

Rice production may link NU, S. Vietnam

by CAROL GOETSCHUS
Nebraska Staff Writer

If plans are accepted by the Board of Regents, the University of Nebraska and rice production in South Vietnam may be directly linked.

Elvin F. Frolik, dean of the College of Agriculture, will present a proposal for establishment of a technical assistance program to South Vietnam to the Regents Nov. 20.

Assistance to the country would take the form of a contract between the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the University.

Under the AID contract, research would be conducted to increase livestock production through a feed grain program and the growing of legumes (soybeans, peanuts) to improve the amount of protein in the Vietnamese diet.

"The war has disrupted South Vietnam's agriculture pretty seriously," said Frolik, who returned last week from a tour of South Vietnam.

The purpose of his six-country, 33-day trip to Southeast Asia was to examine the possibility of a technical assistance program to the war-torn country, he said.

Although he saw "a tremendous lot of military," and was

awakened occasionally by artillery fire, Frolik said his group was able to conduct its countryside inspection without military protection.

He saw considerably less fighting than he'd expected, Frolik said. "We heard some small arms fire and pulled over to the side of the road to see what it was. It turned out to be a soldier trying to shoot a coconut out of a tree."

Traveling mainly by automobile, Frolik visited farms, AID stations, an agricultural experiment station in An Loc and a Montagnard village.

Included in his trip was a stop at My Tho, a city in the Mekong Delta practically ruined during the Tet offensive. My Tho is the proposed site for the AID station if the University decides to enter a contract, Frolik said.

Despite current AID programs and money from the U.S. military, Frolik observed that the years of war have taken their toll in agriculture.

The dean pointed out that before the war, South Vietnam was exporting rice, it's number-one crop, but the country must now import the product. Vietnam also had a "pretty good fruit production before the war," he added.



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The outlook for agriculture in the future is good, Frolik said. "There is a huge potential for food production in the tropics."

The Saigon government presently has a land reform program which tries to get land into the hands of the farmer, said Frolik. Although there is some modern equipment, the water buffalo is still the main source of power, he added.

He was accompanied on one leg of his trip by the Vietnamese minister of agriculture.

Frolik said the people were very friendly.

While in Vietnam, Frolik was headquartered in Saigon. "Saigon reminds me of Rome in 1954, thick with motorbikes," he commented, and "a blue haze of pollution hangs over the city".

Before arriving in Vietnam, Frolik spent the first few weeks in October surveying the agriculture research and experimental programs of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand

and the Philippines. "This was a very valuable part of my trip," he said.

Frolik's next step is to confer with his staff about sending a team of about four men to Vietnam.

If the Regents give the program the go-ahead, then NU will begin negotiating a contract with AID in Washington, said Frolik. "AID is very much interested in us coming over," the dean added.

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