

# AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION DEVELOPMENT IN BOTSWANA : A PROFILE

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## 1. Introduction

An attempt is made to provide a profile of the agricultural library and information development in a sub-Saharan African country-Botswana. Wherever possible areas for regional cooperation in agricultural information, work among the countries within the region have also been pointer out in the paper.

There are four agricultural libraries and one (to be established) documents and information centre, involved in agricultural development in Botswana. All the first four libraries operate in the various research and training institutes under the Ministry of Agriculture. These are:

Ministry of Agriculture Headquarters Library,

The Department of Agricultural Research Library (DAR),

The National Veterinary Laboratory Library,

The Botswana Agricultural College (BAC).

The above are core agricultural library units in their own right. In addition, the National Institute of Documentation and Research (NIDR) of the University of Botswana Library which holds a reasonably good collection on agriculture and its affiliated fields, and the Botswana National Library service can be considered to be of peripheral interest in the composition of the informational infrastructure for the agricultural sector. A brief description of the core libraries follows together with a profile on the involvement of the Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research (SACCAR) in the national and regional agricultural information systems.

## **2. Ministry of Agriculture Library**

The library is very small in size, its service is mainly for the headquarters staff on the ministry. Other staff working in the Ministry's various departments can also make use of the facility, say for lending text-books technical reports, annual reports of the department and ministry's as well as FAO and CAB publications.

However, some of the monographic literature seem to be old and outdated. There is also heavy duplication in the technical and FAO collection. In the mean time, consideration should be given to employ a qualified librarian to run it on an effective and satisfactory scale.

## **3. Department of Agriculture, Research Library**

This library though small in size is still better than any of the others. It is located at about 10 Km, outside (the Capital). Its annual intake of journal is about 30, while monographic stock is nearly 3000 volumes. It stocks over 140 serial publications, plus a considerable amount of non-conventional literature acquired from within and outside Botswana. Primarily, its use is for DAR staff, and in principle researchers from outside the department can also get reference service.

From what has been gathered, this library is not being used as much as one should expect it even by the DAR staff. This can be attributed either to its lack of a librarian or to that most of the research staff are frequently away on field work. Anyway, it needs to be revitalized and made active with the employment of a qualified librarian and other support staff.

## **4. The national veterinary laboratory library**

This is smallest of all the agricultural libraries which is located at the same area like DAR. 10 Km.out of Gaborone. It is housed in a fairly good building and it is supposed to serve the staff of the Veterinary Laboratory and other interested veterinary scientists in the country. Like its counterparts, it requires a trained library staff so as to provide satisfactory service.

## **5. The Botswana Agricultural College Library**

The objective of this library is like any similar institution to serve mainly the students and staff of the college which is offering certificate

and diploma courses. It has a core collection of textbooks, FAO materials, general reference as well as serial publications. Again, some of the textbooks collection have outdated. The technical reports and serials collection include quite valuable items collected from various ministries, mainly Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Local Government and Lands (MLGL), Finance and Development Planning and Ministry of Education. The overall size of the book stock has reached now about 5000 volumes with an annual intake of over 100 journals and magazines.

The BAC library in addition to its community, is also being used by DAR staff. Staff-wise, this is the only library which has a paraprofessional with a diploma in library studies.

The Botswana Agricultural College is also in the process of changing its status from diploma to degree granting institution as a constituent faculty of the University of Botswana. Implementation of the plan is being awaited, although the new Dean for the faculty of agriculture has already been identified and the necessary preparation is being worked out. Obviously this evolutionary change would bring about certain high implication for an overall organisation of the college library systems both in terms of scope of collections development and services.

#### **6. Southern African Centre For Cooperation in Agricultural Research (SACCAR) : Documentation and Information Service Unit**

This new organization was established as a unit to the Southern African Development Cooperation Conference (SADCC) in mid 1985. Both SADCC and SACCAR are located at Gaborone, Republic of Botswana.

SACCAR has as one of its mandates the task of promoting collaborative action among the nine countries to increase agricultural production through developing the research resources of the region.

In addition, it has the specific responsibility for promoting the flow of information in the research sector of SADCC and fostering coordination among national documentation and information services.

The SACCAR documentation and information services unit is however still in its embryonic stage. It is in the process of being established. Two experts in agricultural information work consist the present staff. Other than that, no mention can be made about its stock size

at the moment because there is no substantial collection established by the unit as yet. The nature of the collection required in this regional documentation centre include all current and retrospective literature relating to agricultural research, research policy, feasibility studies and any other grey literature that have pertinence to the Sub Saharan Region. As a short term arrangement, its collection is being added to the DAR library collection (the reason being that the two institutions are located in the same complex). But the acquired materials will be recorded regularly in its own SACCAR Accession list. Eventually, it is envisaged that the SACCAR literature holdings will constitute a regional agricultural information resource.

Finally, by way of concluding the description of the state-of art of the Botswana agricultural library and information services, it would be worth mentioning that at present there is very little cooperation among the libraries of the agricultural sector in Botswana including those under the same ministry (MOA). No one knows what material is held by which library. In my view the whole thing boils down to lack of concern on the part of the principles and directors managing the research and training institutes; and above all lack of trained manpower to run the libraries might have contributed equally if not more in the aspect of lack of resource-sharing and cooperation.

### References

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