August 8, 1974 - Conference on the Sahel
9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. - The Rockefeller Foundation Board Room

Hosts: The Lilly Endowment, Inc.
The Rockefeller Foundation

Purpose of conference:

... To familiarize participants with Texas Tech University study of "Ranching/Mixed Agriculture Programs in Niger"

... To discuss some of the long-term problems of the Sahelian region of Africa and the relationship of this study to the broader issues.

MORNING SESSION

The meeting was called to order by John A. Pino and participants introduced themselves and identified the organizations they represented. Following welcoming remarks by John H. Knowles, Landrum Bolling of Lilly Endowment described briefly the purpose and background of the meeting. Lilly Endowment's involvement in West Africa has extended over approximately one year, financing work, such as this study, carried out primarily under the auspices of Africare, Washington, D.C. Africare is an independent organization, staffed by persons who have worked largely in the Sahelian zone of West Africa on drought relief and food supply problems, principally in Niger. Prior to the recent coup, Diori Hamani, then President of Niger and Chairman of Africare's Board of Trustees, had sought the aid of Africare in dealing with the calamity faced by his nation. Niger is among the six West African countries (including Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, and Upper Volta) hardest hit by the 5-year Sahelian drought, in which over 100,000 people and 20 million cattle have starved to death. Despite massive development aid

to Niger, President Diori was distressed with the lack of progress of earlier efforts and asked Africare to check in the U.S. for institutions that could take a good look at the Sahel situation and recommend constructive action. A team of scientists from Texas Tech was selected to undertake a short-term feasibility study of a mixed agriculture/ranching operation in the pastoral zone of Niger. It was felt that this was in line with the University's activities, that its staff had the necessary expertise, and, further, that conditions in the Sahel are at present somewhat parallel to those in the U.S. Southwest during the droughts of the 1930's. Although the Texas Tech study commenced just at the time a coup deposed President Diori, within 2 days the new Niger Government confirmed its support of the study. C. Payne Lucas of Africare reported that the Niger Government eagerly awaits the study results - with the hope of securing funding from an international consortium, not just from the U.S.

Anson Bertrand, Dean of Texas Tech's College of Agriculture and leader of the study team, then outlined the activities and observations of the team. He readily acknowledged that the 3-week team visit to Niger had not permitted coverage of all the aspects involved, but it was felt that sufficient data were gathered to conclude the study. Slides depicted the sites visited. Heavy population pressure (human and animal), exacerbated by long periods of drought, has led to steady desertification of the region. The perennial grasses are dead over a wide area. Overgrazing and excessive massing of herds around well sites have created mini-deserts around the wells, sometimes extending to a radius of 15-20 kms. Few young cattle are seen - only the older ones remain, and as cattle weaken they are sold for slaughter. Cattle are extremely well disciplined, even near the wells where they are watered about twice a week, indicating the close dependence and human contact

with livestock. Water levels in most wells range from 50 to 60 feet. Despite harsh conditions, the people are proud and industrious. In certain schools visited, children looked relatively well-fed, but the real tragedies are seen in the pitiful refugee camps.

The Texas Tech team surveyed 5 potential ranch sites and finally selected one near Goure where rocky outcroppings provide some runoff of rains into the sand. President Murray reviewed the situation from a geologist's point of view. The region has been fairly well covered with well bores of varying depths (put in over the years by the Canadians, the French, the Niger Government, and others). There is a widespread supply of subsurface water available, but a substantial number of additional wells will have to be drilled. Within the ranch site area are wells already put in by the French and FAO. One of the reasons this area was chosen, said Murray, was because it is in the middle of what was once a principal pastoral belt. He felt that water and range management are the keys to the challenge of whether this region, which has been so badly mistreated, can be restored. In Texas Tech's view, this land is redeemable, but the local peoples and governments must be shown how this can be done.

The site selected by the study team is in an area of ridges and hills, in the depressions of which some remnants of soil and grasses were intact. Even in the months of June and July and with no rain for 10 months, a little green was evident in the grass.

The Texas Tech proposal calls for a ranch of 3/4 million acres, with a peripheral fence to control grazing. This acreage would be divided into 10-square-mile districts and in each district 30 families could freely graze their private herds. A total of 300 families would thus be accommodated.

Approximately 2000 acres would be used, under irrigation, for growing sorghum, millets, and other food stocks. A ranch headquarters, requiring a labor force of an additional 200 families, would provide seed stock for the farms, and there would be an irrigation operation here as well as out on the range. (Note was made that the FAO ranch was in the southern portion of the Texas Tech site, and Pagot of ILCA felt that while there was a dirth of water on the FAO ranch, he was generally in agreement on the choice of site.)

There was some discussion of the Ekrafane ranch, a 250,000-acre fenced ranch, divided into sectors opened to grazing at alternate periods to permit regrowth of forage. When properly managed, the ranch had been a productive operation, its high quality stock having been commercially exported to Nigeria. However, managerial difficulties ultimately caused the cessation of government support. Pagot expressed his belief that the Niger Government made a major mistake in not continuing this operation. While he felt that fencing might not be essential to range management, he did underscore the need for rotation of grazing lands and the reaching of agreements among the peoples of Niger for transmigration of herds and for marketing.

