

Moroccan climate hinders farmers

By Alice Hrnicek

With a population four times that of Nebraska squeezed into an area with less than half its land space, the central region of Morocco suffers severe economic problems.

The threat to occupying peasants is the expected doubling of the population by the turn of the century in a semi-arid climate.

Donald Hanway, a UNL extension agronomist in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, said he hopes to turn the situation around by instituting a dryland farming program similar to Nebraska's.

Last month Hanway, along with two other members of the Federal Agency for International Development, traveled to the northwest African country in a follow-up visit to a 1976 trip.

The trip's purpose was to conform and negotiate a five-year plan to implement the program which will include an applied research component, Hanway reported.

Meetings with the Moroccan government's Ministry of Agriculture were conducted to consider the location of sites for staff and research. A contract between the country and the Mid-American International Consortium was drafted and signed, he added. Headquartered at Iowa State University, the consortium includes ISU, NU, Kansas State University and the University of Missouri.

Research stations will be patterned after NU's five centers in Mead, Scottsbluff, North Platte, Clay Center and Concord, he said. He stressed, however, that "This is to be their program." The consortium's involvement will only be a starting point and part of the plan is to send Moroccan students to the U.S. for agricultural training.

In order to understand the Moroccan plight, Hanway said, one must realize that the country gained its independence only 23 years ago after being exploited by the French. Farming methods are primitive, he stated, and often the equipment consists of a small plow pulled by donkeys or camels. Peasants are barely able to maintain a subsistence living with the scant 6 to 18 inch annual rainfall and the average 15-acre plot, he noted.

"If we can help them through the establishment of an applied research program which would use the limited moisture to the best advantage, we can help them improve production," he added.

Currently, Morocco imports wheat. In the wetter north central region, wheat is grown, but in the dry south only barley can exist. Fifty percent of the people in this central region are 18 years old or younger and the literacy rate is low according to Hanway. More than 70 percent of the people are directly involved in agriculture, with no promise of this figure decreasing, he said.

Thus, with a rapidly multiplying population, more people will be forced to farm on a restricted area of land, he said.

Agricultural schools in the consortium have been dealing with a similar situation for many years, Hanway said. "We have background in this area. It may take time, but Morocco has the potential to double or triple its harvests," he added.

The contract specifies that three Americans will be working in Morocco for the next five years with a number of graduate students working short terms.

"The emphasis will be on the needs of peasant farmers now living under meager subsistence conditions for improving the quality of life," Hanway said.

Hanway anticipated little difficulty with the people's willingness to accept new methods.

"If we can show them ways in which to improve their situation, I believe they will adopt them," he said.

UPCE entertains

Mark your calendar for a night of free popcorn, a good movie, and a chance to save some money.

University Program Council-East has released this year's list of feature length movies they will be showing. The year will begin Sept. 27 with the presentation of "The Groove Tube."

The movie will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Great Plains Room of the East Union. Cost is \$1.50 per person.

The price is inexpensive when compared to those of downtown theaters which charge about \$3, said Anita Johnson, chairman of the UPC-East films committee.

"I'm hoping we can get a big crowd," she said. "Last year's film series went all right, but it seemed as if our movies came on T.V. or were replayed just before we showed them."

Other films chosen by the films committee include a Halloween special Oct. 31 that includes "Green Slime" and "Village of the Damned." Nov. 15 and 16, a Mel Brooks double feature will be presented featuring "Young Frankenstein" and "Silent Movie." "The Sound of Music" will be the final presentation for this semester on Dec. 6.

Movies chosen for second semester will include: "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" Smarter Brother," "Julia," "Magic," and "The Kentucky Fried Movie."

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