

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LAND RECLAMATION AND IMPROVEMENT, WAGENINGEN, HOLLAND

INTRODUCTION

During recent years international interest has been increasingly focussed on Wageningen as an agricultural centre. Various institutions require, however, an initial period in which their construction can be completed, and staff has to be attracted, before their activities can be more widely publicised.

This is probably the reason why it was not till 18th February 1958 that the Directors of the International Institute for Land Reclamation and Improvement considered that the time was ripe to enter the public scene by organising a publicity meeting on that date, although their activities had already begun in 1956.

THE ORIGIN OF THE INSTITUTE

The constant growth in world population makes it ever more needful to provide new agricultural land, and also necessitates making a more intensive use of land already under cultivation.

In the sphere of land cultivation and improvement it is becoming increasingly evident what an extensive field of operations there lies before us, and consequently it would be very valuable if the knowledge and experience gained by certain countries could be made available to others.

It was this idea that led to the founding of this Institute.

As a result of the flood disaster in the Netherlands on 31st Januari 1953, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A.) suggested that an institute should be set up to carry out work on an international basis in the sphere of land reclamation and improvement, and expressed its willingness to give financial support in establishing such an institute. The fact that Holland was chosen as the country in which to establish the Institute is due to the great experience gained in this low-lying and densely populated country in executing land reclamation and improvement projects, both as regards the technical and agricultural aspects and the social and economic ones.

This offer met with great interest in many circles in the Netherlands, and was also readily assented to by the Government and the States-General.

In 1955 the offer was legally accepted and the Institute formally established.

THE OBJECTS OF THE INSTITUTE

The wording of the objects of the Institute speaks for itself:

- a To collect and disseminate all over the world information with regard to land reclamation and land improvement.
- b To promote and conduct applied scientific research into the reclamation or improvement of land, the agricultural reaction of such land, and the way in which it can be reclaimed or improved.

- c To stimulate and conduct research into schemes of agrarian development, cultivation of the land, and social and economic building up of the areas concerned.
- d To promote and carry out field experiments in connection with the foregoing.
- e To take the measures that will further the realization of the above-mentioned objects.

Since the field of operations embraces the entire world it is clear the Institute's task is well-nigh unlimited.

ACTIVITIES

According to the report of the Director, Mr. J. M. VAN STAVEREN, given on the occasion of the publicity meeting, a staff of university-trained assistants has been attracted who have extensive overseas experience.

The activities may be divided into the following groups :

- a *The collecting of information*, viz. the establishment of a library, the acquisition of foreign research data by means of correspondence and local study visits, and the setting-up of a register of land improvement projects from all over the world.
- b *The dissemination of information* by means of individual discussions, working visits, the reception of overseas visitors, information by post, and the publication of articles.
- c *Promoting and carrying out research.*

The Institute has already been concerned in projects carried out in France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain, Greece, India, Surinam and the U.S.A. These projects lie in various spheres and include desalting, drainage, irrigation, spray irrigation, land reclamation, soil research, reallocation, etc.

Holland regards it as a mark of honour that this Institute, which was set up with an ideal purpose, has been established on Dutch soil, and expresses the hope that all countries who think they can contribute to this work will give evidence of their interest.

A. EVERS.