, imports accounted for 71 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (Kraaij 1983). As it will be shown in the next section, this neglect of basic staple food has entailed huge opportunity costs in terms of output foregone and resources expended in the importation of rice.

Early Policy Trade-off: The Opportunity Cost of Plantation Agriculture

The opportunity cost of plantation agriculture can be measured in terms of foregone local food stuff earnings by farmers. Since the early 1950s, the demand for imported rice in the country has continued to increase because the diversification policy then did not emphasize domestic production of rice, the staple of Liberia. By 1942, Liberia imported between 6,616,100 and 11,695,000 pounds of rice. By 1964 Liberia had imported 96,727,735 pounds worth of rice, and in 1966 it imported 102,073,900 pounds of rice. From an initial 6,616,100 pounds, rice consumption, therefore, had doubled 15.43 times. As it will be shown in subsequent sections, later in the 1970s, rice importation became a policy issue since by 1973 Liberia was already spending $12,316,026 on the importation of rice (Kraaij 1983).

It is claimed that this trend was exacerbated by rubber and mining concessions in the country. These concessions employed men from villages and thereby reduced the number of productive prime-age males in the subsistence sector which led to a decline in food production, including rice (ILO Report 1972).

In addition, these concessions also took away arable land from the surrounding farming communities which later bought the same lands from the concessions and feared that one day these concessions might reclaim these lands. This often led farmers to reduce the sizes of their farms as a precautionary measure against future loss of land and consequently a reduction of agricultural output (Pereira-Lunghu 1973; Kamara 1987).

In terms of earnings forgone by the farmers who worked in rubber plantations in the early 1960s, it is claimed that it took a farmer 3 months to cultivate 0.8 hectares of upland rice and 0.4 hectares in other crops, and in the end a farmer harvested 500 kilograms of clean rice (after deduction for seed) which could be sold for $6.50 per 45 kilograms, earning a total of $71.50. But if a farmer chose to work as rubber taper for three months, he would earn only $35.00 at the wage rate of $0.45 a day (Robson and Lury 1969).

It should be noted, therefore, that while these foreign concessions were probably an unavoidable alternative source of state revenues, the economy however continued to lose these same revenues through rice imports. On the other hand, farmers found themselves worse-off since they had to consume imported rice whereas the total wages they earned from these concessions were half of what they could have earned as full-time farmers.

Attempts to Reverse the Decline in Food Production: 'Operation Production' and the 1962-1970 Plan

On two occasions, at least, government policy tried to reactivate agricultural food production through the 1964 and the 1962-1970 Plans.

In 1964, the policy was dubbed 'Operation Production'. For several reasons, however, this policy failed to attain its desired results because of the lack of genuine commitment. At least until 1970 there were no public appropriations to co-ordinate the activities of 'Operation Production' (Lowenkopf 1976; Gedeo 1982) and the so-called 'Operation Production' was administered by a two-man staff over the entire country.

The 1962-1970 Plan attempted to reactivate rice production through rural spatial reorganisation. This plan aimed at clearing vast acres of land and settling peasant families in several parts of Liberia in order to cultivate swamp paddy and drier upland rice through the use of irrigation, while agricultural credit and production co-operatives which were meant to finance these projects failed to yield positive results for several reasons.[2] First, the government's failure to regularly supply enough machines, fuel, and pay government employees and civil servants in charge of these projects affected the farmers' efforts to implement these government-sponsored projects. Second, the non-use of the prevailing rural sociology restricted farmers from becoming members of the government's newly created co-operatives while credit was extended instead to private wealthy individuals who usually monopolised commercial farming.

2 This plan aimed at clearing 3,000 acres of land and to settle 600 peasant families every year in the Gbedin Rice Project. Even though the first 96 families were settled and four years later only 85 acres of land were cleared, less than one acre was allocated per family. This area turned out too small to secure an adequate income for the peasants. Similar projects were established in the so-called Government Rice Zones in Voinjama, Tchien and Kpain.

Furthermore, the alienation of the farmers from the decision-making process gave them the impression that the project was purely a government affair. Also, the use of capital-intensive methods further aggravated this alienation and sometimes made it difficult to harvest all the crop produced since no contingency plans were made for manual harvesting of these crops alongside combined harvesters, and finally, employees of local administration strangely became nominal production co-operative members for a fee. Even though they never participated in the farm work, they appropriated most of the harvested produce (Seibel and Massing 1974).