Stanley Peek, Agricultural Officer for Central West Africa, AID, spoke of that agency's considerable experience in the Sahel over the past 10-12 years. Some experiences have been negative; a small portion have been positive. He was critical of the attempt to encourage sedentary farming in a high risk area such as the one under discussion, and felt that this type of critical zone should be used to the maximum for grazing livestock, not for food crop production. AID Range Management Specialist, Frank Abercrombie, has spent 6 years in Nigeria involved in a range livestock project and has traveled in the subject area in Niger. He said that AID recognizes that both

human and livestock pressure on the Sahel is at the root of the problem. While they accept as valid Texas Tech's feasibility study on a ranch operation in the selected site area, they do not feel it would serve as a model across the entire Sahel...there are just too many cattle, too many people, and too little land. AID sees two choices: (1) the development approach suggested by Texas Tech utilizing range management controls and sedentizing people, or (2) opening up other lands to the south of the Sahel, clearing them of tsetse, and relieving the pressure on the Sahel. Abercrombie spoke of developing temporary water sources (wells) that would be closely controlled. These would be tied in with the wet and dry seasons and force herdsmen to migrate to fresh forage, rather than settle down around well sites. Many of the sedentary areas, the hardest hit, are the overgrazed areas around the wells.

Texas Tech did not agree that a transmigration zone was essential in this region - that with some immigration and agricultural development the pastoral lands could increase in productivity. Note was made that, in fact, 80% of Niger's people are presently sedentary and only 20% nomadic.

Don Stoops reported that The World Bank has made a recent economic study of Niger and expressed the belief that though a ranch scheme is technically feasible, it is economically impractical. At a cost of approximately $25,000 per family, the Niger Government could not afford such an undertaking. Such massive funding would have to come from a consortium of outside donors and would have to be continued over a very long period of time. The Bank feels it is wrong to encourage countries to take on projects they cannot afford to maintain and that lead them further away from self-sufficiency. It agreed with AID's doubts as to the replicability of the Texas Tech scheme.

The UNDP echoed the views of the Bank and further raised questions of a sociological nature. It spoke of programs in Chad which had been deterred by dissention among tribes, regions, and divergent cultural and economic interests. The recently established cooperative relationship among 6 Sahel nations for the eradication of tsetse is a tenuous one. Serious doubt was voiced with regard to getting African governments to impose restrictions on nomadic tribesmen or the governments being able to enforce them without serious societal repercussions. Africare was convinced, however, that the Niger Government is determined to establish range management controls in which fencing would be an integral part. He stated that the concerned community should take advantage of the receptivity to such controls brought about by the drought - that when the rains come, it may be another 10 years before such cooperation can be achieved again.

There was general agreement that grazing controls are imperative in the Sahel. If sedentary farming is to be promoted, such a component should be in the southern savannah region where it is more economical. It was suggested that the Texas Tech scheme utilize two ranch sites, one in the north (Sahel) and the other in the south (Savannah), complementing one another. Cow-calf herds could be bred and developed in the northern area and immature stock could be moved from the dry Sahel to, say, a 2,000-3,000 acre-ranch site in the south. Again, note was made of the ever-decreasing weight and age of animals reaching the slaughterhouses during the past 15-20 years because herdsmen cannot find feed for their expanding herds.

John J. McKelvey noted that from an ecological point of view the tsetse fly is the main impediment to cattle movement in Africa, and AID described

a proposed tsetse eradication program in Mali involving combinations of aerial and/or ground spraying.

Pino expressed the need for dealing with the long-range, overall problems of the Sahelian region. Texas Tech commented that while its contract with Africare ended with the conclusion of this meeting, it agreed that a number of the suggestions offered might be of value as alternatives to their suggested approach. Among these, grazing controls without peripheral fencing and the complementary north/south ranch sites suggested by Abercrombie.

Hopper of IDRC emphasized his conviction that strong commitments must be made on the part of Sahelian nations to support and enforce the measures necessary to restore their lands. He would like to see a good deal more discussion and agreement with the governments and a greater expression of commitment on their part than has been evidenced to date. Africare's Kennedy felt assured of Niger's sense of commitment, having just returned from meetings with that government's officials who expressed a deep concern for the 1 1/2 million people in its refugee camps.

Ochs, speaking of the World Bank's project in Mali in this field, noted the need for a strong authority at the head of such programs. The Bank's Mali program will have as a key objective determination of ways to control grazing. It will include animal health improvement (vaccination, etc.) watering facilities, and monitored wells, extension services, high-level training of Malinese, marketing systems and a small municipal hospital. The project area is a good one with enormous grazing potential. However, Ochs expressed the belief that one cannot count on the government, the army or the pastoral peoples themselves to exercise restraint or enforce grazing controls.

As the morning session came to a close, Dr. Bolling reiterated some of the points which had been expressed and asked that the afternoon's discussions consider which of these points private and public funding agencies should give highest priority to. These included: (1) seeding around wells, (2) more wells, (3) irrigated agriculture, (4) control of tsetse fly, (5) roads running north and south (rather than east and west) to conform with traditional transmigration movements between Savannah and Sahel, (6) government controls, (7) programs for pastorals, (8) fattening of immature cattle, and (9) improvement of marketing systems.

