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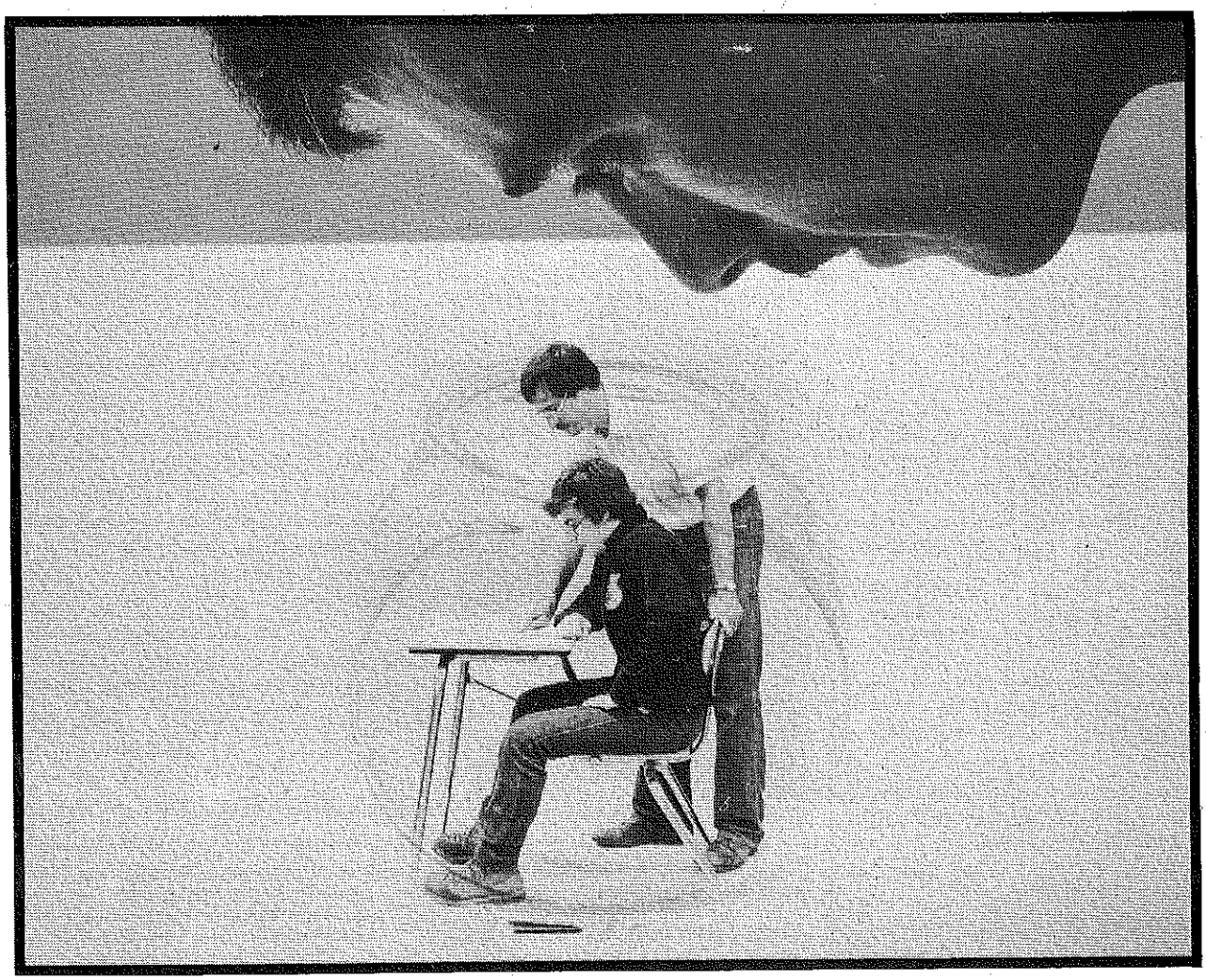

THEME: How Others Perceive Us

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Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor, Regional Editors, or Special Editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). Two copies of articles should be submitted. A recent photograph should accompany an article unless one is on file with the Editor.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Through the Eyes of Others

LARRY E. MILLER, EDITOR
(The Editor is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)

Everyday we work with a program that we understand very well, enjoy and appreciate. We are sometimes alarmed when other groups of persons do not comprehend or seemingly appreciate the program or our efforts with the same level of enthusiasm. What image do we have with those outside the profession? How do they perceive our program?

This question constitutes the theme for this issue. The theme attempts to encourage those in the profession to hypothetically step apart from their current role and examine what is the nature of our program. The authors of the articles present their perceptions. Several publics we should consider include students, the general public, agri-industry, administrators, teacher peers, and legislators. While the positive aspects of the perceptions of these audiences are definitely of interest, some of the detrimental aspects may aid us in identifying those areas in need of improvement.

Students

Vocational agriculture is a part of the total vocational education system and, hence, suffers from some of the inherent negative stereotypes. Students in the public school systems, in general, often perceive the course of study in agriculture as being less rigorous than other subjects.

