

The Village and Farm Forestry Programme — VFFP

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MESSAGE

It is a pleasure for me to inform you that while doing my work in my house at Gulshan, which I do with my dog, I keep overlooking at the trees planted by the roadside by the present government. After having a careful look, I feel very cheerful to see the trees getting their heights day by day. I think this is the proof that this country wants to do something about forestry. The Village and Farm Forestry Programme was started by Swiss Development Cooperation for creating awareness among the rural households regarding village forestry products and their use as fuel, fodder and fruit. SDC also promotes the involvement of the younger generation in tree planting and tree management programmes. I am particularly pleased to see the people of rural areas, irrespective of men and women, come forward out of their own initiatives to establish their nurseries. So let us not talk only, let us do something in reality for a better future of this country.



Albert Mehr
Charge de Affaires
Embassy of Switzerland in Dhaka

The Village and Farm Forestry Programme in Bangladesh

by **Khairul Islam**
Senior Programme Officer SDC

IN Bangladesh, half of the population lives in poverty and a majority of households are already without sufficient areas of land to raise enough food, fuel and fodder to meet their needs.

Trees make important contribution to farming system to better satisfy the wide range of a household needs and are important source of fuel, fodder, food and income. Overuse and destruction of forest/tree resources already, have negative impact on the welfare of million of people in Bangladesh and threatening their food security and quality of life and the country's natural environment.

Many families in rural areas spend a considerable time scavenging for twigs, leaves, and other biomass fuels needed for cooking and for fodder to keep animals. One third of the animal dung which would otherwise be used to help maintain

soil fertility and productivity is now burned as a household fuel.

SCOPE FOR IMPROVING SITUATION



Despite the relative high population density in Bangladesh, there are scopes for increasing the forest area and its productivity through the following ways:

- A. Public Land Potential
 - More trees can be planted along the strips of roads, railways, canals and embankment (about 200,000 km).
- B. Private Land Potential
 - On each homestead (19.7 million), if only 10 more trees are planted in addition to the existing trees, the resulting plantation of 197 million trees would be equivalent to 123,000 hectares forest plantation.
 - High- and Medium High land of the total cultivable land (9.5 m ha) alone can support 639 million trees if planted with only 100 trees per ha which is equivalent to 399,000 ha of forest plantation.

THE PROGRAMME
In 1986, SDC developed a pilot phase 'Village & Farm Forestry Programme-VFFP' taking the following main factors into consideration:

- The farms (small) are complex systems in which farmers combine multiple subsistence and commercial activities
- The primary objective of land use system is production of food especially rice and secondarily generation of cash income
- Though the principles of agroforestry is understood but a much better understanding of the overall cropland agroforestry farming system is needed
- National Development Plan (Five Year Plan) objectives and strategies emphasized for bringing all possible land under

women...
Project Goals:
The basic goals of the project are:

- 1. Creating awareness among the rural households regarding productivity of homestead (Homesteads lands) and cropland (khetland) agroforestry, its management, production and their use for food and nutrition, fuel, fodder, fruit, timber and poles, compost and mulch materials and cash generation etc.
- 2. Making rural farm families and the community accessible to the high quality inputs (saplings of desired species and of high-yielding and improved varieties of tree species) and technologies of production, management and maintenance of their forest/tree resources including special horticultural technologies for in-situ varietal and productivity improvement of already existing but poor quality and poorly yielding fruit trees.

- Objectives:
- a. Intensification of tree planting, care and management practices in the homestead (Homesteads lands)
 - b. Introduction of trees into cropland (khetland) and development of tree management technologies for agri-silviculture (tree-crop inter-cropping) production system
 - c. Restore productivity and improve varietal quality of existing old and/or wild fruit trees through application of renovation/top-working and other management technologies.
 - d. Develop and establish self-sustaining local level institutions (forestry resource/growth bases) for

