

## "Challenge for change seminar" focuses on women in Third World

What the liberated women in Canada take for granted, women in developing countries cannot even conceive let alone dream of. This disparity became clear at the recent seminar "Challenge for Change in Third World Agriculture" held in Edmonton and sponsored jointly by the Alberta Institute of Agrologists and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Speaking to some 200 University of Alberta faculty members, regional farm representatives and research scientists, were noted specialists in the field of Third World development.

Canadian food scientist Gordon Yaciuk revealed through a study financed by the IDRC that village women in the northwest African country of Senegal were responsible not only for preparing meals but also for much of the harvesting and processing of food. They have little or no time for self-improvement, leisure, the practice of traditional crafts or the training of children. Yet through the introduction of such mechanized devices as grain threshers, de-hullers and grinders, their work-load could be immensely reduced.

"The social implications of this are far-reaching," said Yaciuk. "On the one hand, the traditional system is tedious, but it provides a social outlet since the dehulling graining operation is often done in a group. The new system allows the woman this same social outlet but less frequently. It does, however, give her free time to use for increasing family income or for family improvement, either by self-education or training of the children."

Dr. Yaciuk's study, part of another IDRC-sponsored program at the National Centre for Agronomic Research, was done among 800 women in eight regions of Senegal. The majority were between the ages of 21 and 50 and were Muslim.

### Nigerian innovation

Carol E. Williams, senior lecturer in rural sociology/home economics at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, gave an example of a mechanical innovation that was effective from the point of view of production, but failed because it did not take into account other factors of village life.

She described the introduction of two types of machine for extracting palm oil in Nigeria. One, a hand-operated-hydraulic press, produced four imperial gallons



*In the rush to increase food production, little attention has been paid to the needs of rural women in the Third World. New and appropriate systems of technology should be adapted to age-old practices of farming and food preparation, freeing rural women from drudgery and allowing them more of the benefits of development. (Above) Village women in Senegal.*

of oil from only 15 to 20 heads of palm fruits, compared to 30 which were needed with the traditional method.

So well did the press work that it was used 24 hours a day by residents of several hamlets surrounding the village where it was located. The problem was that the press required a lot of water, and as a result of its constant use the village well could not cope with all the needs.

In addition, the press required a man's strength to operate it and when the two farmers who were employed to handle it were busy on their farms, the press fell idle.

In the case of the other palm oil machine, sufficient research was not done; it was later found that the palm kernel nuts, which were the women's source of income, were broken in the machine. The women objected and, as a result, the

machine was abandoned.

Farm women want to adopt scientific methods to improve their lives, said Mrs. Williams. But researchers and policy-makers of developing countries have to devote more attention to the consequences of change if they are to help them do so.

### Filippino females housekeepers

Dr. Gelia Castillo, who occupies the chair of rural sociology in the University of the Philippines, told the seminar that the most significant activity of women in her country was housekeeping.

"Among Filipino females, ten years old and over," she said, "only about a third are in the labour force while almost half of them are classified as housekeepers."

Instead of a reduction of females in farming there has been an upward trend, from 53.6 per cent in 1965 to 59.7 per cent in 1974, Dr. Castillo said. Seventy-seven per cent of females in agriculture are employed in rice and corn farming, mostly as unpaid family labour.

There also are more working wives in rural than in urban areas, Dr. Castillo said. "Contrary to the media image, the more affluent and urbanized areas like Manila and surroundings have fewer households where the wife is a source of income. It is in the poorer and more rural regions where wives play the breadwinner role, even if supplementary and contributory to the husband's earnings."

Dr. Castillo said the average Filipino wife had five years' schooling and that less than 3 per cent had any vocational training. The average wife spends more than 29 days a month and eight hours a day or more on housekeeping. Only 2 per cent have helpers.

"In designing strategies to involve low-income women in community and national development programs, we must not forget that livelihood and household activities occupy the major part of their daily lives," she said. "Free time is not as free and as available as we often assume it is. They are not always at leisure to benefit from educational programs, even if such were designed purportedly for their own welfare."

The seminar "Challenge for Change in Third World Agriculture" was part of a series organized by the IDRC as a continuing effort to inform the Canadian public about the current state of development research.

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