Vocational agriculture students often are exposed to comments from their peers that elude to their being enrolled in an easy course. Students in our courses are often stamped as the less academically capable. Some academically capable students, who would otherwise be interested in vocational agriculture, avoid the area because they do not wish to be stamped in that mold.

Many students perceive our program to be dominated by laboratory activities. "Are you taking shop?" "Are you enrolling in FFA?" These questions highlight the lack of understanding of the program that exists.

General Public

"Vocational education is for the other person's child." People have consistently supported the concept of vocational education but really do not want their child enrolled.

Vocational agriculture is often faced with this problem. In some cases, the student that proposed to study agriculture in college does not enroll in vocational agriculture because of their image of the program, that of their parents or guidance counselors. As Kirts notes in Alaska, a poor concept of the overall importance of agriculture is an obstacle we must strive to overcome.

Agri-Industry

One of the most frequently voiced perceptions by this group is that our instruction is at a level that is too elementary. Some prospective employers wish for an emphasis on human relations skills while others advocate the technical. No clear concensus seems evident.

The profession must assure that students are competent in the needed areas. Supervisors and teacher educators must take a holistic approach. Teachers must adapt curricula to the local level. Is your curriculum relevant? When was the last time it was reviewed? We will be perceived as current when we truly revise outdated curricula.

Administrators

Most administrators see teachers of vocational agriculture as busy, but not more so than other teachers in the system. They envy, often jealously, our base of contacts and influence in the community. Our programs are often perceived as burdened by red tape and regulations. The per student costs of the program come under close scrutiny. We are often seen as "prima donnas" expecting exceptions to usual policies and procedures.

Peers

Other teachers also often perceive our students as the less talented and our instructional content as less than rigorous. As Jim Howard notes, the image we present to our peers is not always as good as it might be.

The result of these negative impressions, whether they be upon fellow teachers in the local system or upon other teachers of vocational agriculture, has a permanent and often irreconcilable effect upon those with whom we work. Coupling these effects with the common requests for consideration for our students to be excused for a special event, creates the impression of expecting too much. We can do much to improve how our peers perceive us by exhibiting a better appearance and cooperative attitude.

Legislators

Our image with legislators is best characterized as politically naive. Legislators are much more likely to recognize the term FFA advisor than teacher of vocational agriculture. Since most legislators come from and represent urban areas, they often perceive that the industry for which we are training is diminishing. Agricultural surpluses indicate that the industry is already over producing; thus, education and trained workers are not needed.

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Through the Eyes of Others

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The profession is capable of energizing a limited pressure group. This group is often not politically significant. The concern expressed is often to maintain the status quo.

Conclusion

We in agricultural education, have often ignored how others perceive us. We have relied upon the overall exigency of our program to sustain us. We can no longer afford this luxury. If we are to maintain viable programs, we must begin to positively affect all of our audiences.

The Cover

Teachers of vocational agriculture often perceive that they are inside the proverbial fish bowl under the watchful eye of scrutinizing observers. (Photograph courtesy of Boyd Hastings, Vocational Agriculture Instructor, Montgomery County Joint Vocational School, Clayton, Ohio 45315.)

THEME

How Others Perceive Us

In speaking to his fellow scientists Albert Einstein is reported to have once said, "The concern for man and his destiny must always be the chief interest of all technical efforts. Never forget it among our diagrams and equations". To make this statement applicable to agricultural education, we might paraphrase it to say: The concern for people and their destiny must always be the chief interest of all those in agricultural education. Never forget it among your day to day problems that lose their importance in the larger picture of making a difference.

Our concern for people has always been an important plus for agricultural education. The same need of helping people remains an important part of agricultural education and is the primary reason many people make agricultural education their career.

By James P. Clouse, Theme Editor

(Editor's Note: Dr. Clouse is a Professor in the Agricultural Education Program, Division of Vocational Education, Lane Hall, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.)

Some Groups of Others

While being of service and helping others is basic to agricultural education, the quantity and quality of service is only the first step. Of almost equal importance is how other people see agricultural education. Are they impressed? Do they understand the program? Has agricultural education made a difference in their lives? Have they had direct contact with people in the program? Would they support vocational agriculture?

These and other questions need to be asked often of several groups if the vocational agriculture program is to prosper and to provide the help needed by agriculture and the public. Who are these others with whom the agricultural education program should be concerned? The following groups should understand, appreciate and have a good perception of vocational agriculture.

Students of Agriculture

In a complete program of vocational agriculture, there are three types of students. Typically, these are the high school students, young farmers and adult class students. It is imperative that these people be interested in and enthusiastic about the program and the value they are receiving from the program. The local vocational agricultural department cannot long endure if those directly involved do not have positive feelings.

Other School Students

The strength and value of a vocational agriculture department can often be determined by talking with other students in the school. Is the FFA an important organization in the school? Does the blue jacket have valued meaning? Is the vocational agriculture teacher considered important? Are the agricultural students leaders in the school?

