

Agriculture in the Dhofar Region, Oman (6) - Continued from the preceding page)

What I would like to urge here is that the following points should be considered before discussing the problems of agriculture in Dhofar:

- 1) The technologies available in Oman are still at the developing stage and there is a significant manpower shortage. This can be strongly felt in the technological sectors in the fields of agriculture, cattle farming and fisheries. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to realize a rapid Omanisation (the employment of more Oman nationals as opposed to foreign workers) in the technological sectors. It is necessary to forcefully improve the level of Oman national's technological capabilities by introducing good technicians and technologies.
- 2) It seems necessary to specifically draw up development plans (including those for environmental and resource conservation) sector by sector, embracing all the relevant sectors. Within the comprehensive development plan, sub-plans can be drawn up and carried out in each geographical region (such as the coastal, mountain and Nejd regions) as well as under each sector. It is also necessary at the same time to create a coordinating body, under which relevant authorities can be systematically positioned and their roles in the development plan be made clear.
- 3) It is difficult to convince local farmers to co-operate with the measures imposed upon or explained to them by using words alone, as they tend to respond defensively to outside forces. Even if the objective is said to secure assets for their future, they tend to oppose any restrictions on their vested rights which may be required to achieve the objective. Therefore, it is necessary to consider ways to satisfactorily demonstrate the benefits of planned measures in a way that satisfies and convinces them of their necessity when seen from a longer term perspective.

My conclusion is that, in considering the agriculture of Dhofar, not only agricultural issues but also more fundamental problems have to be addressed. This might be a very personal, biased view, however, I cannot help but feel that what can be realistically achieved will only solve a very small portion of the many problems which I feel need to be addressed if sustainable agriculture is to be achieved in the region.

To be honest, it is difficult to think of concrete solutions. From the viewpoint of those who investigate the region in the hope of planning a development path, it is, firstly, very important to grasp the quantity and the scale of the demand-supply cycle of agricultural products within the region (as discussed in the previous issue). This is a precondition before pursuing sustainable agriculture within the context of the limited water and other environmental resources of Dhofar. Also, it is necessary to devise methods to give incentives for technicians to venture into research by providing with them some new technologies and machines. It is also important to demonstrate the result of research in a way that is understandable to everybody. Moreover, what is important from the standpoint of local farmers is to have somebody (or some organization) who can be trusted and who can mediate between technicians and developers and themselves. I think they would like to have some reliable people who could participate and work with them rather than merely provide support.

What is clear is that, in search of sustainability, local farmers should also understand that they have to be ready to sacrifice something among themselves. However, I think that the burden of such a sacrifice may be alleviated by adjusting their sense of values (for example, suggesting they reduce the number of camels which are less useful in an economic sense today and increase the number of cows) or introducing new technologies and government subsidies. This is not a satisfactory summary of the entire series, but what I would like to add in conclusion is that the major actors here have to be Oman nationals. The precondition for any action should be that Oman nationals themselves perceive and become concerned with their problems. Outsiders are never anything but supporters and cannot take real actions in their place.



**The Jabal
region**

**The Nejd
region**



**Traditional
farming
in Salalah**



**Large-scale
pasture
cultivation**