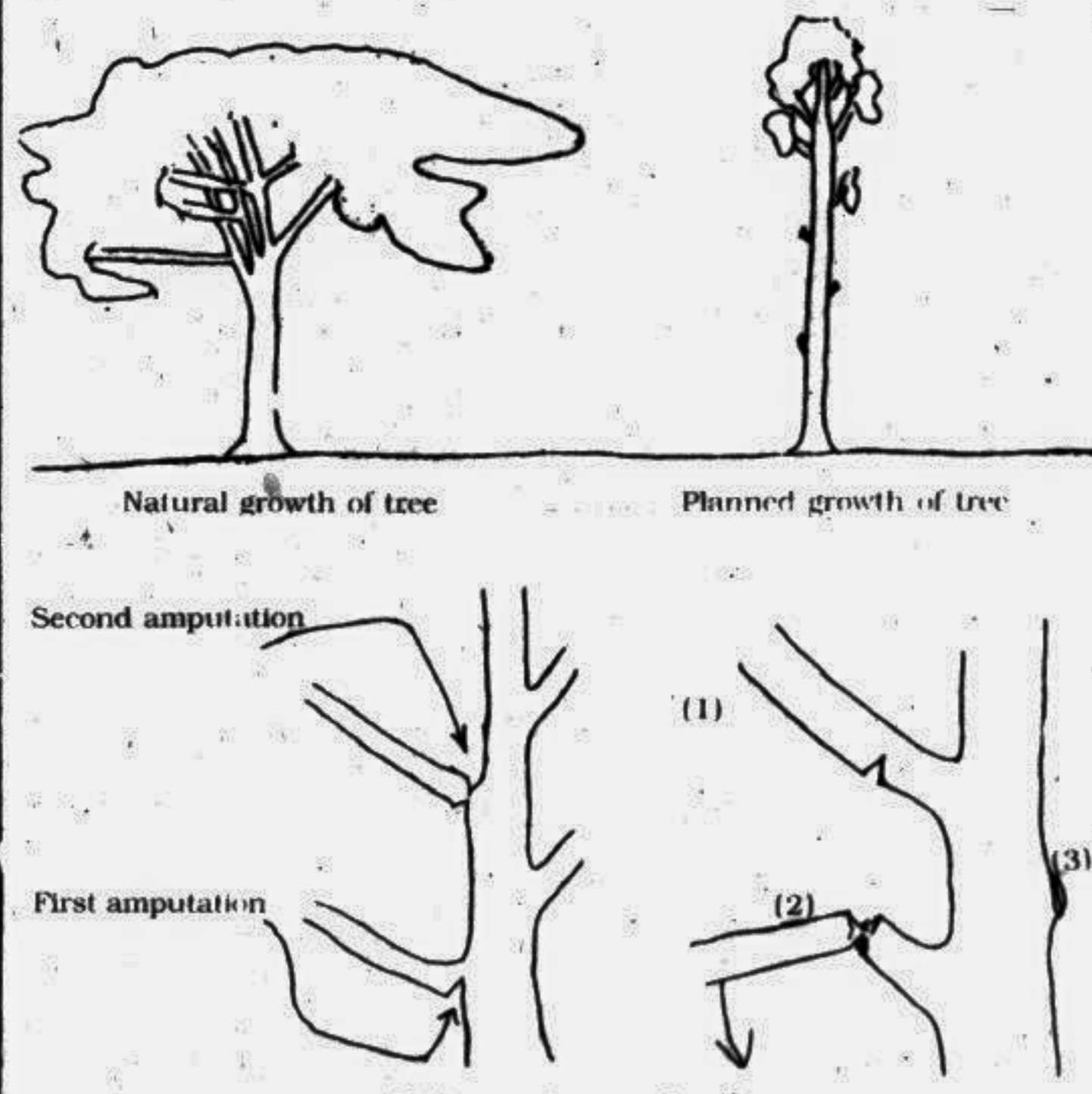
VFFP: A Farmer Driven Programme

THE member of trees planted in the period 1987-1990 depicts the kind of progress that can be expected to occur in the early years of a normal tree planting project.

During this phase of the programme NGOs worked directly with farmers to promote tree planting on their own bariland and, on their khetland through the Action Research component of the programme. There is a steady upward trend but there is nothing spectacular about number of trees planted.

The number of trees planted in the period 1993, is roughly 20 times as high as in the earlier period! There has been a quantum jump in the level of tree planting. One simply has to ask...

What is going on here?
The answer, in a nutshell, is that the VFFP — which had always been a farmer-oriented programme — discovered a way to make the tree planting programme truly farmer driven.



The key innovation which made this possible was the adoption in 1991 of the so-called 'Core Farmer' model of extension. The way in which this innovation occurred is interesting. In looking for a way to solve the problem of chronic undersupply of seedlings, they came up with the idea of a village-based nursery enterprise operated by selected farmers and their families.