In most high schools, the students have a good perception of the worth of each program and the students in that program. If the agricultural program is to grow and develop it must be respected and liked by the in-school students. Student perceptions can and do make a difference. We must recognize this and work to project a good image.

School Personnel

How the school administrators and teachers see the local vocational agriculture department can have tremendous impact on the success and future of the department. Enrollments and budgets are often determined entirely by persons other than the vocational agriculture teacher. If the department is viewed as being strong and having a positive influence, added support is forthcoming.

Vocal and cooperative support results when other teachers in the school like what they see in the agricultural program. If the agricultural students perform well in other classes, the teachers are more likely to be impressed and supportive. Particularly important is the perception that the agricultural teacher(s) have of their own department. If they are positive in their outlook, like their work and students and believe they are doing some good; the department will be stronger. As the teachers go, so goes the agricultural program. How true, how true!

Adults in the Community

In addition to the young farmers and adults directly involved with the local vocational agriculture department, there are at least two other groups with which we should be concerned. They are the adults directly involved in agriculture and the general public. Because of their occupational interests, it is very important for the first group to have positive feelings about the department or by asking for their assistance in one of the departmental or FFA projects or activities.

The general public needs to be kept informed about vocational agriculture, the program and the activities and accomplishments of the students. This may best be done through a strong public relations effort concerning the high school program, the FFA and the young and adult farmer programs. Positive public relations result in a positive image which results in positive perceptions on the part of others.

Advisory Committee Members

The importance of the local advisory committee to the future of the vocational agriculture department cannot be over emphasized. The committee provides direct support to and for the department. How it perceives the department usually goes a long way in guaranteeing the success of the department.

The advisory committee must be kept informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The members need to be worked with individually and as a group to continually strengthen the program. As the teachers of agriculture work with their students, administrators and others, they will want to keep the committee informed about progress being made and help needed.

The advisory committee is an important interface group between the vocational agriculture department and the community. It must be used effectively.

Local Government Officials

In addition to the local school administrators and the board members, it is very important for the local officials to have a good perception about the vocational agriculture department. The political arena is where many decisions are made that may directly or indirectly affect the agricultural department. The teachers of agriculture should know these people, elicit their support and help them be aware of and understand the agricultural program.

Conclusion

Other groups could be listed. Hopefully, these will suffice to make the point that how others perceive us is important. Teachers, students, advisory committee members, school authorities and others must be concerned about and build a strong program and project a positive image. Departmental progress, enrollment, activities and support are all affected by how others see us.

THEME

A Local Director's View

Agricultural education has been a viable force in providing training for the agribusiness sector of this nation in the past and will continue to have a vital role in the future. As the agricultural community, especially the production segment, becomes an increasingly smaller percentage of our working population, it becomes even more essential that training be provided for the present and future workers.

Increased emphasis in training for the agricultural community will be required since so many people will be depending upon so few to provide the food that is needed by the people of the United States and other nations of the world. However, if agricultural education is to be a viable force, certain aspects of the agricultural education program must receive attention. I would like to concentrate on two areas of concern: (1) What should be done now? and (2) What about the future?

What Needs Attention Now?

First of all, I see that the programs in agricultural education should be of a higher quality than is now evident. An increased emphasis is being placed upon school systems for better instruction in math, science, foreign languages and computer technology for high school graduates. This shift in educational emphasis will put increasing pressure in course selection upon students.

By Richard B. Carter

(Editor's Note: Mr. Carter is the Director of Vocational Education in Appomattox, Virginia 24522.)

Many programs in agricultural education have not kept pace in quality offerings. This will no longer suffice. Students are becoming more interested in program selection. They and their parents are looking for programs that will provide effective instruction in meeting needs of the job market.

Secondly, I believe that agricultural education should continue to emphasize leadership development through the FFA organization. The FFA has developed a strong reputation because of the excellent leadership that has been developed through the activities which have been an integral part of the agricultural education curriculum.

Leadership development should be provided for all students not just selected individuals. I see a decreased em-

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A Local Director's View

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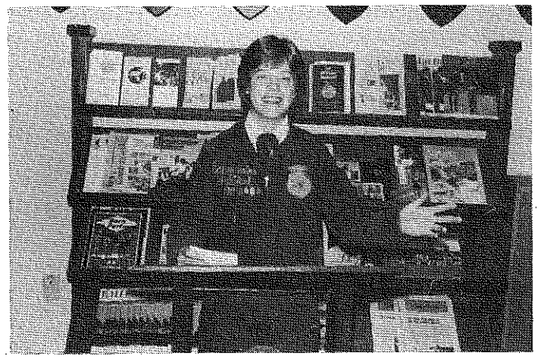


A continued emphasis on leadership development is necessary.

Many of the skills needed for job entry level in agribusiness careers will be taught in the laboratories of a department of agricultural education.

phasis in leadership development in Virginia. Increased emphasis must be placed on helping every FFA member to reach his or her potential. Public speaking, use of parliamentary procedure, conducting meetings, planning and conducting various FFA activities help to develop leadership.

