

THE WORK OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

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The Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service was created in 1914 to "extend" the campus of agricultural colleges to every farm and farm home in the United States. Realizing that the teaching on the campus would not bring about increased production and other desirable results fast enough to meet the needs of a growing nation, Congress wisely provided through the Extension Service a channel by which farmers could be kept up-to-date on research findings and other technological advances which could be applied to their work. The work of the Agricultural Extension Service is teaching, although methods of teaching never before employed are frequently used and often prove to be more effective than any others. The method most commonly used is the demonstration, as it was long ago discovered that people learn more quickly through demonstration than through reading or hearing. The amazing growth of America, as a result of salesmanship is a striking example of the value of the demonstration. Most salesmen demonstrate their products. Extension teaching is not the formal education of the classroom. Its classrooms are the farms, the fields, and the homes of North Carolina. Extension does not try to teach lessons in order that the learners may pass an examination, but rather to demonstrate practices which will increase income, improve rural living, develop rural youth, and promote the expansion of all phases of community improvement.

The slogan of the Extension Service is "To Help People Help Themselves". Extension does not try to do something for people, as such, but tries to show them how to do the things they are now doing in a better way or how to do new things which will be of value to them. The Cooperative Extension Service is a joint democratic enterprise between the farm people, their county, state and federal governments, cooperatively financed and cooperatively administered. It is like a two-way road in that facts, information and guidance flow from the

State Experiment Station, the United States Department of Agriculture and other sources to the farm people of North Carolina. The problems and situations developed by the people on the farms, in turn, are channeled back to State College for solution. Through our system of county agents and local volunteer leaders, Extension gains direct access to all the farm homes of the State. In a very general way, the Extension Service may be considered as a network, covering the entire State which can swiftly and effectively adjust its teaching efforts to meet new local county and state situations. Extension helps to develop among rural people those traits of character, qualities of leadership and knowledge of basic democratic issues that will make them more prosperous and happy citizens. The public's stake in Extension is that it needs an adequate supply of high-quality food which can be sold at a satisfactory price to both the producer and the consumer.

Almost everybody knows the County Extension workers. The phrase "See Your County Agent" is one of the most commonly seen in publications, newspapers, or heard over the radio. It has made the County Extension Offices in each of the county seat towns of North Carolina the center of information for all subjects relating to agriculture and home demonstration work. Although these County Extension Agents are full fledged members of North Carolina State College, they live in the counties near the people they serve, as they must be ready at all times to aid those people. They are supervised by District Agents and are kept constantly up-to-date in new subject matter by a group of Specialists located at State College.

Through this cooperative arrangement, Extension workers living close to the people they serve and having immediate contact with research results and other technological information, the latest scientific farm and home information is made available to North Carolina farmers. In addition to information furnished

by the Experiment Stations, much progress is made through the recommendation of steps developed by other progressive farmers, homemakers, farm organizations, and commercial groups.

The Extension Service could not function without the valued assistance of thousands of local leaders. These men and women volunteer to assist their fellow farmers in working out projects in all fields of home and farm improvement. This leader system is unique, and while they are not paid in money, the satisfaction they must receive from seeing agriculture advance certainly justify the efforts they contribute.

The Extension Service program is practical education. It is based on a need, and it teaches men, women, boys and girls to learn by doing. Rural people gather to talk over their problems and needs. Extension workers who take part in these planning meetings bring advice and information of value to work out a solution to the problem. Out of the discussion, the group develops a plan of action and sets up its goals. It selects local leaders and gives the County Extension workers specific tasks to do. The Extension Service uses many teaching devices, and they attempt to pick the ones most suited to the particular problem. They plan demonstrations or tours, a series of meetings or make farm and home visits to give individual help and advice. Through the press, the radio, television, printed bulletins, or circular letters, they distribute information to thousands of farm people on problems of all types. Whether the problem is growing better pastures, keeping records, finding labor-saving devices for the farm, the production of better livestock, the completion of the work will bring improved conditions and add to the prosperity and welfare of the entire State.

North Carolina has 288,000 farms, which is more than all the farms in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Delaware. It is obvious

that this many farm people, each with many questions to be solved, provide the Extension Service and other agricultural agencies with plenty of work to do. When questions arise as to which fertilizer to use, how to control a dairy disease, what to do to increase milk production, or what kind of a barn to build, the natural place to turn for reliable, unbiased answers is the County Agricultural Agent of the Extension Service.