The key elements of this model
Using the nursery as the centre of tree planting efforts, with extension activities being offered as business services which, in turn, generate new demand for nursery products.
The result was an uncommonly robust and dynamic rural institution, which functions as the origin and centre of all tree planting activities in the current VFFP project and the

MESSAGE

On behalf of SDC, let me first express heart-felt thanks to all of you for having accepted in great number our invitation to attend this information session on the Village and Farm Forestry Programme. We are especially grateful to his Excellency, Col Akbar Hossain, the Honorable Minister for Environment and Forest, and Mr Abdullah Haroon Pasha, Secretary of the same Ministry for having kindly consented to attend this inaugural session and address the audience despite a very busy agenda.



The VFFP has some special, unique characteristics which are worthwhile to be shared with all the development partners of Bangladesh. Let me just briefly highlight three points:
First: Unlike other initiatives in the forestry sector which generally work on public land (khasland, roadsides, etc), the VFFP is entirely directed at private tree planting on private land: homesteads and cropland.
Second: On the technical side, the project has taken up the challenge to prove that, if certain rules are respected which every farmer can learn and follow, it is possible to plant trees in about 70 per cent of Bangladesh's cropland (mainly ricefields) without negative effects on the crop yields. This opens up a totally new and promising perspective for tree plantation in the country.
Finally, the extension strategy which the Project has adopted proved to be successful far beyond expectation. An enthusiastic observer describes the situation with the following words: 'In the established VFFP areas the challenge is no longer merely to stimulate tree planting on farms but to keep up with the pace of innovation in tree growing that the VFFP farmers and the tree wallas have established.'

Peter Arnold
Counsellor and Head of SDC

VFFP, Govt Policy and Forestry Master Plan

by **Md Fazlul Huq**
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Forest

VILLAGE and Farm Forestry Programme of Swiss Development Cooperation should be seen in the overall context of participatory forestry and agroforestry in Bangladesh. These assume a special significance as a strategy for integrated resource use, optimization of socio-economic benefits out of scarce resources and sustainable resource use and conservation in rural Bangladesh.

Village and Farm Forestry Programme in Bangladesh
— The project should no longer be treated as a simple tree plantation activity but also as a dependable model to create a catalytic force in the rural areas capable of bringing in rapid physical and conceptual changes to the very concept of grass roots level self-sustained rural development.

ment of Bangladesh in its overall development perspective. This is being emphasized in all government policy documents including the Five Year Plans.

In the Forestry Sector political commitment at the highest level has been re-iterated time and again for broad based peoples participation.