Thirdly, increased attention must be given to supervised occupational experiences. There is no substitute for the on-site instruction provided by a teacher of vocational agriculture. Regular visits to the home or placement site by the instructor are necessary to develop effective relationships with parents and other individuals connected with the instructional program.

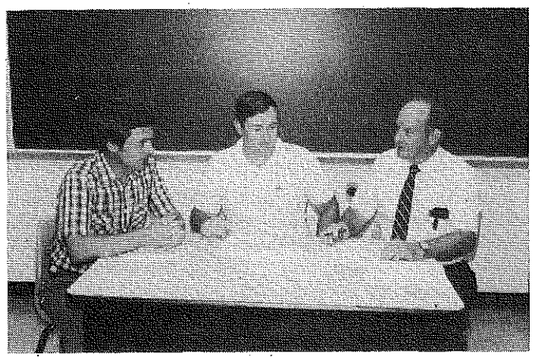
Teachers of agricultural education and school administrators should view on-site supervision as a vital ingredient of an effective program and make provisions for such supervision in the daily schedule. This will require the teachers to develop close relationships with school administrators.

People who are informed and knowledgeable will usually make the necessary decisions that are required to make effective programs. I would urge that more teachers of agricultural education be committed to on-site supervision and that school administrators endeavor to make such provisions for the supervision in the school schedule.

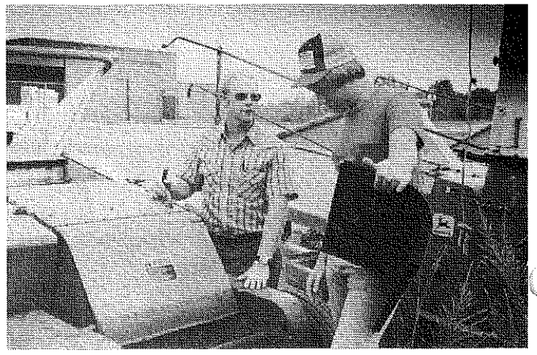
Another area that will strengthen programs of agricultural education is adult education. It is my opinion that effective programs of all-day instruction will be supported only where there is effective instruction for adults. Adult education was provided in the beginning of federal legislation and has continued in the legislative process.

School divisions across our state and nation have made reductions in adult education to such an extent that little or no instruction is taking place. Such a trend needs to be changed. The need for organized instruction for adults has long been recognized and documented. My concern is that efforts be made to revitalize this area in departments of agricultural education.

Lastly, I believe that teachers of agricultural education should concentrate on presenting a more professional attitude. Well developed and effective programs of vocational education in agriculture require constant attention. The teacher of vocational agriculture should be the best interpreter of a sound program in the community and should become involved in summer activities which will enhance the programs.



Developing extended contract time should be carefully planned with school administrators.



Strengthening adult education in agricultural education needs revitalization.

Developing extended contract time should be carefully planned with school administrators. It is, also, essential that such plans be executed in a professional and business-like manner. Accountability for the use of resources is important. Expressions such as "I need the time off during the summer months" or "what is there for me to do since the students are out-of-school" should not be a part of the teacher's working vocabulary.

There is much that a teacher should be doing. In fact, there is more to do than there is time. Consequently, much planning is needed to accomplish those tasks given the higher priorities. Developing a more positive professional attitude on the part of teachers in agricultural education becomes a must.

What About the Future?

About all we really know about the future in agricultural education is that there will be a change. There are, however, certain current trends from which several conclusions about the future in agricultural education can be drawn.

First, I see a trend toward more of the skills needed in the agribusiness careers being taught within the laboratories curriculum in agricultural education becomes competency based, the skills that are job relevant in the agricultural machinery careers may be taught within the laboratory of the school.

From the experiences that we have gained in our situation here in Appomattox, I know that the skills necessary for job entry level in careers in agricultural machinery service are reasonable expectations in the instructional program. As the higher technology develops with computer applications, more of the skills needed for job entry levels in the agribusiness careers should and ought to be taught in the school laboratories.

Since more of the skills will be taught at the school, there will be a lesser need for supervised occupational experience programs. This does not contradict my earlier statements about the supervised occupational experience program, but indicates a shift in where such supervised practices will take place.

I believe we will see an increasing need for land laboratories to provide the opportunities to develop competencies needed in areas of animal husbandry; crop production; soil, air, water conservation and forestry. A decrease in the number of students from farms or suitable sites for occupational experiences will create a demand for instructional sites on school grounds.

These situations will demand competent instructors who must show evidence of being capable of delivering a product as well as being in a position to provide related instructions. To bring about some of these facilities will call for some creative and innovative teachers and administrators. However, if agricultural education is to survive the challenges of an ever expanding compulsory or required courses for high school graduation, high expectations for quality programs must rate a top priority.

Secondly, I see the need for greater articulation within the secondary and postsecondary programs in the agribusiness offerings. One level of education can no longer be expected to provide all of the training needed. Decision makers at both the secondary and postsecondary levels need to formulate policies and procedures for such articulation.