New Attempts to Diversify the Economy Through Agriculture: 1974-1980

For the second time, the Liberian state envisaged in 1974 an agricultural development plan: the 1976-1980 National Socioeconomic Plan. The objective of this plan was to attain self-sufficiency in rice production for domestic consumption and thereby enable the State to save some of its revenue formerly used in the importation of rice ($15,828,295 in 1974). The plan also envisaged the expansion of cocoa and coffee production for export in a bid to earn foreign exchange for the State. Under this development plan, about three Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (in Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties) were created in the country to work with small-holder cocoa, coffee and rice production schemes.

The conceptualisation of this plan may have resulted from the Liberian government's failure to attract Japanese investment into the untapped Wologish iron ore deposits in 1972 and the decline in the pressure from the iron ore sector. The plan also included a policy shift to exploitation. On the other hand, political and equity considerations played a very crucial role in shaping the agricultural policy. Liberia then had a highly skewed distribution of national income in favour of the political elite. At that time, 97 per cent of the population received only 25 per cent of the share of the national income while the remaining 75 per cent of the national income was distributed to 3 per cent of the Liberian population that constituted the political elite and foreign firms (Liebenow 1969; Gedeo 1982). Therefore, the new policy direction could be seen as an attempt to spread the benefits of national economic growth to the other sectors of the population so as to diffuse political opposition in the countryside.

As the Liberian experience shows, however, farming through the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADP) was not viable. As Pereira-Lunghu (1995) puts it:

> ... because: (1) farmers become indebted to these projects within a state-controlled relation of production ... In the Liberian case, government credit cooperatives that operated under the IADP were faced with serious problems of recovering loans extended to farmers in the 1980s ...; (2) the evaluation criterion of these projects became the achievement of production targets of rice, cocoa and coffee to be met by small-holders ... One would expect changes in production techniques and organisation to be the most accurate measure of agricultural progress rather than the mere attainment of production targets by peasants ... For in this context, agricultural development calls for a simultaneous increase in productivity and rural transformation ...; (3) many authors ... have argued that ... this 'top-down' approach to agricultural development ... may fail to motivate farmers who might perceive these policies as detrimental to their own interests ... farmers may perceive these policies as a source of coercive taxation and forced labour. This insight might be instructive to a country like Liberia with a long history of coercive taxation of those in the rural areas ... (4) in small-holder cash cropping, labour productivity remains the same as in traditional agriculture. And even though it generates accumulation and enterprise on a small scale, it may not generate an agricultural surplus because its activities are not structurally differentiated according to a strategy of specialised production nor is labour specialised... (Pereira-Lunghu 1995:207-231).

Moreover, integrated agricultural development projects could turn out to be very exorbitant because of the huge overheads involved. For example, the financial implication of the 1976-1980 National Socioeconomic Plan was that the Liberian State embarked upon a scheme of heavy borrowing from international circles to finance the total planned expenditure of about $712 million. Post-civil war Liberia must undoubtedly bear the brunt of this inherited foreign debt.

Large-Scale Rice Farming in 1972

Alongside small-holder rice production plans, the government established an Agricultural Mechanisation Company (AGRIMECO) in 1972 to undertake land development work. The programme envisaged large-scale mechanised reclamation of small swamps for rice cultivation and subsequently, the introduction of tree crops (Gedeo 1982).

This special Rice Programme ended in failure because planners overlooked three important socio-cultural factors: (1) Liberian male farmers prefer large tracts of upland rice farming because of the prestige that goes with it than does small swamp rice farming;[3] (2) planners must have assumed that once the land was cleared by AGRIMECO, farmers would automatically cultivate the land. On the contrary, cleared acres of land were left unplanted because farmers are accustomed to felling trees and burning bush before planting (using the ashes of the burnt bush as natural fertiliser); (3) the majority of the farmers could not afford the fees charged for land development, not to mention other inputs. It seemed, however, that the middle and large farmers benefited from the programme.

