

Some Problems, Some Solutions

The end of last year saw vast swarms of locusts descend across the drylands of West Africa destroying much of the harvest; the rains this year, though better than last, were still barely adequate for traditional rain-fed agriculture; markets, due to cheap imports, remain crippling bad; the cost of fuel, fertilisers and other inputs continue to rocket; and farmers' organisational, managerial and agronomic abilities still remain inadequate for the more intensive farming systems they are increasingly having to practice.

Some Lateral Thinking

The above seems depressingly negative, but this is not the whole story. Research by Rainbow and partner ADMAPE shows just how very keen farmers are to innovate and maximise the potential of agriculture in their region. Exciting areas identified for us to focus on include: quality seed experimentation and production to increase yields and extend the growing season; promotion of regenerative/organic farming methods to lessen dependence on external inputs; concentration on vegetables, millet and livestock which face less market competition; instigation of a fruit-tree nursery; and researching the export market potential.

The Family Farm

Above all, it is the potential of the family farm and small cooperative that people are keen to develop as a means of providing themselves with the food security and incomes they need in order to keep their communities alive. Working across the community, from women's groups to pastoralists to irrigation farmers, Rainbow and partner ADMAPE are currently in the process of developing a program of work that will incorporate much of the above.

The Year Ahead

The year ahead will see this program evolve in collaboration with American regenerative farming group, The Rodale Institute, whose knowledge and experience in the field of participative agricultural development will help build the capacities of partner ADMAPE and inform their program of work. At this end, Rainbow will be looking at building its profile and support base with talks, a website and perhaps even a party!



Pastoral Peul: The Peul are proud, able cattle herders with a rich history and tradition. Their way of life is threatened by recurrent poor rains. Often they travel 20 miles to water their animals and rely on temporary wells like this one dug in riverbeds. Professionally dug wells and integration with farming are two areas of current research.



The Future: 70% of boys like these in Leqceiba, Mauritania, will go to the city unless agriculture can provide them with realistic livelihoods. As well as working on food security with the very poorest sections of the community, Rainbow's aim is to see an agricultural sector that also has genuine financial incentive.

Funding News

Rainbow's sponsored walks continued in October last year (as they will again in September this year) with top, 'behind-the-scenes' trustee Mark Hudson, trustee Miranda Wilson, ably accompanied by husband Billy, Andrew Snodgrass (again!) and Paul Cullinan (again!) completing 50 miles of Irish rock, bog and pub to raise the astounding figure of £9664. With support from many Trust Funds as well as the great generosity of certain individuals, and as always the sterling fundraising efforts of **Beti Hand**, it has been a successful year, laying the foundations for the next.

Rainbow Development in Africa

Founded in June 2001 as a registered charity with a Trust Deed, Rainbow's core commitments remain:

- to provide direct, grassroots assistance.
- to focus on the causes as much as the results of poverty.
- to maximise cost efficiency by remaining small and tightly focused.
- to foster confidence, independence and self-determination amongst Africans.



Results: Utilising regenerative methods learned from ADMAPE, Amadou works a plot of land on one of the many irrigation schemes. Instead of mono-cropping rice, as is usual, here he rotates it with maize, enriching the soil, doubling his cropping and providing extra food for both himself and his livestock.



Solar Powered Irrigation: Suited to small-scale schemes, this form of irrigation has many advantages over the current focus on diesel pumps: virtually no maintenance or running costs; applicable far from rivers; economical when combined with regenerative farming methods. Is this a way forward? Working with Sylla women's cooperative, ADMAPE are looking at its application potential.