The recent advent of competency based education across our nation will become the foundation for making the most effective use of both human and material resources. Articulation models have been developed for the accomplishment of this task. Many of these existing models may be adopted with a few minor changes to meet local situations.

Thirdly, I believe that more of what is being taught in vocational agriculture programs should be adapted to shorter periods of time such as one semester courses. Many more students would be able to benefit from such instructions if courses shorter than the traditional ones were offered. I would epand this to other vocational courses, also. For instance, a one semester course in leadership development would attract students from all disciplines.

Agribusiness students would also benefit from a one semester course in business communications which may be taught through the business education department of a high school. Such a change will require close coordination at the state and local levels. Leadership is needed from departments of education at the state level for the implementation of such changes.

Lastly, a higher quality of preservice training for agricultural education. This will present a challenge to instructors of agricultural education to develop quality programs.

The preservice training should have a viable supervised student teaching element. All that one needs to teach agricultural education will not be learned in four years, but a closely coordinated program between the university and the local school system will enhance the preparation.

There is much to be said about what goes into preparing a preservice program, but unless there is ample supervision from the teacher training institution much will be lost. I would strongly urge that more resources be put into the student teaching preparation for future excellence in agricultural education.

1984 Themes

SOEP:	Entrepreneurship	January	SOEP:	Sales and Service	July
SOEP:	Placement Programs	February	SOEP:	Horticulture	August
SOEP:	Cooperative Experience Programs	March	SOEP:	Mechanics	September
SOEP:	Laboratories	April	SOEP:	Forestry, Conservation & Recreation	October
SOEP:	Urban Programs	May	SOEP:	Adults	November
SOEP:	Recordkeeping	June	SOEP:	Post Secondary	December

THEME

Impressing Others

By James Howard

(Editor's Note: Mr. Howard is a former teacher of vocational agriculture at Mt. Vernon, Missouri, and is currently a graduate instructor in the Department of Agricultural Education at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802.)

How would a person locate the vocational agriculture building when coming into a rural community? On the first day of teacher orientation in the fall, how would you recognize the vocational agriculture instructor? How does a student distinguish between the vocational agriculture instructor and the foreign language teacher? How does the spouse and family of a vocational agriculture instructor get the attention of that teacher when over 60 students are making demands on the teacher's time; plus, time is being given to adults, young farmers, and the community.

All of these are questions which deal with how others perceive us as vocational agriculture instructors within our communities. Many people are looking at the vocational agriculture instructor from different directions and with different needs and intentions. Our students and parents see us as an advisor and teacher. Other educators are viewing us in our approach to the philosophy of education, our techniques and discipline.

Agriculturalists are looking to us for our technical knowledge and the ability to relay that knowledge to others. The community is looking to us to provide leadership in the church, civic clubs, and community affairs.

And our families are looking to us to provide financial support, love, and attention. We, the vocational agriculture instructors, must realize the different perspectives from which others view our work; and we must strive to make their ideas of agricultural education and ourselves positive and exemplary.

Housekeeping

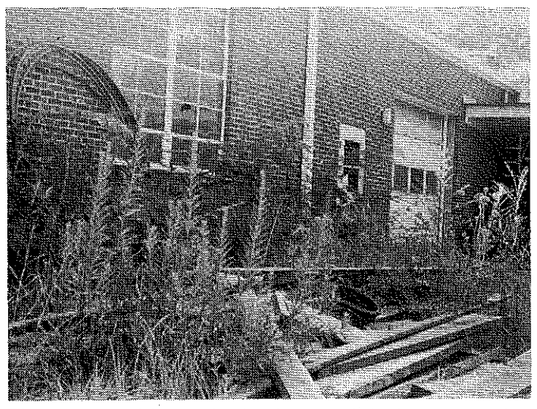
No matter what else is done and said, what others think of the vocational agriculture instructor and the department is how they look. That first viewed impression is lasting. The questions addressed in the opening paragraph; how do you find the vocational agriculture building and how do you recognize the vocational agriculture teacher are often negative perceptions others have.

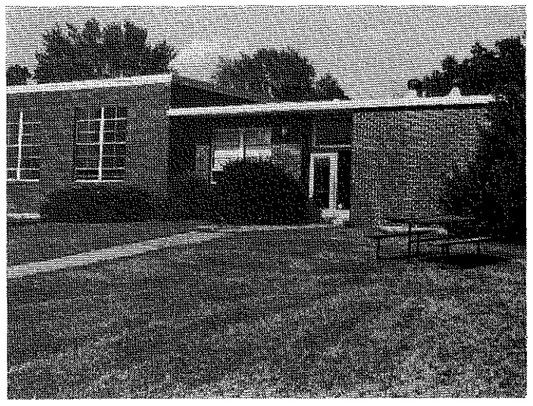
Too often, the vocational agriculture building in a community can be located by finding the metal scrap, engines and machines in disrepair, all visible from the street. What appears to the teacher as parts for a wagon, a partially finished project, and a good buy on metal, appears to others as junk.

For agricultural education to have a positive image in the future, departments must be cleaned up, appearances must look progressive, professional, and as a safe and desirable place for learning.