However, there was also the Foya project in Lofa county which was under foreign management (the Agricultural Development Company International). This project became quite promising. The company cleared 2,500 acres of low land and swamp land and 1,000 acres of irrigated fields. This project had the potential for harvesting thrice on the same acre. The returns per acre of upland rice ranged between \$3.36 and \$51.16; and those of irrigated swamp rice ranged between \$34.94 and \$321.74 (Ministry of Agriculture 1972). The project was abandoned not on cost considerations but on political grounds when Liberia joined other African states in their support of Egypt against Israel during the Middle East crisis, and the Israeli managers of the corporation had to simply leave (Pereira-Lunghu 1995).

Once again, like the early 1962-1970 Plan the Special Rice Project failed to take account of the prevailing rural sociology in the countryside. Nevertheless, the Foya experiment with irrigated large-scale farming is indicative of possible large-scale capitalist farming in Liberia, or of joint public and private efforts.

Agricultural Pricing Policy in the 1970s

In the 1970s price policy was designed to protect rice, coffee, cocoa and palm kernel. In 1973 a new price formula (closely linked to export) was introduced for prices of coffee, cocoa and palm kernel. The Liberian Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture set producer prices. A Price Stabilisation Fund for the protection of farmers against fluctuations in the world market prices was established. Additionally, LPMC developed a network of buying stations and employed

3 Unlike reasons given by Gedeo (1982), this is the cultural reason why farmers preferred upland rice farming. Moreover, farmers denounced the cultivation of swamp rice for fear of water-borne diseases (Bong County Agricultural Development Project - *Annual Report, 1984/1988*).

the services of licensed buying agents who dealt with farmers or intermediaries.

In the 1980s, however, there arose great concerns about the working of the pricing system of LPMC as the gap between producer prices and export prices of coffee, cocoa and palm kernel was generating huge economic rents for LPMC. The World Bank and other international organisations that financed small-scale agricultural development projects had repeatedly called for the review of the pricing policy of the Producing Marketing Corporation so that farmers would receive better prices for their produce (Gedeo 1982).

There was also in the 1970s an attempt to raise the price of rice in order to guarantee a continuous supply of the grain to the growing urban sector. The policy increased the price of imported rice from $22 to $30 a bag of 100 pounds (allegedly to discourage rice imports) and that of a 100 pounds bag of local milled rice from $22 to $25 (allegedly to stimulate local rice production). This increase in prices resulted in the historic April 14, 1979 Rice Riot in Monrovia which left about 70 dead and 400 wounded. Critics of the government argued that such a policy would have only benefited the immediate relatives of the President who were involved in the importation of rice, and large-scale producers of local rice such as the President himself who was a rice farmer (Kraaij 1983). The incumbent government then never recovered from this incident until its overthrow by a violent military coup d'état in 1980.

In this particular instance therefore, the Liberian experience clearly indicates that the Neo-classical remedy of raising agriculture food prices in order to guarantee a continuous supply of agricultural goods to the growing urban sector could turn out to be a less palatable policy. Thus, the terms of trade (wage-price) stability between industry and agriculture of the Liberian economy may, *ceteris paribus*, rest essentially on the price of rice which is Liberia's staple food and its achievement could depend very much on policies that reduce the cost of production of rice rather than policies that increase the supply price of rice.

Reduction in the cost of production in agriculture may occur due to costless innovations such as improved techniques and cultivation practices without recourse to expensive technologies while there occurs a change in the conception of agriculture and farming systems (Dummont 1954; Lowe 1986). Innovation may influence technical change in a direction that permits the substitution of increasing abundant (cheap) factors for increasingly scarce (expensive) ones. This has the advantage of reducing the unit cost of production (Hayami and Vernon 1971).

Another obvious lesson from this episode is the political economy of agricultural pricing policy when decision makers have a vested interest in the policy (i.e., when they are involved in the importation of the commodities and/or local production of the commodities that the policy purports to protect). And this incident seems to suggest the need for de-coupling the institutions in charge of policy formulation from the government.

The State of the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects in the Mid-1980s and Beyond

In the mid-1980s as the Liberian State failed to honour its foreign debt commitments, the international donors suspended all possible new loans to Liberia; a decision that led to a complete halt of the externally funded projects in the country such as the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects. Government employees in this agricultural development projects could not get their monthly salaries and government-sponsored co-operatives as well as the extension programmes were in a state of complete bankruptcy and disarray.

