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**NEW APPROACHES TO CONSIDER IN CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE - BUILDING ALLIANCES**

COUNTRY PAPER PROPOSED BY ERITREA

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INTRODUCTION

Eritrea is a young country having gained independence from colonial rule in 1991 after 30 years of armed struggle. Full international recognition of independence was achieved in 1993. However, in 1998 Eritrea suffered a further 2 years of bitter war with its neighbour, Ethiopia. These wars and repeated droughts have placed an enormous strain on the national economy. Eritrea has a GDP per capita of US\$200 (1999) and is ranked 159th/174 of the world's poorest countries (UNDP Human Development Report (2000)). During the most recent war with Ethiopia almost all able-bodied men were conscripted into the armed forces and much of the country's limited financial resources were directed towards the pursuit of the conflict.

In spite of these difficulties in the recent past, Eritrea has once again resumed implementation of the strategy for reconstruction of infrastructures and other assets and has been obliged to undertake a programme for the resettlement of displaced persons and returning refugees. Much effort has been made in capacity building in the field of disease prevention and eradication, up grading the inspection and laboratory techniques capacity building. These are in fact, helpful in producing nutritious, quality and safe food, which is main goal of this forum.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Agriculture forms the backbone of the economy of Eritrea, however, the country experiences a recurrent structural food deficit, it has a very limited resources base and more than 70% of the population live in poverty. Thus the government places a high priority on rural development. The overall objectives are to achieve greater food security and raise farming incomes.

The agricultural sector has a fair progress in agricultural output from 1994-1998. This agricultural output had shown that Eritrea was stepping towards self-sufficiency in food. This economic growth had been due to the application of technical aid, introduction of mechanized farming and proper use of land use.

During the implementation of the medium term phases of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (1993-2000) the strategy adopted by the Ministry of agriculture was to provide subsidized inputs and services and to assist the establishment of the private sector. It was the government's intention to gradually withdraw from the distribution of inputs and marketing of products in the year 2000 when Eritrea was supposed to have entered its long-term development phase. The recent war (1998-2000) is blamed for serious delays in achieving these objectives.

LIVESTOCK POLICY

Livestock play a particularly important role in the rural economy since cattle, sheep, and to a lesser extent donkeys and camels, form the most important capital asset to many rural households. However, animal capital is risky in this environment where heavy loss occurs due to lack of forage in dry years. The relative importance of livestock ownership is determined by the farming system. In the agro-pastoralist farming system of the highland areas where crop production is the dominant agricultural activity, cattle are kept largely for draught power but also contribute to the productivity of the system through the supply of manure. Few cattle remain at the household during the cropping season, as almost all-available land is cultivated. At this time most of the cattle from the central highland areas migrate to the eastern escarpment. In the higher potential areas closer to urban markets there exists the opportunity to exploit dairy production with exotic cross dairy animals on a semi-intensive zero/limited grazing management system relying on forage cultivation.

In pastoralistic or transhumant systems, which characterize the extensive dry lowland areas, sheep and goats are the most important capital asset but also provide milk for subsistence nutrition and cash through the sale of male and older animals. Livestock development policy is contained within the Animal Resources Investment Sub-programme, which constitutes a sub-programme of the Agriculture programme. The main objective of the animal resources sub-programme is to increase productive efficiency, especially among smallholder farmers in order to achieve the following policy objectives.

- Increase the supply of animal origin proteins and nutrients;
- Promote livestock ownership and increase production;
- Stimulate both small and medium scale processing of livestock products and by-products;
- Encourage export of animal products and by-products; and
- Increase supply of draught power;
- The stated specific objectives of the sector are:

a) Livestock service and input supplies:

- Prevent and control animal diseases of economic and public health importance, through improved quality of services;
- Improve animal production with an emphasis on the productivity of the individual animal vis-à-vis the increase in animal numbers, and upgrade the input supply required for production;
- Develop the traditional livestock production system with emphasis in the potential areas of the lowlands, where pastoralism of various forms is in practice, through efficient use of natural rangelands;
- Develop the quality standards of animal products and by-products.

b) Research and Livestock Services:

- Develop realistic animal health and production research capacity based on actual knowledge of the conceptual setting and with clear aims to solve the problems of livestock farmers;
- Establish high quality standards of animal services to meet the needs of farmers in the different production management systems such as the traditional (pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, sedentary) and the commercial small/medium scale;
- Establish effective link with the Agricultural Research and Human Resources Development Department so that animal research will be carried out on the constraints identified by the ARD;

c) Legislation, Land use and farmer's security

- Design appropriate legislation aimed to promote animal production, be appropriate to the Eritrean conceptual setting;
- Promote land and water security for animal production purposes on equal to the land use planning for cropping and vegetation;
- Facilitate farmer security from natural causes;
- Develop a credit scheme which is easily available to livestock farmers with emphasis on small-holders;

d) Marketing and Infrastructure

- Improve marketing systems for animals, animal products and by-products, particularly that of export;
- Improve infrastructure and viable tariff system for animal processing and marketing in order to create a positive atmosphere for animal production, and;
- Develop pricing structure for animal products that would favor competition.

