

aphorism of old Dean Swift,
the great 18th-century satirist,
that the greatest benefactor
of mankind is the man
who can make two blades of
grass grow where one blade

Bophuthatswana I had the
opportunity of meeting some
such benefactors. But it was
maize, not grass, that they
were growing, and the yield
had increased not twice but
sevenfold. Basically what
had happened was that the
green revolution had been
too long last to an African
area.'

The green revolution is
nowhere in the world of
agriculture. Its origins date
back 30 years and more to a
time when American
agronomists began producing
new, higher-yielding, faster-
growing strains of maize and
other grain crops. The new
strains require elaborate at-
tention, involving the appli-
cation of the proper
chemical fertilizers and pes-
ticides. Introduced into India
in the 1960s the new strains
brought about profound
changes in the agriculture of
the sub-continent. White
farmers in South Africa were
quick to make use of the new
methods.

Too poor

But a revolution of this na-
ture requires a combination
of considerable money to pay for
expensive seeds, fertilizers
and pesticides and techno-
logic knowledge. Most
African farmers

black
were far too poor and ill-in-

Bophuthatswana a way has been found to bring the green revolution to a section of the black peasantry. The innovating force behind Bophuthatswana is Agricor, the Agricultural Development Corporation of Bophuthatswana. Agricor is a para-statal organization, funded entirely by the government of Bophuthatswana on a non-profit-making basis and staffed largely in its higher reaches by white South Africans. Its aim is simply defined: To develop the agricultural potential of Bophuthatswana. It is not intended to replace the old-established Department of

grew before. Recently in.

I HAVE always relished that -

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structed to be able to apply the new methods. Now in

Agriculture, but to supplement the department's activities and to inject a new mood of dynamism.

ment the department's activities and to inject a new mood of dynamism.

Projects, training, agency services, loans. and marketing are the five headings which Agricor uses to define its functions. Projects have to be identified an irrigation scheme here, a maize improvement scheme there, the construction of silos in a third place; then plans have to be drawn up, consultants brought in, managers re-

cruited to help in the initial stages. Every project involves the training of local personnel to take over positions of increasing responsibility. Agency services includes administrative and financial services for already-established co-operatives. Loans are made

available to co-operative:
and to individual farmers
and the corporation's ma-
keting services put at the dis-
posal of the producers of
livestock, fruit and
vegetables.

Described in such formal,
abstract terms, development
policies cannot avoid
sounding dull. Development
becomes exciting only when
you can see it on the ground
and talk to some of the
people directly involved.
Through the kindness of
Agricor's charming and im-
mensely well-informed pub-
lic relations officer, Mrs
Dawn Mokhobo, I was given
the opportunity of visiting
some of the corporation's

| Africa,

projects in Ditsobotla Dis-
trict south of Mafikeng.

Ditsobotla adjoins one of |
the great maize-growing
areas of South Africa. In re-
cent years white farmers
have achieved a yield of 3-4
tonnes a hectare; black farm-
ers using traditional methods
of cultivation have produced
no more than half a tonne a |
hectare. The problem put at
its simplest was to get black
farmers to achieve the same
yield as their white neigh-
bours. (National boundaries,
it should be noted, are con-
spicuous by their absence.
Driving along a road, I would
be told: 'That side's South
this side's
Bophuthatswana.' Clearly
you need to have a very acute
knowledge of local geogra-
phy to know just which coun-
try you are in.)

The organizational method
used to improve African pro-
duction is through a form of
co-operative first worked out
in Israel and known there as

'Green revolution' multiplies
Bophuthatswana maize yields

By ROBIN HALLETT, who was recently lecturing at the University of
Bophuthatswana

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achieved t,

the Moshave system. I was

given some indication of
what such a co-operative
could achieve when I visited
Sheila, which Agrigor re-
gards as its model project.

The Sheila scheme embraces
3700 ha of arable land.

There are 197 farmers on the
scheme. Collectively they
form a primary co-operative;
they all come together in a

general meeting once a year |
to elect a management com- |

mittee, whose task it is to li-
aise with the management
agent. The farmers are subdi-
vided into 31 contracting
units. Each unit is made up
of six or seven farmers and
one contractor; individual
farmers possess 15 ha plots,
the contractor 30 ha. The
contractor acquires, through
a hire-purchase agreement
with the management, a trac-
tor and other implements
necessary for cultivating his
own land and that of the
other farmers in his unit. He
is paid for the use of his trac-
tor by the other farmers. This
income, together with the
proceeds of his additional
15 ha, make it possible for
him to keep up with the pay-
ments on his hire-purchase
agreement.

Good management is
clearly essential for the suc-
cess of such a project. The
managerial staff, a small
group of white agronomists

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and technicians, has been

seconded from a

neighbouring white farmers.

co-operative, the North West-

ern Co-operative of) |
Lichtenberg. The task of the
managerial staff is to provide
professional advice and tech-
nical assistance, train local |
farmers in the new methods
and set up the project's ad-
ministrative and financial in-
frastructure. Agricor now
provides the credit needed
for the purchase of seeds,
fertilizers, fuel, tractors and
other equipment.

To be driven round the
edge of the project was to see
with one's own eyes the
change that has taken place.
On one side, beyond the
fence, lay the fields of farm-
ers not involved in the
project, most of them smoth-
ered in weeds, the maize |
skinny or stunted. On the
other side of the track, within
the project, the crop looked |
uniformly. strong and?
healthy, though some plots
were obviously better tended
than others.

The Sheila project's statis-
tics tell an impressive story.
-In 1977 the scheme produced
six million kg of maize, aver-
age yield was 1,68 tonnes a
hectare and the net income
for the farmers after all costs
had been paid R20 a hectare.
Three years later the average
yield had risen to 3"z tonnes
a hectare, total production
stood at 13 million kg and the
average net income had in-
creased to R175 a hectare.

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