The inside of the buildings, even though not seen by nearly so many, have as much importance as the outward appearance. With teaching some classes in laboratory, some in a greenhouse, and some in the classroom; housekeeping takes on a whole new meaning as compared to teaching a language class.

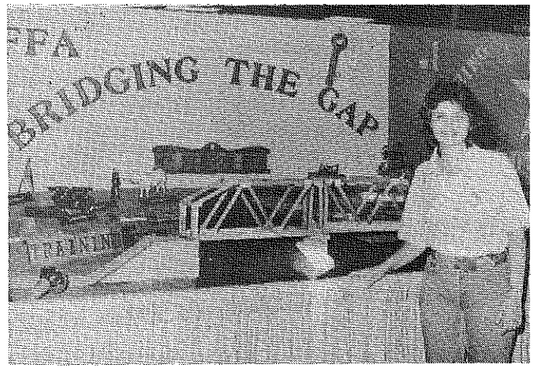
Appearance does not end with cleanliness and a picture postcard view, it also goes to the bookshelves where obsolete books are stored, to the tool panels where poorly fitted and sharpened tools are housed, and to the storeroom where improper containers store solvents and flammables.





The appearance of the vocational agriculture building from the street is the first perception that anyone has of the department and the teacher. It is the only perception that some ever have.

Advisory committee meetings are a means to make updates and improvements in the vocational agriculture programming as well as a vehicle to inform the public of the accomplishments of the department.



Educational exhibits are a means of promoting vocational agriculture and the FFA. Exhibits and other communication to the public are essential in forming favorable impressions.

The vocational agriculture instructor cannot be held fully acountable for the appearance of the department. School officials and janitors must realize that the vocational agriculture department is not a single classroom that can be cleaned with ten minutes of maintenance per day.

Personal Appearance

Another point on appearance is what the teacher of vocational agriculture looks like. The dress of the agriculture teacher is dictated by the activities and surroundings of the day. But gone are the days, if in fact ever they were, that an agriculture teacher should wear a cap inside at a professional meeting, wear manure covered boots in the teachers' lounge, chew tobacco in the classroom or at a meeting, wear clothing in poor repair in the laboratory, and curse as a common practice in the classroom. Agricultural educators, through their appearances and actions, are what others will use to evaluate the professionalism, accountability, and timeliness of agriculture education today.

The unwritten dress code for all teachers has changed over the past decades; however, inappropriate dress is easily noted. As a supervising teacher of student teachers, I always insisted that the male student teacher wear a necktie along with other appropriate dress for the first half of his practice teaching experience. Very seldom in their second half of practice teaching did they present themselves in the classroom without a necktie.

Too often, I have seen teachers bring FFA members in official dress to a function and themselves appear in frayed blue jeans and an open shirt. Granted, dress does not make the person, but it does form the opinion of others.

Professional Activities

Just as important as the appearance of the agricultural teacher is his/her actions. Many agricultural teachers in the past have kept themselves divorced from the rest of the faculty in a school system. Salary schedules, system-wide evaluations, and perhaps even merit pay will, in the future, depend on the total cooperation of all of the district's faculty. Those who do not cooperate and make their ideas known will find themselves in a position of having to fight alone against insurmountable odds.

Agricultural instructors, who are carrying on a balanced program, have an enormous work load, but it is becoming ever more important that they do not neglect the school district by whom they are hired. Counseling with students on their classes, avoiding conflicts with teachers concerning release time for students, cooperating with coaches concerning students out of school day activities, assisting administrators with total school discipline, and attending professional meetings are tasks which can not continue to be avoided by any teacher who wants to have a successful department and program. Some faculty lounges have too much discontent and negativism to be enjoyable; however, it is important for the agricultural teacher to be visible to to other faculty members and to be a part of the professional staff within a school district in order to provide for the total education of the district's students.

Administrators

In this time of austerity, decreasing enrollments, and a cry from some about back to the basics; the agricultural instructor will have to favorably impress the school's administrators and the board of education. Perceptions by these must be documented by student placement and follow-up data.

Vocational agriculture teachers should evaluate themselves and their program systematically to keep updated on important lessons and methods and to discard obsolete and inappropriate courses and methods. The vocational agriculture instructor most often has the largest budget within a school district for a single department or teacher. Preparing a budget, handling funds, making out purchase orders, and posting bills for payment are all places that will and should be closely scrutinized by the teacher's superiors. Impressions and perceptions by superiors can be enhanced by timely and frugal actions on these matters.

The Public

School personnel and students are not the only people who vocational agriculture instructors make impressions upon in performing their jobs. Adult and young farmers, alumni members, advisory committee members, other agriculture teachers in the state, state department of educa-

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Impressing Others

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tion personnel, teacher training staff, and citizens of a community, all have perceptions of agricultural education based upon the appearances, actions, and the publicity generated by the local agricultural instructor.