Here too, like the unsuccessful 1962-1970 Plan, the non-judicious use of rural sociology resulted in bankruptcy of the government credit unions and co-operatives. While government credit co-operatives were faced with recovery problems of loans extended to farmers and probably with problems of dishonesty on the part of local employees in charge of these credit co-operatives (Bong County Agricultural Development Project - Annual Report 1984/1985), loans that were advanced through African traditional channels such as the 'Susu' exhibited no rates of default.

By definition, 'Susu' is an African savings loan cooperative whose basic principle is to pool, at regular or irregular intervals, goods, or money for the benefit of one member at a time in a rotating system. In the 1970s and 1980s, these African cooperatives became widespread and continued to grow in number and importance. There were thirteen different types of such cooperatives (Seibel and Andreas 1974). Prominent among them was the Susukuu movement, a creation of the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) which attempted to simultaneously organise farmers into a savings loan cooperative (susu) and a work cooperative (koo). In the latter, farmers worked on a rotation basis on one another's farms. Distribution of labour services rendered and received were based on reciprocity.

The success of these traditional channels rests partly on the use of the existing village local structures as the experiences of Nimba county shows. In this county, the highest village authority who is the sole custodian of the religious, magical and spiritual powers over the town chiefs and everyone else in the village became the symbolic overseer (Manager) and member of these sources of traditional credit co-operatives. His participation ensured discipline and accountability on the part of members and borrowers alike (Pereira-Lunghu 1988).[4]

This is the anthropological perspective that Donald (1976) alludes to when he argues that a local political structure or a centralised village level leadership could be effective in ensuring the sanctity of contracts, viz., repayment of loans. Here, what we ought to learn from the anthropologist is the complex interaction of multiple ties in the rural areas (kinship, ties, ritual responsibilities) that shape economic transactions and not just profit incentives.

Other factors that make co-operatives modelled along the African tradition and culture so successful include their very reliance upon certain given economic and social functions. For example, the African Savings and Credit Co-operatives mostly known as 'susu' are based on mutual trust among members of the co-operatives. Other reasons for saving with 'susu' include lump sum to be obtained at the end of the month, the easy access to credit, and the fact that small sums are accepted by the collectors. Another important reason for saving with 'susu' is that the operation takes place over a short time (Aryeetey 1991, 1992).

In the 1980s, the lack of confidence in the Liberian banking system because of the ongoing revenue crisis fostered the growth of many informal African credit and savings associations which became leading credit unions with assets amounting to millions of dollars (Pereira-Lunghu 1988). This trend is perhaps all over West Africa. Data on Ghana between 1982 and 1989 show that of the 795 respondents who saved in one form or the other, only 18 saved solely with formal banks while another 300 saved solely with 'susu' (Aryeetey 1991, 1992).

Policy in this area, therefore, should encourage the adoption of such traditional financial practices, of course, as the Japanese model shows, only to the extent necessary to guarantee the efficiency and continuity (Nicholls 1964) of these cooperatives and their acceptance by the local farmers.

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4 On this insight I am indebted to one of my students in the Money and Banking Class for sharing this information with me while lecturing at Cuttington University College, Liberia.

The Effect of Liberia's Civil War on Policy Since 1989 and Beyond

The fighting between the Liberian army and the rebels of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) which ensued in December 1989 affected policy and almost totally disrupted Liberia's agricultural system.

By 1991, more than 1.28 million of Liberia's 2.5 million citizens or about half of the country's population had become refugees in the 13-month-old civil war. Liberia needed emergency food supplies. The USA donated to that date $127.2 million in relief food to Liberia while foreign contributors had given $44.1 million in relief food.

At the time (October 21, 1992) the NPFL rebels mounted a powerful assault on Monrovia, the capital city, fighting outside the city drove an estimated 100,000 civilians into Monrovia. At that time however Monrovia was said to have had adequate food supplies.

