Farming Cooperatives for Subsistence Farmers in Zambezia Province, Mozambique: Promising Practices for a Changing World

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Research and technological advances in production agriculture over the past 50 years have resulted in rapid growth in food production worldwide. The overall state of the world is indeed changing for the better. Although technological advances in production agriculture have raised the world’s carrying capacity to over six billion people, not all people are benefiting from such advances. In a world of abundance, many countries continue to be plagued by malnutrition and starvation. It has been argued that the failure to address malnutrition and hunger worldwide is not a problem of production, but a failure of human systems. Agricultural extension systems, broadly defined, have been highly successful in some countries and dismally inadequate in others. In Mozambique, organizational structures and basic production techniques used elsewhere have far outpaced the current human systems of technology transfer. Currently over 500,000 people in Mozambique are in need of immediate food aid.

Purpose
The purpose of this poster is to visually depict a model for sustainable development through farming cooperatives among subsistence farmers in Zambezia Province, Mozambique.

Major Points
To counter the trend of inadequate food production and distribution in the region, the International Mission Board developed a farming cooperative program in cooperation with subsistence farmers in Zambezia Province, Mozambique. Great interest was shown and 70 farming cooperatives were formed. The objectives of these cooperatives were:

To establish long-term self-sustaining cooperatives
- Under the one-person, one vote principle, each independent cooperative elected a governing body and developed a set of rules and regulations.
- To encourage planning and feedback, meetings at the district level were put into effect
- Adopted a goat distribution scheme modeled on Heifer International’s “pass on the gift” model

To generate increased income from staple crops while implementing improved farming techniques and seed
- Warehoused staple crops for sale during the annual time of scarcity. The adoption of improved varieties of maize, pigeon pea, cowpea, and groundnut.
- Implemented basic farming techniques, such as crop rotation of maize and legumes, composting, and the planting of leucaena for erosion control and soil improvement

To improve the nutritional intake of the association members
- Propagated orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, high in Vitamin A

Conclusion and Educational Importance
Farming cooperatives among subsistence farmers in Zambezia Province, Mozambique, have shown a great deal of promise as a long-term agricultural extension strategy capable of helping address malnutrition and starvation in Mozambique. Additional research is needed on teaching methodologies used for effective communication between change agents and farmers and to develop new ones where these are lacking.