Agricultural education has an excellent vehicle for communication with the public in the form of the FFA. Local newspapers, radio, and even television public service spots are readily available to the FFA's youth oriented success stories. In a day when so much of the news concerns itself with undesirable stories of crime, vandalism, and disrespect; regular news releases about the activities and successes of a FFA chapter go a long way in promoting favorable perceptions of the FFA Chapter, vocational agricultural department, and the instructor of vocational agriculture.

For a community to see the results of a sound instruction program and the successes of FFA members, it will be up to the agricultural instructor and the FFA officers to publicize these stories, for only when a highly successful individual, such as a star state farmer is attained, will the news media show up at the department's door for a story.

FFA alumni and vocational advisory committee members generally only see what is placed in front of them to see. For the true benefits of either one of these groups to be realized, the agricultural teacher must call upon them for their assistance.

Advisory committees can only assist agricultural education within a community if they can evaluate the needs of the students that the district serve and know the goals of the teachers serving those students. Most alumni affiliates will assist a program and teacher in remarkable ways, if they are only called upon to do so.

In the future, alumni and advisory committees can play an ever expanding role in helping teachers keep abreast of the times and changes needed within an individual program. They also will be instrumental in providing for some of the expertise in the evolving technology of agriculture.

Adult Students

Adult and young farmer groups have seen good times and bad as far as their relative importance in the agricultural education program. They will play a vital part in the vitality of agricultural education programs in local school districts in the future. Though money for such programs will be limited, the vocational agriculture teachers that realize the value of the support of the adult and young farmer programs will have on-going and successful adult programming to compliment the high school vocational agriculture program.

Family

As addressed in the opening paragraph; how are agricultural teachers seen by their own family, or as some would have it; when are they seen by their family. Vocational agriculture teachers, because of their visibility in a community, have many demands put upon them beyond their teaching duties.

Chamber of Commerce, civic clubs, churches, ball programs, and community benefits are all looking for leaders to assist them. In rural communities one of the potential leaders is the instructor of vocational agriculture. It is, and will continue to be important that the agricultural teacher perform in some of these functions in order to fulfill some basic convictions and to acquire a broader base of people to involve in the agricultural education program. Teachers should not, however, penalize the job or their famiy in order to supply this leadership to the community.

Future years will find more stress being placed upon families. More things to do, more places to go and more activities in which to be involved will be a challenge of all families. The vocational agriculture instructor; already loaded with a full classroom schedule, adult program, civic and church responsibilities, and professional organization obligations; will have to learn to say no to some queries of his or her time.

Summary

How others perceive us and our programs is important to most of us as vocational agriculture instructors. We realize this importance and the importance that agricultural education has to the communities in which we live and each state and the nation. We must strive to make favorable impressions and complimentary perceptions. As agricultural teachers, we are viewed by more different people than practically anyone else within the community.

We have a profound influence upon our students and our young and adult farmers. Students' parents, FFA alumni members, and advisory committee members look daily to our accomplishments and lack of accomplishments. Because of the vastness of agricultural teaching and the influence that we have upon the entire community, school boards and administrators are more pleased or disenchanted with us than other teachers. Other faculty in our school district, other agricultural teachers, state department staff, and teacher training staff watch us and comment upon our classroom discipline, cooperation, teaching methods, and personal behavior, or our lack of any of these.

Today, as in years to come, the highly successful and respected agricultural teacher must dress appropriately, teach enthusiastically, be technically up-to-date, act appropriately, participate professionally, advise honestly, and assist the community and family.

Promoting vocational agriculture and the FFA is easily accomplished by members of the FFA. FFA Week is commenced with the signing of a local proclamation by the mayor.

THEME

Looking Up To Vocational Agriculture

By Jim McGuire

(Editor's Note: Dr. McGuire is a teacher educator in Agricultural Education at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101.)

"What are you doing, Billy?" I asked the youngster eating lunch in the Warren Elementary School cafeteria.

"Eating lunch!" replied Billy, grinning from ear to ear.

"And where did all this good food come from?" I continued.

"From the farm!" chorused Billy and several of his buddies who were eager to get into the conversation.

"Hey! I know you. I saw you out at Western's farm when we went to the Ag Center," called a freckled-faced girl down the table.

"That's right. Tell me, what is your name?"

"Marcia Lou Megan."

"Tell me Marcia, where did your roast beef sandwich come from?"

"It came from a cow and some wheat."

"Excellent . . . and your milk?" I continued.

"From cows!" Her friend across the table barely beat her out as they answered nearly in unison.

"But do you know what kind of cows?" I asked.

"Black and white dairy cows. I think they're called whole steins."

No more of that McDonalds, the milkman or the grocery store stuff! Two thousand first and fourth graders in Bowling Green and Warren County, Kentucky, know where their food comes from! They have learned about agriculture and vocational agriculture at the grass-roots level. And they learned it well thanks to the Warren Central and Warren East FFA Chapters and Western Kentucky's FFA Alumni and agriculture faculty. They have been taught the basics of food production by Future Farmers in their classrooms. They have experienced agricultural production at Western Kentucky University's farm.