The strategies which are being implemented in order to achieve these objectives are broadly based on available resources and are determined largely through agreements with external funding sources and donor agencies, principally the African Development Bank (ADB), through the National Livestock Development Programme (NLDP), DANIDA through the Agricultural Sector Support Programme

(ASSP) and the EU through the Pan-African control of Epizootic Diseases Programme (PACE). an IFAD project targeting the southwestern lowlands (Gash Barka region) is planned to commence in 2002.

The main opportunities that have been identified to achieve the livestock policy objectives lie in development of semi-intensive small-holder dairy systems based on major urban markets for milk, improved backyard and semi-commercial poultry production through disease control and improved nutrition and rangeland management and increased production from pastoralist and transhumant small ruminant production systems.

It is strongly perceived that there exists an opportunity to increase production of sheep and goats for export through better utilization of existing natural pastures, the development of improved pastures and forage and the use of crop residues, improved marketing infrastructures including appropriately located and priced slaughter facilities.

In relation to the delivery of animal health services the following are also stated policy objectives:

The Government will take the responsibility to controlling nationally important diseases, in particular Class 1 scheduled diseases such as Rinderpest, Foot and Mouth disease, CBPP, Rabies, PPR, and/or any other disease which may require state intervention in the national interest;

Clinical treatment, vaccination and inoculations against other scheduled diseases such as Hemorrhagic septicemia, Brucellosis, Newcastle disease, African Horse sickness, Trypanosomiasis, Blackleg, Pox, and activities such as Artificial Insemination, and bull testing which have immediate direct benefit to the farmer will be the responsibility of the individual farmer.

Government will encourage private veterinary practices and community-based animal health care in order to provide farmers ready access to both animal health and production services.

In trying to address the new approaches to consider in capacity building and technical assistance-building alliance, Eritrea having drafted food control policies, is facing the difficulties of reviving the deteriorated infrastructures of food processing and production.

To safeguard the society from food born diseases all necessary standardized food inspection materials, infrastructures, and trained or skilled manpower is required.

But Eritrea as a new country with all its institutional frame work destroyed by the war is unable to deal with this problems. It needs support of the necessary money, know-how, and technology. In this field of food safety programme, all foods imported and exported must be checked and controlled at the port of entries through effective quarantine services. But this is possible only if material and technical support is available and peace is ensured.

The existing food control system, including the food safety and quality control procedures and laws are inadequate to address the many present and future needs of Eritrea.

In particular, for export oriented food products the food quality control needs strengthening in terms of upgrading skills/training, equipment and appropriate laws for application. At present there is no systematic food quality control measures in real terms, with such activities spread over different ministries (Health, agriculture, fishing industries.) Only basic food control measures and traditional inspections are being practiced.

Quality control laboratory is non-existing in the Veterinary Laboratories. Moreover pharmaceutical products, biologics or vaccines, animal products are imported freely without certifying or testing their safety and efficacy. At present the Animal Resources Department is working on establishing quality control laboratory as a project. Partial construction of the laboratory building and equipment specifications is expected to be started at the beginning of 2002.

Establishing this laboratory could assure the production of a reliable and accurate international veterinary certificate for pharmaceutical products, biologics animal products produced locally or outside the country. This laboratory would also provide factual evidence of the efficacy of safe guard measures to be taken at each critical point in the animal field and in the food chain.

There is a project by the name of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) that expected to start in 2002. The programme is extremely focused on objectives for achieving fast growth in selected food sub-sectors with thrust towards export, self-sufficient and food security of the country.

Traditional inspection is practiced in slaughterhouses, meat/milk products processing plants with the help of the central laboratory. Most of the existing slaughterhouses are aged counting over 60 years, and are practically manual. Taking this into consideration, renovation and expansion measures are being taken and new slaughterhouses are being established.

Establishing of standardized quarantine stations and checkpoints are also in process.

Eritrea as one of the underdeveloped countries is suffering from:

- the spread of various livestock disease which are of economic and public health importance;
- the border conflict with Ethiopia also is one of the main constraint hindering the progress to control these diseases;
- the shortage of skilled man power, standardised infrastructures and above all high technology are found to be the main handicaps of development.

Eritrea being bordered with Ethiopia and the Sudan, these countries are always under the threat to each other from emerging and re-emerging transboundary diseases, which makes the exchange of information and collaboration in between the neighbouring countries is important as far as food safety is concerned.

Therefore, Eritrea is expecting much from this forum in improving in gaining new approaches to consider in capacity building and technical assistance –building alliance.