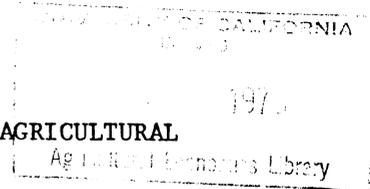


*Economic Development*  
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SOME EXAMPLES OF ETHICAL ISSUES FACED BY INDIVIDUAL AGRICULTURAL  
ECONOMISTS IN DEVELOPMENT WORK



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Much writing on the ethics of development has dealt with issues at national and international policy levels. But most agricultural economists--junior professionals especially--are working at operational levels where we have to take such broad decisions as "givens." In our day-to-day roles we encounter many situations related to personal behavior as well as to program/project implementation which require ethical judgments. These "little" decisions add up to a lot and can have important bearing on aggregate effects of development efforts in human terms. Making these little decisions is in some ways tougher than when one is in high policymaking circles; one often has to choose whether to go along with the priorities and modes of behavior that have been established.

Here are a few examples of ethical issues that arise in our work related to international development:

A. Agricultural economists associated with development project planning and implementation

- A1. When working out implementation details, which places or farm groups should get help first? The most needy? The most responsive? The most influential? Those located most convenient to one's office? Or what?
- A2. In such a project, should a few people be helped a lot? Or many helped just a little?
- A3. If a project helps low income rural people at the expense of food production efficiency, is that all right?
- A4. Should more time be spent on benchmark studies and planning if this means less time and money to help people in dire plight in the near future?
- A5. Should emphasis be on quick and showy results that will please politicians and administrators? Or on more lasting long-term results?
- A6. To what extent to take into account the happiness, political influence, family well-being, and professional progress of staff members when deciding whom to promote, transfer, or discontinue?
- A7. To what extent to go along with administrative priorities and practices that are at odds with one's own sense of values and human decency?
- A8. To what extent to distort arguments or facts in order to gain public or administrative support for a proposed program that will benefit the needy?

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## B. Agricultural economists in development assistance organizations

- B1. To what extent to impose our organization's own priorities when working out loan or technical assistance details with a host country agency?
- B2. Is it all right to work with and assist groups that represent disadvantaged people or "worthy" causes, even though they are in conflict with (or not given priority by) leaders of the host country?
- B3. If donor country foreign aid policy is at odds with what is best for the host country (e.g., insistence on purchasing equipment from the donor country or bans against promoting certain agricultural commodities), to what extent to try to get around such constraints when working out assistance details?
- B4. In the interest of expediency (maybe!), should the assistance organization have a heavy hand in running the project? Or should host country personnel be encouraged to make many of the key decisions?
- B5. Is it fair to seek duty-free privileges, posh facilities, and other special benefits for assistance staff that we provide?
- B6. Should we go along with practices that are locally accepted but "unethical" to us back home (e.g., bribing officials or exchanging money on the black markets) in order to get the job done or make life easier while abroad?
- B7. How "honest" to be when reporting back home about an assistance project that has not been going very well?

## C. Faculty members in U. S. and Canadian universities

- C1. Should we have easier or different standards for LDC students when it comes to comprehensive exams, theses, and such?
- C2. When considering the applications of students from developing countries, should we go strictly by usual academic criteria? Give preference to those from countries in special need of development help? Give preference to individuals who seem most likely to emerge in important development roles back home? Give preference to individuals who seem most dedicated to helping the disadvantaged in their home country? Or what?
- C3. When considering use of limited numbers of graduate assistantships or admission spaces, should equal consideration be given to LDC applicants if this means saying "no" to some worthy U. S. applicants?
- C4. Is it fair to involve LDC students in thesis studies related to domestic oriented experiment station projects if this is easier for us but at odds with topics that would be most beneficial to them and their home countries?

- C5. To what extent should we help LDC students who seek changes in study programs or lengths of stay that are not consistent with the expressed desire of their home governments, AID or other sponsors, and/or our own immigration officials?
- C6. Is it unfair to become involved with an overseas assistance or research program when one's interest is primarily finding a "laboratory" to test out a pet theory or technique?
- C7. Should an agricultural economics department or professor have technical cooperation involvements in a country which has a repressive human rights situation?

D. Agricultural economists in developing countries recently returned from studies abroad

- D1. To what extent is one obligated to stick to his/her agreement to continue with a public service employer if a more interesting (and better paying) job opportunity comes along in the home country? In another country?
- D2. Is it fair to apply for other study or travel grants abroad in the near future when many colleagues have not yet had such opportunities?
- D3. In evolving a work program, to what extent to emphasize activities that may lead to international professional recognition (e.g., writing journal articles or developing sophisticated models) if these are at the expense of less attention to activities that will help one's home country the most?
- D4. How ready should one be to move to an "up country" location if this is where he/she can be most useful to development but where there would be some sacrifice of life's amenities and interaction with professional peers?