A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

This research report of the University of Kentucky INTSORMIL (International Sorghum and Millet) Project is the second of two reports written during the course of field investigations carried out in the el-Obeid area of Sudan. Like its predecessor this is a report of work in progress. Succeeding reports will analyze larger data bases which may call for the modification of a few of the conclusions found in this manuscript.

Part I of the report presents an analysis of the data collected from a preliminary survey of 40 farm households in three villages. Part II describes major aspects of the rural marketing system in the area based on data collected from four marketing centers. Part III is an analysis of the main constraints to agriculture in the area. This section also describes how farmers attempt to deal with these constraints at present, and it proposes new strategies for alleviating each constraint. Following Part III, there are a number of appendices which present additional data that could not be easily reviewed in the main body of the report. A glossary of Arabic terms and a copy of the questionnaire used for surveying the 40 households are also found in the appendices.

Overview of the Farming System

The el-Obeid area receives on the average 347 mm of rainfall annually, most of it falling in the period of July through October. The amount of rainfall varies greatly from one year to the next, and within a single season the pattern of its distribution is quite irregular. These characteristics of the climate make consistently successful farming extremely difficult to achieve, given the rudimentary labor-intensive technology that farmers are able to apply. El-Obeid lies on the transitional zone between the clayey sand soils to the south of it and the goz soils (stabilized sand dunes) lying to the north. These two principal soil types are associated with some differences in cropping patterns and livestock rearing. Both types of soil are characterized by low fertility. Fallowing is the principal means for restoring soil fertility. The natural propagation of Acacia senegal, a native of the region, allows farmers to gain an income from their fallow land through the collection of gum arabic produced by these trees.

The rural population is dispersed in villages that vary in size from five or six households to 1,000 or more. The number of villagers that occupy a village varies with the season. The population is greatest during the rainy, cropping season and lowest during the dry season. The average household numbers between seven and eight members. Nuclear family residence seems to be preferred but extended families, matrifocal families, and other household arrangements are fairly common. Whereas the household is the basic unit of consumption, agricultural production is typically in the hands of more than one decision-maker in the household. A common pattern is for husband and wife to manage separate farms. Unmarried sons and daughters who are old enough are also given land to manage, if it is available. Besides farming, virtually every household has members who work in secondary occupations, usually on a seasonal basis. The survey