



# AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

## ***How does the Agriculture Program help farmers in Africa?***

The Agriculture Program—often known as SG2000—provides the tools and means that have helped 8 million farmers in sub-Saharan Africa increase their crop yields through agricultural development, sometimes two- or even threefold. The program has helped farmers in 15 countries develop self-sustaining agricultural development programs and currently focuses activities in Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, and Uganda.

By increasing the amount of quality food produced, hunger and poverty in developing countries can be lessened, food security enhanced, and national resources protected.

## ***How does the Agriculture Program work?***

Projects undertaken by the Agriculture Program unfold in phases, beginning with establishing better crop production, training extension workers, and then establishing production demonstration plots. Activities then increase to include grain storage, crop processing, and seed production, when appropriate.

In its test plot projects, Agriculture Program staff team with farmers who agree to provide labor and land—1,000 to 5,000 square meters—to try new methods. Working directly with extension workers, farmers gain firsthand knowledge of different technologies and the associated costs.

In each community, 30-40 farmers take part in these test plots. From 1986-2000,

more than 500,000 demonstration plots were established.

## ***What farming methods does the program promote?***

The Agriculture Program promotes both conventional and no-till methods of crop production, as appropriate. In the no-till method, an effective but short-lived herbicide is used to kill weeds, leaving a mulch on top of the soil into which crops can be planted.

## ***What happens to crops after harvest?***

Increasing crop yield only solves part of the problem in Africa. A bumper harvest may be lost because of lack of proper on-farm storage. Without storage, crops must be quickly hauled from local markets to cities or other areas, but roads are poor, and vehicles are scarce and expensive.

Through the Agriculture Program, extension workers have learned how to construct inexpensive but durable one- to two-ton storage bins that give protection against insects and rodents. Proper storage—along with improved handling of harvested grain and chemical treatment against insects—can sharply reduce spoilage. Before these techniques were used, 20 to 40 percent of the yield was lost.

## ***What role do farmers' associations play?***

Farmer groups have better bargaining power in negotiating seed and crop prices and are better able to market their crops.

Farmer associations in Benin, for example, have 35,000 members and have started their own savings and loan programs. Their deposits exceed \$1 million USD, and members are required to make regular deposits. Only members are allowed to



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take out a loan, and strong social and kinship bonds ensure that loans are repaid.

In Ghana, farmers belonging to an association are able to get loans from the national agricultural development bank, and association members are responsible for repayment as a group.