LUNCHEON - Dining Room A

AFTERNOON SESSION

President Murray confirmed that while their feasibility study had been confined to a specific project, Texas Tech would support the broader views expressed and would be pleased to join with any group that might undertake programs to resolve the Sahel's problems. He invited those present to a symposium on arid lands to be held at Lubbock, Texas, on October 14 (announcements will be mailed to all present by Texas Tech).

D. Stoops of the World Bank noted a recent FED* conference on the Sahel at which an unofficial Bank "think piece" had been presented. It was a "Proposal for a Cooperative Effort to Rationalize the Livestock Industries of the Sahel" - a coordinated investment program aimed at reaching 250,000 pastoral families of the Sahel by semi-intensive range development projects over the next five years. Copies of this paper were distributed to those present. Stoops reported that the Bank is meanwhile moving ahead with other specific programs in Mali, Kenya, and Ethiopia. In dealing with the Sahel, country by country,

*The Common Market's Development Fund

Stoops urged that a comprehensive approach be used which would relate to all countries. Teams of highly qualified people are essential and each donor agency must be permitted his own particular development activities in the overall effort.

Meimaris reviewed Bank surveys of both short- and long-term irrigation potentials in the Sahel. Major studies of such undertapped sources as the Niger and Senegal Rivers are being supported by various agencies and should continue. $200 million has been committed for irrigation schemes that would combine cultivation of fodder crops along rivers with irrigation of inland rangelands. Rotation would involve periodic fodder cultivation in the rangelands.

IDRC stressed the urgency of immediate rehabilitation of the range and the ultimate need to develop a base for Sahel nations to meet future droughts which weather records over time indicate are cyclical.

UNDP described a fundamental need for the training of Africans to continue development efforts once assistance agencies pull out. The collapse of FAO programs upon termination of FAO supervision was noted. Africare voiced two serious questions: (1) are we, the donor and assistance agencies, devising programs that these countries want? (2) what, in fact, is the level of commitment on the part of African governments? Support must be assured not only by the governments but by the people as well. The influence of tribal leaders was recognized; governments can enforce controls only if tribal chiefs are convinced of results. The direct, personal understanding, acceptance, and involvement of the Sahelian people is essential. If the Sahel is to be restored, its governments and its people must make the ultimate decision and commitment.

Sterling Wortman affirmed the consensus that something can and must be done about the broader, long-term problems of Sahelian survival. The resources are available in the world community and the idea of a long-term group approach merits follow-up, perhaps very quickly. Such a group should concern itself immediately with range restoration and return of pastorals to self-sufficiency, said Wortman. Providing funding and technical assistance, the group might be reinforced by a technical advisory board (like TAC) and a highly mobile team of specialists concerned with immediate identification of appropriate action programs. This effort should include a major training component for and staff input from the Africans themselves. Over time, its programs should become institutionalized.

Bolling asked those agencies present if they would be interested in forming a loosely-knit, informal group - a sort of consultative committee of organizations concerned about the Sahel - that would start pulling data together, developing ideas, setting up meetings, and establishing sustained communications and initiative. Hardin called for cooperation and participation not just of foundations but of governments and assistance agencies (UNDP, AID, World Bank, etc.). There was discussion on how long it might take to get such an effort underway.

Hopper advised that the organizations "to move" are not the donor and development agencies but the governments (recipient and donor) whose cooperation is crucial to success of any effort. He feels one would find a receptivity on the part of many governments, but other steps are needed first:

(1) Analyze the data on the Sahel - What has been done? What is being done?

(2) Articulate a coherent "vision" - What can and must be done? Develop this vision in the form of a report/presentation of the approaches that should be used to rehabilitate the Sahel, in the short- and in the long-terms (with perhaps a 25- even a 50-year perspective in mind).

(3) Consult and confer with the donor agencies - develop a program stressing continuous action, and establish the basis for dialogue that would lead to identification of a consultative group of private foundations, assistance agencies, etc.

(4) Consult individually with the heads of multilateral development agencies, regional labs, governments, private organizations, etc.

(5) Call a meeting - in, say, 12-18 months, of all these agencies and organizations expressing an interest in some sort of cooperative action in the Sahel.

It was agreed that the interest has been expressed, and all confirmed their interest in taking part in the Sahelian undertaking, and in accelerating the dialogue for determining future steps. JAP agreed to be the "contact" over the coming months and gel suggestions for action. In the meantime it was agreed that there was no reason short-term projects should not go forward.

Drs. Bolling and Pino thanked all present for their participation and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Rapporteur: Patricia Evans

A G E N D A

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9:30 a.m. - Board Room, The Rockefeller Foundation

Hosts: The Lilly Endowment, Inc.
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Discussion Report Presentation: Texas Tech. University

Welcome and Introductions

Convening of the Meeting - Dr. Landrum Bolling

Presentation of the Texas Tech. Report

(LUNCHEON)

Discussion of Sahelian Problems

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