Through constant study and practical experience, the County Agent can answer almost any question concerning the agriculture of his county. He can tell you about crop yields, farm indebtedness and give specific recommendations upon seeding rates, time of seeding, and cultural practices of the many crops raised in his county. In addition, he has information on the production, management, feeding and marketing of all types of livestock and poultry. With such vital information as a background, coupled with his training as a graduate of an agricultural college and with years of experience and the vast reservoir of knowledge made available to him through the Specialist system at State College, your County Agent maintains a unique position as an agricultural leader and advisor.

In a similar manner, the Home Demonstration Agent serves the farm family through advice and assistance to the homemaker and to the boys and girls. Every county has organized home demonstration work and organized 4-H Club work. These clubs form the center of information on the latest and best homemaking practices. More lately, the rural people have shown an interest in the development of their communities, and a great many areas of the State are now being organized to develop community resources. There are many activities needed which are beyond the range of an individual or an individual family and need the support of the entire community. Some of these are: Better roads, schools and churches, the securing of electric and telephone service. Working together as a group, areas can be improved to add to the prosperity and happiness of all the people living there.

North Carolina is unique in that its Negro farm people are served by a number of specialists and district supervisors located at A. and T. College, Greensboro. Their work exactly parallels that of the staff at State College, and they serve the farmers in over half of the counties of North Carolina. The Negro program covers the entire field of agriculture and homemaking affecting the farm families in North Carolina. Some of the activities conducted by Negro Extension workers include: Farm and Homemakers Conference Week, State 4-H Club Shortcourse Week, District and State Home Demonstration Federation Meetings, public speaking contests, many cattle shows, 4-H camping programs, and leadership and organization in the rural progress campaign.

As an example of an Extension program in a small county having only a small town, we started an intensive Extension program for the improvement of farm income and better living conditions. In 1940, farming was almost entirely of a subsistence nature in this county. Crops produced were corn, wheat, hay and pasture, and livestock consisted of milk cows, hogs and chickens with a few beef animals -- all primarily for home use. The yields per acre for the main crops were extremely small, and there was no improved pasture in the county. In 1940, the total cash income from farming was \$101,164.00. Only 74 farm dwellings had electric lights and there were only 30 trucks, 12 tractors, and 145 automobiles on the farms of the county. Churches, schools, roads and other community facilities were in poor state of repair as might be expected from such a low income.

By following the best practices recommended by the Extension Service and with the assistance of other agricultural agencies, farm income increased from \$101,164.00 in 1940 to \$1,877,000.00 in 1953. The average cash receipts per farm increased from \$92.00 to \$1,870.00. The average yield of crops was greatly increased and the production per animal showed a remarkable increase. Homes with

electricity increased from about seven per cent to ninety-eight per cent. The number of tractors rose to 200. Almost every farm now has a radio and mechanical refrigerators increased from 55 to 660. This record of financial improvement is reflected in many ways. For example, 32 churches had either been rebuilt or remodeled during the 13-year period. More important is the fact that the young people of the county do not need to leave the county to find employment. The progress of the county has inspired the people to still greater effort, and the whole picture has been changed for the better.

Many other counties have made outstanding progress, as revealed by a study of the annual reports received. For the State as a whole, the number of people affected and the number of changes in practices is almost beyond the imagination. In North Carolina, the Extension workers hold thousands of meetings annually. It is a matter of record that on every working day in 1952, there were 274 meetings held. These meetings, together with all other devices used, resulted in 227,000 farms making definite changes to recommended practices for increasing the income and the efficiency of farming. The total number of farm families influenced by some phase of Extension work during that year was 261,626.

It can be seen that through the concentrated effort of County and Home Agents that the entire picture of rural life in North Carolina is being changed. Farmers no longer are hesitant in appearing in any public meeting and taking part in the discussion and the solution of county and state problems. There is no distinction in the dress, the habits of diet, the quality of homes, the use of modern appliances -- such as refrigeration, electricity, etc. -- the ownership of automobiles and radios, and the many other evidences of growth and progress. The Extension Service does not claim to be the sole cause of these great and miraculous improvements. It does, however, form the firm core of a system by which rural people can climb the ladder to economic and cultural success. Extension's program is made by the

people, it serves the people, and it welcomes the advice and assistance of all who are interested in seeing North Carolina take its rightful place as one of the outstanding states of the nation.

To the end that farm people may have the benefit of all the aid offered by all levels of government, the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service is part of a united program by which agricultural agencies and farm organizations can combine their resources. This long-time program for the improvement of agriculture is dedicated to increased per capita income, greater security, improved educational opportunities, finer spiritual value, stronger community life, and more dignity and contentment in country living. The Extension Service will continue to work with all other interested groups to achieve these six great objectives.

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