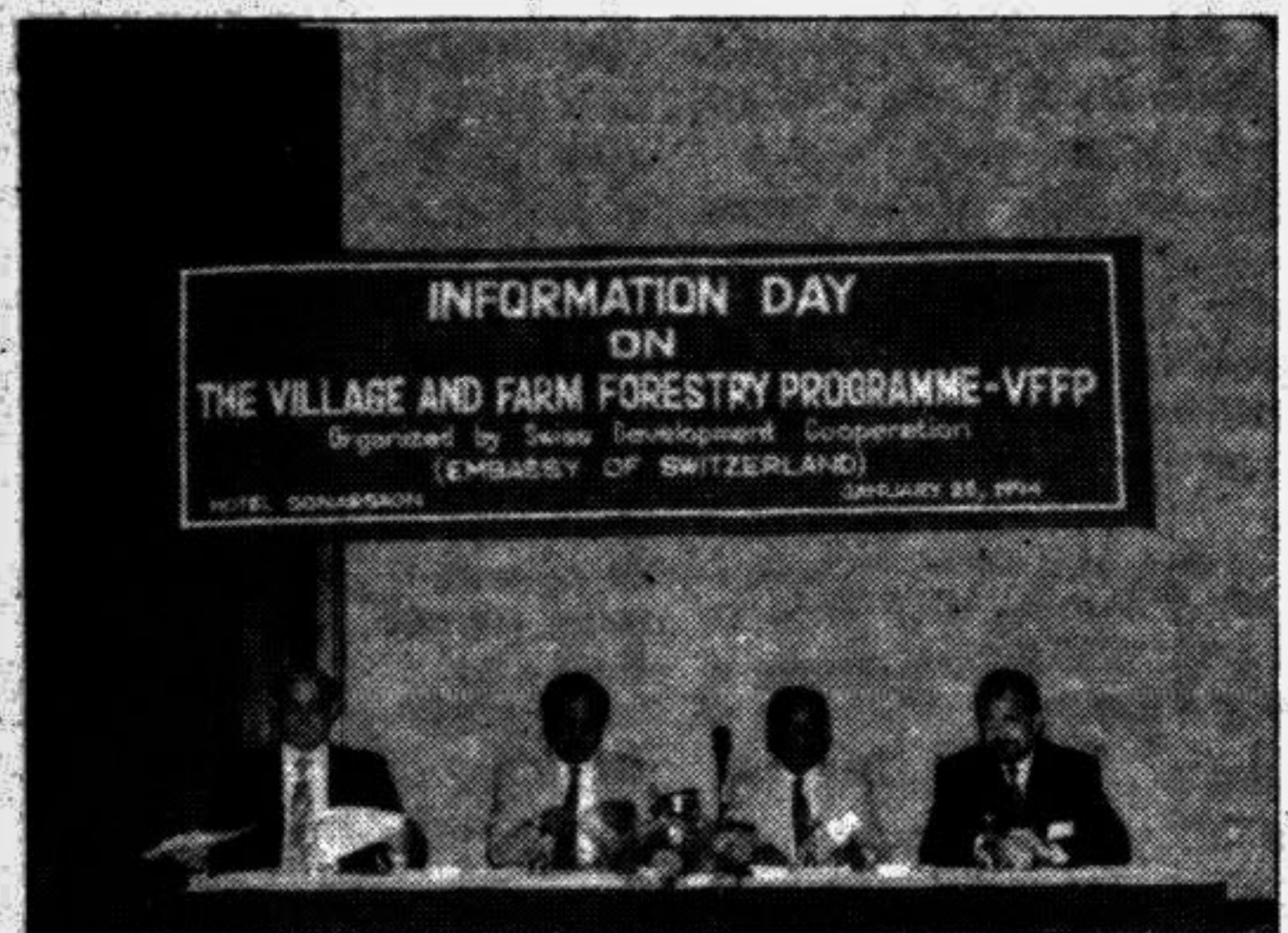
It is notable that the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said on the occasion of Tree Planting Festival (July 1992) "Political commitment is necessary to make the national tree plantation a success". She further opined her view "that tree planting could act as an instrument in the governments national Programme of poverty alleviation and that community forestry had been introduced towards that direction". Begum Zia further said that community forestry Programme aimed at bene-

rd for successful tree plantation.
Proposal for creation of a new department of social forestry.

Forestry Master Plan
Government of Bangladesh (BOG) assisted by the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme is preparing a long term plan to preserve and develop the nation's forest resources. The 20-year Forestry Master Plan provides an overview of the Bangladesh forestry section. It identifies sectoral strengths and weaknesses and presents an understanding of the steps required to enhance sectoral development.

The Plan recognizes three major focuses for forestry in Bangladesh: people-oriented forestry, production-directed forestry and institutional strengthening. Specific areas of investigation included: forestry institutional strengthening. Specific areas of investigation included: forestry institutional aspects, environment and land use concerns; forest management requirements, forest-based industry prospects and the economic base for the sector. Focus was on institutional factors — policy, education and training and administrative structures. Specially interest groups like the landless women, non government organizations (NGOs), minorities and private industry received additional attention.

Master Plan development proposals consider two essential development options compared to the present day conditions. Scenario 1 adds additional money and peoples and retains, with slight changes, existing systems, technology, institutional structures, working methods, laws and regulations. Scenario 2 represents optimum development and adopts relevant new technology.
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— Financial assistance may be a necessary factor to help the rural poor and illiterate; to help the process of awakening of their self confidence and self-empowerment, but it is not the prime factor. There are other significant variables which contribute to this process.

— The process of building the self-consciousness and self-empowerment in the rural poor only needs to be awakened and rekindled when it is capable of expanding and taking new and innovative dimensions.

— The VFFP can be applied to all rural areas with necessary variations of species depending on local conditions. In this area of Khetland' plantation it has limitless prospects.

The project has already generated wealth of local experience, expertise, knowledge and vision which needs to be noted.

The project is technically viable, economically profitable and socially desirable and needs to be rapidly expanded to more and more areas.

