

Government Policies Affecting Grain and Agriculture (contd)

Most of the planned activities are already known. When dealing with grains, we must begin by making good use of our experience, and Tunisia already has considerable experience. The action program will be novel in one important respect, however: the proposed action and measures will all be articulated in a coherent whole, clearly directed as a central objective, which is to increase grain output. This coherence will be strengthened further by an orientation statute that will make developing grain production in suitable areas a national priority.

All the planned activities have been covered by an initial feasibility study, and most of the financing required to implement them has been provided by the VII Plan. Thus the program is "ready to use" and can be set in motion as early as 1987-88 season. The activities are grouped in four sub-programs:

- improving the socio-economic environment and stimulating production;
- developing production technically;
- improving the path downstream from the grain sector;
- adapting institutional support.

As for animal husbandry, the new farm investment code has provided supplementary benefits for priority activities aimed at food self-sufficiency in milk and red meat.

During the 1987-88 crop year, the cattle sector will be consolidated by implementing new, integrated private projects. However, it is important to note the delay in importing purebred cows in 1987 and 1988. The program in the VIIth Plan (6,000 cows) is far from having been achieved. The 4,000 Holstein cows scheduled to have been imported from the United States in 1987 will not arrive until this year (1988). This delay is liable to have adverse effects on the operators participating in the program who had already prepared all the infrastructure for these cattle.

Moreover, despite the encouragement offered for developing this sector, problems persist with both milk and meat price policies.

The countertrade or barter system was introduced by the Tunisian government about four years ago in order to cope with the economic crisis the country was going through. Since 1987, some degree of flexibility has been observed, and there is a gradual move toward finally eliminating this system.

7. Market Prospects - Grains and Oilseeds

The grain program presented jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Farm Production and Food was introduced with the VIIth Plan. The measures planned and the funding provided should make possible a real qualitative leap.

Average annual production over the period 1987-91 may thus be about 13.5 million quintals, as compared to 11.7 in the preceding five-year period. Yield may rise from 13 to 16 quintals per hectare for soft wheat and 8 to 10 quintals per hectare for durum wheat. In 1991, national production should cover 67% of requirements for these two grains.