

Canadian "green thumbs" help restore Chinese grasslands

Sales of prairie-grown wheat have made Canada famous as a granary to the world. Less well-known, but equally important in world food security is another Canadian agricultural export: farming experience accumulated in building one of the world's most successful agricultural industries.

Typical of the way in which the Canadian "green thumb" is being put to good use far from home is the selection of Agrodev Canada, an Ottawa-based firm, to deal with a complex agricultural problem in three of the northeastern regions of China — the provinces of Hebei and Heilongjiang and the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia.

The area, grazing country, has for thousands of years supported large numbers of cattle, sheep and horses. In recent years, China's population growth and the introduction of the modernization program in the region have boosted livestock demand and packed more animals into the same grazing areas. The result, in some areas, has been a thinning of grass and other vegetation, less fodder for livestock, and the threat of reduced earnings for the people who depend on the animals.

In 1981, worried about the future ability of these ranges to support livestock, China and the International Fund for Agricultural Development initiated a drive to rehabilitate the endangered pastures and sent out a world-wide call for consulting advice. The company



Map shows area in northeastern China where Agrodev Canada is sharing its agricultural expertise.

finally chosen for the three-year assignment was Agrodev Canada Inc.

Current projects

The firm is one of the few consulting companies that specialize in agricultural and aquacultural projects and in the application of modern farming and fisheries development techniques in developing countries. Its current projects include assignments in Bolivia, Oman, the Sudan and the Bahamas.

Agrodev's China project group (21 people in 1982, 12 this year) arrived in China in the spring of 1982 and included animal nutritionists, seed experts and pasture specialists.

Over the past two years, the Canadian group has criss-crossed the three project regions, working closely with Chinese government officials, local communes and individual households. The terms of reference included diagnosis of the ailments afflicting the northern ranges, prescription of remedies and training of technicians for long-term rehabilitation work.

In all project areas the basic task is to find the best possible balance between livestock numbers and grazing acreage. However the management problems vary from region to region.

Laying groundwork

The main mission is to lay the groundwork for long-term management of the ranges. Agrodev has been working with local commune representatives on the selection of seed, fertilizer, machinery and other inputs. Its consultants also advise on range management strategy — for example on plans for redistributing livestock in patterns that will allow overgrazed areas to recover.

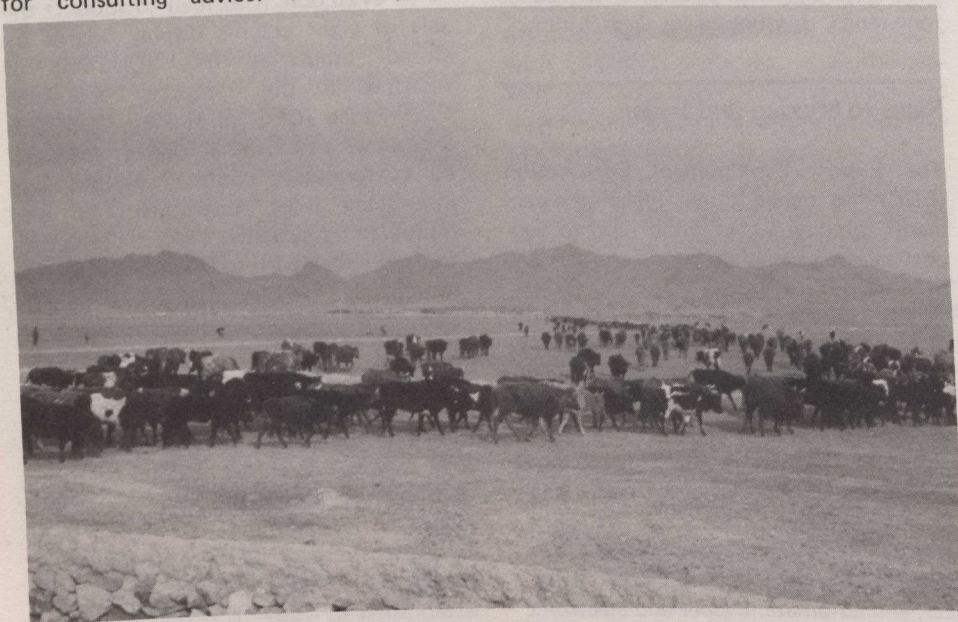
The group is also helping to train commune technicians and individual farmers for the long-term job of restoration. In the 1982 and 1983 seasons, Canadian consultants conducted 70 lectures and seminars throughout the three regions. Next May, six more Agrodev specialists will leave for China for the final year of the company's involvement in the project.

Recognition for Canadian firm

DAF Indal Limited of Mississauga, Ontario, has been granted US Navy validation for its management system for a \$112-million contract for Canadian designed and manufactured high technology helicopter guidance systems that was awarded to the company in September 1982 by the Canadian Commercial Corporation. DAF Indal Limited is the first company outside the United States ever to receive such recognition.

The company has been commended for its performance in the current contract program, which has achieved cost savings for the US Navy of over \$3.8 million, or more than 10 per cent, over the 1983 figure, while meeting all delivery targets.

The contract, for 31 helicopter Recovery, Assist, Secure and Traverse (RAST) Systems, is expected to generate \$400 million by 1990.



The area is traditionally good grazing country for cattle, sheep and horses. But in recent years, it has seriously deteriorated, threatening the livelihood of thousands of people.