The VFFP of SDC has been a successful agroforestry model. However further studies need to be addressed to make this model fit for replication on a national basis and also generate sustained interest by the international community for its ultimate adoption in similar rural situations in the region and around the globe.

fitting marginal and landless farmers. The main philosophy of the participatory tree planting Programme is to promote agroforestry under which agriculture would be developed along with acceleration of afforestation apart from receiving wages for their labour poor peasants would also get dividends".

The governments continued commitment for participatory approach to Forestry Development have been and are being highlighted in the following activities:

- Successful implementation of the community forestry project in seven greater northern districts in the early eighties.
- Involving the people on a national scale in the ongoing thana afforestation and nursery development project.
- Involving the NGOs for organizing people's participation in the thana afforestation and nursery development project.
- Launching nation wide tree plantation movement by integrating direct participation of the people at all levels for the last two years.
- Encouraging the NGOs in tree plantation.
- Encouraging the growth of private nurseries.
- Implementation of large scale training Programme for plantation at the village level.
- Use of food aid for tree plantation.
- Introducing national awa-

Salient Features

THE VFFP was designed using a farmer-consultative process, and is implemented, including a farmer participation. It is concerned solely with private tree planting on private small farms, both around homesteads and at wide spacing in crop fields. Trees in crop fields are intended to be managed by root and canopy pruning to minimize adverse crop impact. Planting stock is supplied at commercial prices by private village-based nurseries operated by 'Core Farmers' (CFs) trained by VFFP. Farmers are completely in control of the trees at all times, under guidance and advice by the VFFP through field staff of small, local NGOs. The VFFP monitors tree survival and performance through a triplicate system of cards, and pays a "service fee" to CFs for the job of data collection, which of course also serves as an extension contact and helps the CF

to promote sales of his/her next year's stock. The ideas have caught on, and it has become in many ways self-propagating with a steady demand for technical information and training from previously unassociated organizations.

The core farmer approach is creating multi-dimensional changes in tree plantation and over all socio-economic perspective. The emerging features of this approach are:

- It is becoming a viable family business.
- It is helping in cementing the family and social ties.
- People are even leaving govt jobs to work as core farmers.
- Unemployed youth are getting meaningful employment and deranged youth are being rehabilitated in the main-stream of healthy social dynamics.
- destitute women are finding a way of respectable and homebased employment.
- core farmers are also giv-

ing training to their own family members and other interested people in the village.

- core farmers are going on hire for settling up new nurseries.
- economic condition and social status of the CF is improving within a very short period. People are repaying their loans and getting back their mortgaged land and property.
- everybody in the village is being encouraged to plant trees and utilise all vacant land. Block plantations are rapidly changing the look of the villages.
- nurseries are becoming growth centres and centres for social interaction.
- development of village nurseries are also leading to the selection of mother trees for improved seed sources in the villages. In the initial stage such seed sources were allowed to be exploited free of cost. But now, the owners charge for collection of seeds from their trees.

Case 2
This TW was formerly a smuggler. He started out with a nursery of 8 decimals, expanded to 26 decimals in the second year, and this year has started developing a much larger nursery on 110 decimals of land which he has leased for 3 years at a rent of Tk 14,000. So far this year he has sold Tk 38,000 worth of seedlings but he plans to plant 100,000 seedlings in his new nursery this year. For this he will hire 5 labourers. His top selling species are mahogany, mango, guava, betelnut and jackfruit.

At his new nursery site he has constructed a gazebo to provide his customers with a shady place to sit. Just outside the entrance to the new nursery a vender has set up a little stand to sell to the people who come to the nursery. He says he makes Tk 50/day, which is better than the Tk 30 he used to make as a wage labourer. His 7-year-old daughter is his constant companion in the nursery and is said to be an expert grafter.

In addition to the bari and khet land plantings for which he has provided seedlings he has also established 90 block plantings, 4 of which are fruit orchards, the other 86 of which are mixed tree gardens of timber and fruit trees such as lemon, guava, papaya, etc (a very innovative form of agroforestry — the kind you might expect from a farmer).

One of the distinctive features of the VFFP experience is the willingness and ability of the project staff at all levels to learn from the farmers.
From them the NGO staff and SDC regional staff learn of the innovations and do what they can to integrate the most promising ones into the operation.
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