

POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR AGRICULTURAL THE SCOPE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND ECONOMISTS IN LIBYA

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INTRODUCTION

Agricultural economics is an applied phase of economics which focus on problems related to agriculture. The development of this applied science extends back to about 1900 when it began in United States as a study of farm management. Professors of agriculture in areas such as agronomy and horticulture as well as general economists were attracted to work in this new field of agricultural interest (Snodgrass and Wallace, 1964). Few years later, agricultural economics spread all over the world with different areas of interest such as marketing, policy and econometrics.

This paper is divided into two sections, first is a general description of the scope of agricultural economics and the second section is an attempt to explore the potential demand for agricultural economists in Libya.

THE SCOPE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

The scope of agricultural economics includes different areas of interest, here is the most common list of these areas :

1. Farm Management is concerned with the decision making process of the farm business i.e. what farming enterprise should be engaged in? how large should the farm be ? how much should be produced ? etc. (Castle and Becker, 1967).
2. Agricultural Marketing courses are usually directed to explaining the various marketing functions involved in the flow of goods and services from the farm until they are in the hands of the consumers (Khols, 1967).
3. Farm Finance contains an assessment of the basic economic principles of credit, the nature of interest and other costs of lending and borrowing.
4. Cooperatives. There is a general misconception that cooperatives are the cure of all ills in traditional countries. This, however, is questionable, therefore courses in cooperatives focus on how to measure the value of services offered by a cooperative.
5. Resource Economics is a flourishing branch of agricultural economics, usually divided into land economics and water economics. Land economics course contains a classification of farm land into different regions (by climatic and associated factors affecting land use), the use of tools of economic analysis in studying the efficiency of land tenure and evaluating the land reform measures (Lewis, 1967). Water economics contains the study of policies affecting the use of water resources, economic benefits is assessed for commercial and recreational fishing and cost-benefits analysis of water pollution.
6. Agricultural prices. As agricultural incomes remain low, governmental programs are being developed to support farmers. These programs require price and another analyses. The results are no longer merely academic exercises, they could be bases for governmental programs. Analytical tools are being developed to deal with the price analyses and the electronic computer has become not merely a luxury but a necessity (Shephard, 1968).

7. Agricultural development is a relatively new, deals with the mechanics of agricultural development including the relation of agricultural to industrial growth, the evolution of economic occupation during development, the evaluation of farm unit and the relationship between development and populations. The role of agricultural scientists in agricultural development and factors affecting the efficiency of agricultural institutions. (Lewis, 1967).
8. Agricultural policy is a classical field of agricultural economics, within which value judgement is applied. It includes governmental programs such as support prices, acreage allotment, land retirement etc. (Hathaway, 1964).
9. Production economics. Courses in production economics are attractive to agricultural economists because of two reasons : first, that it employs quantitative method along with economic principles, the layman will hardly be able to follow (regression analysis, linear programming, transportation models, economics of scale etc.), and second, that it offers production economists the promise that farmers problem will be solved through the manipulations of mathematical formulas using experimental data derived from experimental results of farm surveys (Lewis, 1967).
10. Econometrics contains a wide range of activities aimed at applying tools of economic theory and statistical inference to analysis of economic phenomena. It has been taken to include such associated action as the development of methods of collecting economic data, the collection of data itself and the application of empirical results to the problems of farm management, marketing, etc. (Goldberger, 1964).

POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS IN LIBYA

Assuming that science exists to serve the man, therefore the success of agricultural economists depend on their ability to provide meaningful answers to the present and future economic problems of Libya. Services provided by agricultural economists are teaching, research, adult education, advisory and administrative.

TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIBYA

A general agricultural economics course is given at the Faculty of Commerce in Benghazi, Farm Management, Marketing and Co-operation are taught on the undergraduate level at the Faculty of Agriculture. Other supporting courses are also given such as : Principles of Economics, Statistics, Mathematics, Rural Sociology and Extension. At the present time here in Libya demand exceeds by far the supply of agricultural economists. Sources for demand are the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Education, Bank of Libya and may be other public or private agencies.

No sources yet to supply professional agricultural economists in Libya, however, the Faculty of Agriculture could be a good source of supply. The students can major in agricultural economics similar to other majors of plant production, animal production and water and soils. Establishing a special department for agricultural economics is a must to meet this objective of supplying agricultural economists in Libya.

RESEARCH SERVICES

The demand for research services appear to be of growing importance in Libya. Several research projects have been undertaken at the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Commerce, University of Libya, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Planning, Research Center of Bank of Libya and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

As long as the present efforts continue toward developing Libyan agriculture, demand for research services in Agricultural economics continue. Future research efforts should be coordinated between the aforementioned agencies to stimulate cooperation and thereby producing meaningful research.

ADULT EDUCATION, ADVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Other demands for agricultural economists are for adult education (extension) advisory services on management problems of individual farms and marketing firms and administrative services in the public or private agencies. These kinds of services could be the cornerstone of public support for our teaching and research programs.

SUMMARY

Agricultural economists are needed in Libya to find answers to the following questions : 1) Is it economically feasible to desalinate water for irrigation in Libya ? 2) Are the cooperatives improving the marketing and production efficiency of Libyan agricultural products ? 3) What is the efficient approach to manage the required farms from Italians ? Related questions are :

- a) How to evaluate the existing enterprises ?
- b) How to increase the agricultural land within the given funds at hand ?
- c) How to improve agricultural production ?

4) How to make an economic plan for importing and exporting agricultural products in Libya ? 5) Are the farm subsidies from Ministry of agriculture and loans from Agricultural Bank improving Libyan agricultural products ? 6) Does Libya has proper marketing facilities such as paved roads, refrigerated trucks, storage rooms, and processing plants ? Are the processing plants operating efficiently or not Does Libya need more or less of these plants ? Are the perishable products (milk, tomatoe, etc) located with easy access to the markets ? 7) What is the economic impact of rural migration on agricultural production in Libya ? 8) What are the cost and benefits of using farm machinery in Libya ? 9) What is the optimum use of land and water resources in Libya ? (fishing, swimming, camping, golfing, etc).

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