

A 5-Year Desert Greening Project in Eritrea, Africa

**James DeMeo, PhD
Director, Orgone Biophysical Research Lab
Ashland, Oregon**

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Abstract

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James DeMeo, Ph.D., Director, Orgone Biophysical Research Lab,
Ashland, Oregon. demeo@mind.net

With support from the government of Eritrea, Ministry of Agriculture, the Reich cloudbuster was applied over five years, for the purposes of ending a chronic drought and increasing the summertime *Kiremti* rainfall and crop productivity. The project began in 1994, and continued in 1995, 1997, 1998 and 1999, carried out by an international team of workers composed of myself as project director, plus Theirrie Cook, Carlo Albini, Aurelio Albini, and Bernd Senf. The apparatus was constructed locally in Eritrea, which lies at the SE edge of the Sahara Desert on the arid Red Sea coast. During the first summer of field work, in 1994, a 30-year drought was ended across the Eastern Sahel zone, and in Eritrea. Thereafter, the Ministry of Agriculture in Eritrea gave full support to the project, which involved two phases of work activity each of the summers. Meteorological data, satellite images and ground observations were used to evaluate the effects of operations, which required mobile transport of equipment to various operational sites. Operational methods were aimed firstly at generalized dorbusting and mobilization, and secondly to increase tropical moisture flow from the Gulf of Guinea near the African Congo, with stimulus of the high-altitude Easterly Jet stream which moves into the region from Asia and Arabia.

In 1994, Eritrea did not yet have a network of rain-gauges, and so only very general documentation existed for that year. For the years 1995, 1997 and 1998, measured rainfall data was obtained, showing an overall 50% increase when comparing a 15-day period before the start of each phase of work, as compared to the 15-days after the start of cloudbuster operations. Cloudbuster operations were carried out at several locations within Eritrea, primarily at sites within a half-day's drive of the capital city of Asmara, but also in Massawa on the Red Sea. Operations utilized one large trailer-mounted cloudbuster and often several smaller devices. By 1998, three different cloudbusters were employed at different locations, coordinated in operations by radio-telephone communications.

Rains from the operations spread widely across the region, saturating soils and recharging groundwaters, while streams and rivers flowed abundantly and lakes and reservoirs filled to capacity. Agricultural import expenditures declined from around \$150 million per year, during the pre-operations drought periods, to less than \$50 million during the periods of good rains. The larger Nile River basin (covering Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea) also benefited significantly from the rains, with dramatically increased flows downstream into Egypt's Lake Nasser, which filled to capacity for the first time since the Aswan High Dam was constructed some 35 years earlier. Overflow waters were also sufficient to require diversions into the Toshka Depression of the open Sahara Desert, where four giant new lakes formed, for the first time in human memory. It was an "unbelievable result". Regrettably, open warfare between Ethiopia and Eritrea developed in 1999, forcing a dramatic limitation in operations for that year, with no data analysis and subsequent cancellation of the project. It nevertheless proved once again the accuracy of Wilhelm Reich's discovery, showed that even hyper-arid regions adjacent to the Sahara Desert will respond to the cloudbuster's influence, and that major social and environmental benefits can be developed with even minimal institutional support.