

1. BACKGROUND TO THE GUIDE

The origin of this Guide to Technology Transfer can be traced to the Rural Technology Meeting organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat with the Government of Tanzania in Arusha, Tanzania in August 1977. At that meeting more than 100 items of locally made equipment from all countries of East, Central and Southern Africa, as well as some from West Africa, India and Papua New Guinea, were brought together and tested in the field by participants drawn from all the countries of Commonwealth Africa. The participants also had the opportunity to compare experiences of tackling the technical, economic and administrative problems of getting appropriate equipment from the drawing board to the factory bench, and thence out to the users.

The Arusha Meeting was effective in opening people's eyes to the wide range of implements designed and made in the countries of the region. Though most countries still depend heavily on imported agricultural equipment from the developed world, the meeting showed that many of these imports are high cost, inappropriate to countries' needs, difficult to maintain in remote rural areas, and that they could to a large extent be replaced by locally manufactured alternatives.

Following the meeting there has been some expansion of technology transfer within the region. Countries were able to obtain samples of the items they saw at Arusha which they thought appropriate to their needs. Local manufacture of simple tools - for example ox-ploughs, harrows, tool bars and water pumps - has expanded in some countries. Plans have been drawn up in other countries for local manufacture under licence of more complex items such as small tractors. Exchange visits have been arranged to promote further the spread of information between countries.

But the barriers to communication and technology transfer are still very strong. Even when countries know the equipment they want, and have found out where it is made within the region, logistical obstacles, customs barriers and financial restrictions often prevent them from obtaining it. It is frequently easier to purchase from established suppliers through established trade routes in Europe, than from a manufacturer just over the border in a neighbouring territory.

This Guide has been prepared to help to break down such barriers. Its publication has been delayed to await the achievement of independence in Zimbabwe, which is not only an important manufacturer of agricultural equipment in its own right, but also forms an important link in the trade routes between East and Central Africa on the one hand, and Central and Southern Africa on the other.

In East Africa the demise of the East African Community has left countries cautious about unequal exchanges with their neighbours, but no less conscious of the need for developing mutually beneficial trading relationships within the region. In Central and Southern Africa the establishment of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference, emerging from the grouping of Front Line States forged in the Zimbabwe Liberation War, has the objective of reducing economic dependence on South Africa and strengthening economic integration between the member countries. The authors of this Guide therefore expect that the information it contains will fall on fertile ground; they trust that it will prove useful both to manufacturers and to users of agricultural equipment in East, Central and Southern Africa.

Comments on any part of the publication, including its usefulness, shortcomings and suggestions for improvement, would be welcomed and should be sent to:

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