



**New Book
on
Agricultural Development**

**Developing Smallholder
Agriculture**

– A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE –

By Richard L. Tinsley

AgBé ; 2004, 500 pages, 24 Tables, 30 Figures, 30 Graphs, 70 Photos, 25 Boxes. US \$ 49.

This book presents a synthesis of nearly three decades of work with smallholder producers and their communities. It takes the farming systems work of the 1980s and 1990s a step further, and pays

particular attention to those factors and issues that have proven to constrain agricultural development in developing economies.

Developing Smallholder Agriculture is thus a very practical book. As a synthesis of experience from countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the book is not specific to any country. However, most readers should be able to quickly relate the subjects to their country. The photographs and other illustrations, which give examples from many different countries, help this.

Much of the information contained in this book is derived from unpublished project reports. In many ways the book presents lessons learned from farming systems programs as they developed and evolved over the last three decades. The book carefully reviews the hypotheses on which most assistance to smallholders has been based; that is smallholders' failure to fully exploit their physical environment was the result of limited motivation, and a desire to minimize risks by delaying crop establishment until more assured climatic conditions prevailed. It replaces this notion with an appreciation for the limited resources smallholders have at their disposal to manage their land which often results in a six to eight week extended crop establishment and low yields.

For this reason the book concentrates less on the agronomy and soil science of the author's professional background, but more on the various factors that impinge on the farmers' ability to implement more productive crop husbandry. In so doing, the book promotes looking beyond technology and development. Dissemination concentrates on the supporting services that smallholders need to enable them to enhance their crop management. It emphasizes the importance of village-level, private micro-enterprises as a cost-effective means of assisting smallholders, and questions the potential of governments and public sector institutions in providing these support services.

The book's perspective is that of a technical assistance advisor working through host country clients, for the ultimate benefit of the smallholder producer. As such, it addresses many of the stereotype ideas that advisors confront when working with host institutions.

Developing Smallholder Agriculture is one of the few books that directly addresses practical problems in the overall context of the socio-economic, political and technical environment of the smallholder. Forging links between different subjects and disciplines creates a holistic approach. The book uses both a scientific *and* a practical approach, and a specialized *and* a general point of view.

The book is aimed at a wide readership: depending on the background and interests of the reader, different chapters can be used as a textbook for students, a handbook for extension workers and consultants, and a resource book for development practitioners, researchers and policy makers. It is sufficiently technical for the agricultural scientist as well as being sufficiently general for decision-makers and specialists in related fields.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Dick Tinsley is an emeritus professor of Colorado State University who spent his entire career as a technical advisor to smallholder development projects. He worked for long periods in Vietnam, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Malawi, Thailand, and Tanzania. He also participated in short-term assignments to Pakistan, Zambia, Ivory Coast and Iraq. In addition, he contributed to a farming systems research and development guidebook. In all of these assignments he was deeply involved with smallholder farming communities, extensive informal interviewing of farmers, and facilitating off and on-farm research programs. He currently teaches a class in agricultural development at Colorado State University and does short-term consulting.

The permanent address of the author is: Soil and Crop Science Department, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, 80523 USA; E-mail: rtinsley@lamar.colostate.edu.

CONTENTS

1. Characteristics of Smallholder Producers

This Chapter introduces smallholders as individual entrepreneurs, who despite limited education, are skilled practitioners of agronomy. They are usually constrained by circumstances outside their control and have limited resources such as labor. This results in prolonged crop establishment that limits their prospects for adopting time sensitive innovations. The Chapter develops the concept of financially-suppressed economies, and how this impacts on farm management.

2. Determinants of Smallholder Systems

This Chapter reviews the physical, economic, social and biological determinants of farming systems; how they interact, in terms of what can be produced; what is produced; how well it is produced; and who has control over the different determinants. It ends with a discussion of rainfall variability and the extent it can be used as a planning tool. A case study of rain-fed rice in the Philippines is given.

3. The Role of Land Tenure

This Chapter evaluates land tenure including ownership, cash rent, share rent, customary, communal, landlessness, etc, and how this impacts on crop production and prospects for long-term investments in protecting natural resources. The Chapter also examines the relative well-being of estate workers and independent smallholders.

4. Support for Smallholders

A major Chapter that looks at both private and public sector support services. It contents that the private sector is more effective, while big parastatal companies and corporative societies are usually detrimental to smallholder production, because of high overheads. The Chapter divides the private sector into small, family-based village enterprises that are in direct contact with the farmers, and large corporate enterprises that eventually process and distribute the produce. Case studies are from Malawi for the public sector and from Nepal for the private sector.

5. Technology Transfer

This Chapter contents that extension efforts are now more an instrument of government policy aimed at supporting a suppressed price policy than a program to promote farmers' well-being. The Chapter looks at how much information is actually flowing through informal channels and how this can be enhanced. A discussion of integration, and how both innovations and the farming environment can be adjusted to make the innovations more acceptable to farmers, is offered.

6. Sustainability of Smallholders Systems

This Chapter takes a developing world definition of sustainability as "the need to balance food security with environmental protection". The chapter reviews the trade-offs between the power required to protect the natural resources and the fossil energy based inputs to assure a commercial yield. A next section looks at the issues surrounding nutrient cycling, composting, etc. It evaluates the ratio of the land from which nutrients must be collected to that on which they need to be applied to obtain sustainable yields. The final section looks at the use and abuse of insecticides. Examples are from India, Vietnam, and Thailand.

7. The Role of Mechanization

This Chapter emphasizes the importance of mechanization in providing farmers with the necessary resources to cultivate enough land in a timely manner. The emphasis is on privately owned contract mechanization versus public ownership. Also discussed is how the smallholder environment reduces the equipment's efficiency because of difficulty in accessing small fields and excessive turning once in the small fields. Private contract mechanization is discussed for land preparation in Egypt, Pakistan, and Iraq.

8. Irrigation Development

This Chapter looks at how irrigation can be provided to smallholders through large schemes: Egypt and Pakistan are the main example. It looks at pragmatic issues such as the minimum amounts of water needed to push a wetting front across a field; at water depletion; and the substantial period between crops in which little irrigation water is used. The emphasis is on bottom-up planning as an effective management tool.

9. Practicalities of Smallholder Farming

A Chapter discussing various concerns for those assisting smallholders. Items discussed are: casual crop management, certified and hybrid seed versus retained seed, soybeans, intercropping, soil testing, impact of HIV/AIDS, etc.

10. Assisting Smallholders

A summarizing Chapter that looks at the impact of various factors on developing projects aimed at assisting smallholders. It focuses on smallholders as individual entrepreneurs that are more restricted by labor and other shortages than knowledge or motivation. The Chapter reviews how projects might concentrate more on off-farm support services than on technology development and promotion, and the mechanism to effectively do so.

ORDER FROM

Europe AgBé Publishing P.O.Box 1 B-1050 Brussels, Belgium Phone/Fax:++32-2-687.33.76 E-mail: agbe@skynet.be	The USA Balogh Scientific Books 1911 N. Duncan Road Champaign, IL 61822, USA Phone:++1 (217)355-9331 Fax: ++1 (217)355-9413
---	---

In the US also available directly from the Author at Rtinsley@lamar.colostate.edu