Until 1993 Liberia was getting food shipments through UN auspices, and food became a policy variable under the control of the UN. On August 2, 1993, the UN special envoy to Liberia, Trevor Gordon-Somers allegedly halted (secret) shipments of food of thousands of starving Liberians in regions controlled by the NPFL. Gordon-Somers was quoted as saying that the relief shipments could have threatened the fragile peace settlement between the warring factions (United States Information Services Publications 1990-1993).

One may give two possible interpretations to Gordon-Somers' analysis. One, it could be that the UN wanted to force the NPFL rebels and their leaders to appreciate the need to adhere to the peace settlement. And secondly, that food diverted secretly to the NPFL-controlled regions would have deprived other needy regions of their access to food and probably undermine the UN role in the peace process in the Liberian conflict.

Thus the period of the Liberian civil conflict may be characterised by the absence of an agricultural policy. This state of affairs reinforced the observed adverse effect of macroeconomic imbalances (fiscal, monetary and exchange rate, trade and external aid policy) on Liberia's agricultural performance between 1980 and 1990.

Implications for Policy in Post-Civil War Liberia

It is obvious that plantation agriculture (rubber and palm oil) will continue to draw men from villages to work in these concessions. Neo-classical economics would require that under competitive market conditions, the wage rate payable to these workers should at least equal their opportunity cost. In the 1960s this opportunity cost was extremely high ($7.9 per day) when compared with the daily wage that farmers received when working in the rubber plantations ($0.45). These results, therefore, cast serious doubts on the competitiveness of Liberia's labour market. It could be the case that these plantations enjoyed some monopsonistic powers. Or it could be that farmers were coerced by government policy to work in these plantations which had become inevitable sources of government revenue. The challenge, therefore, to future policy is how to close the observed wage gap between farmers' foregone returns and what they actually earn in these plantations.

Moreover, government efforts to reactivate food production have foundered for several reasons: (a) the so-called agricultural development projects have entailed huge overhead costs in terms of salaries and vehicles. These projects have often become a source of employment for many white-collar job seekers. A retrenchment policy is probably needed, while extension agents could use motor bikes instead of vehicles; (b) since the ultimate success of a development project rests with the recipient (the farmer), the socio-cultural dimension of the farmers' environment must be taken into account to ensure the success of co-operative credit schemes, greater motivation and participation of farmers in these projects; timely fulfilment of government promises is crucial since failure to do so could aggravate farmers' cognitive restructuring of government policy; and (e) proper planning is required to avoid ad-hoc decisions and to implement these projects.

As regards agricultural pricing policy, there is need for (a) de-coupling the institutions in charge of policy formulation from the government and (b) policies that reduce the cost of production through cheap innovations and technical changes rather than policies that increase the consumer prices of agricultural produces, especially where salaries may not increase proportionally.

It also needs mentioning that of late, diversification attempts on the economy have always centred around growing more rice, rubber, cocoa and coffee, without reference to poultry, cattle and small ruminants development (Zinnah 1985). A real diversification of agriculture should encompass the possibilities of developing the crop and livestock industries.

Experience is already showing that in spite of all the public resources and efforts put into small-holder rice production through spatial reorganisation schemes during the 1962-1978 period and also during the integrated agricultural development project of 1967-1980, agriculture in Liberia has still not produced any reliable surplus. The rural areas have attained only some degree of self-sufficiency in rice production for local consumption but not enough to supply the urban centres which until now consume imported rice.

In 1979, Liberia imported 163,167,000 pounds of rice valued at $26,001,000. By 1984, out of 265,000 metric tons of rice consumed, 101,000 metric tons were imported.

Other alternatives available therefore are, from a global point of view, being a small country, Liberia probably need not seek to attain self-sufficiency in rice production and trade with countries that produce rice efficiently. This will mean that less resources would go into rice production. Therefore, local rice-growing countries could be chosen based on their comparative advantage; this will release resources from inefficient rice production processes to efficient production processes of other crops and livestock. The specialisation would enhance productivity and stimulate intra-country trade.

Conclusions

From the analysis of this study, Liberia's future agricultural policy will be faced with many constraints which will include socio-cultural as well as economic and political factors. However, the removal of these constraints will undoubtedly determine Liberia's agricultural progress in the post-civil war era.

It is hoped that this paper has provided policy guidelines that will help to buttress a sustainable agricultural policy in post-war Liberia.

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