

Title: Sustainable Agriculture Training for the Developing World

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Abstract:

World Hunger Relief, Inc., was chartered in 1976 by real estate developers Bob and Jan Salley. The Texas, non-profit charter provided for a program in agroforestry and related technologies to address the needs of the hungry, both foreign and domestic.

In 1979 Carl Ryther and his family returned to Texas after 17 years of agricultural missions in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). The Salley's invited Ryther to join World Hunger Relief in 1979 to develop a program to train individuals to address hunger needs around the world. In the following 25 years, WHRI trained over 300 interns working in 20 countries spanning 4 continents. These interns now work for various international organizations promoting sustainable food production and economic development.

Over this time period WHRI training has been expanded to include sustainable technologies appropriate to developing countries with more extensive resources and production. These systems included alley cropping, larger scale organic vegetable production, drip irrigation, rotational grazing, and additional livestock (poultry, cattle, goats, sheep, bees and worms).

In recent years, WHRI staff has expanded these demonstrations into income generating enterprises. The intern training program underwent a major reorganization providing a more comprehensive full-time curriculum, and offering living stipends in addition to room and board.

Each Intern participates in formalized class time, field trips to farms and conferences, practicum experience, and gains management experience by overseeing one of the enterprises on the farm. This combination creates a unique and effective means of developing knowledge and skills that will be useful in addressing problems related to hunger and poverty throughout the world.

The WHRI farm produces organic vegetables, milk, eggs, meat, honey, and organic pecans for sale. Interns are, therefore, involved in all aspects of running a working farm (planning, production, research, marketing, etc.) We try as much as possible to utilize production techniques appropriate to developing-world settings. These include composting, cover cropping, biointensive gardening, integrated pest management, drip irrigation, multi-species rotational grazing, pastured poultry, etc.

In addition to farm work, interns are involved in leading school tours, teaching classes, and speaking to church and community groups, and working with schools, churches and other groups in gardening project in Waco. Those interns who choose to participate in the optional 3-month international internship will be encouraged to raise support through fund-raising activities. All these experiences are integral to the learning of the intern.

WHRI has found that either a class based or a hands on/self guided study program were deficient in providing the skills needed to address the complex problems of hunger and poverty. The combination of developing skills in teaching, agronomy, animal husbandry, and marketing help transfer the complex

skill set needed to address those problems. This experience also allows ideas to be tested under the real world stresses of a working farm.