The idea originated in 1981 when the Chairman of Western Kentucky University's Agriculture Department, Dr. L.D. Brown, asked for help in coordinating the many requests from local schools to visit Western's farm. He wanted to facilitate these requests, yet the classes did not always want to come at the most convenient time.

It was suggested that all schools in the area come to the farm on a given date, that a special program be instituted for them, and that the National FFA's 'Food for America' program be used in conjunction with visits to the school's farm. The FFA Alumni agreed to coordinate the event.

Planning

The Alumni began by contacting the Warren Central and Warren East FFA Chapters. They agreed to organize and teach the in-school phase of the program in the elementary schools that fed into each of their respective schools as well as a share of the Bowling Green city schools. Bowling Green schools do not offer vocational agriculture. Back on campus, the Alumni set up committees for coordination with Warren Central FFA, Warren East FFA, public information services, commercial sponsors, the agriculture faculty, and with persons serving as tour guides, conducting hayrides and coordinating traffic flow.

Group meetings were used to get people acquainted and familiar with the program. Purposes and suggested procedures were presented at principal's meetings of both the city and county school systems. The principals went back to their respective schools to check with the first and fourth grades to see which ones would want to participate.

The plan was for a one hour, in-class presentation by a team of local Future Farmers, followed by a two-to-three hour field trip to the University farm. The teachers had the option of participation in either or both phases of the program.

Bus transportation was to be furnished by the school districts. In most cases, either the principal or one of the teachers from the school called the coordinator to express their interest and to select the best time to arrive at the farm for their tour.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to check out those schools not responding on schedule. All but one school has participated in one or both phases at least one of the two years the program has been presented. Kindergarten classes have asked and been permitted to come on the tour portion of the program.

Future Farmer teams from Warren Central and Warren East Chapters met on campus with the FFA Alumni for program orientation. They learned what would be presented at the farm and opportunities for their in-class presentations. Selected exercises from each of the 'Food for America' activity books were duplicated by Western's Agriculture Department; although, in most cases, the FFA chapters selected and duplicated their own materials.

Once school assignments were completed, the chapters did their own scheduling and presenting within the schools. An improvement for the second year was having the same presentation team available at the University farm to serve as tour guides.

The excellent presentations and the official attire of the FFA members in the classroom and at the farm connected FFA to agriculture very vividly in the minds of the elementary students.

The most difficult and possibly the most important planning was involvement of the agriculture faculty. The faculty was uneasy as many of the university personnel could

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Looking Up To Vocational Agriculture

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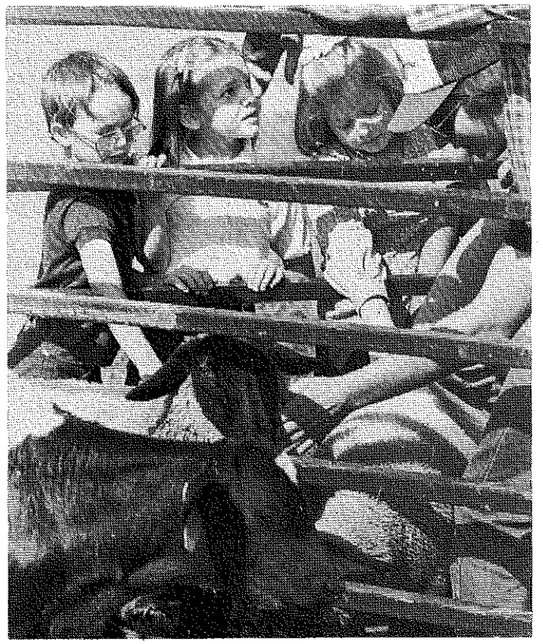


The Food for America program is an ideal way of forming attitudes about the FFA, vocational agriculture, and the agriculture teacher (photograph courtesy of Jim Howard).

not relate to and in some cases get enthused about the students at the elementary level. Usually they came through and faculty interest is growing. Those most cooperative are those who have been to the farm to visit with the youngsters during the tour.

Agriculture faculty involvement was comprehensive and varied. Mechanization was in charge of securing tractors and equipment for the hayrides of the farm and the half-million dollar mechanized exhibit in the big arena. Signs told of the cost of an implement, cost to fill the fuel tank, or expenditures for the enormous tires on the implements.

Animal science worked with the animal exhibits which have included a sow and baby pigs, chickens, dairy goats, sheep, beef cattle, a duck slide and horses. Dairy helped animal science by contributing dairy cows which the youngsters enjoyed trying to hand-milk. Dairy also arranged with Dairymen, Inc. to have a truckload of free milk samples for the students.

Horticulture has a production greenhouse adjacent to the Expo Center which provided a tour stop. Agronomy prepared crop displays along with exhibits of related products processed from those crops. Education coordinated showing of the movie "Food from Farm to You" and coordinating tour groups.

Agricultural Economics provided information about the farm for the hayrides and this year added a lively group participation microcomputer demonstration in the sales arena. Students tried to guess the food item the micro was thinking about through the "Raise the Flags" game. They learned that microcomputers are used on farms and throughout agriculture.

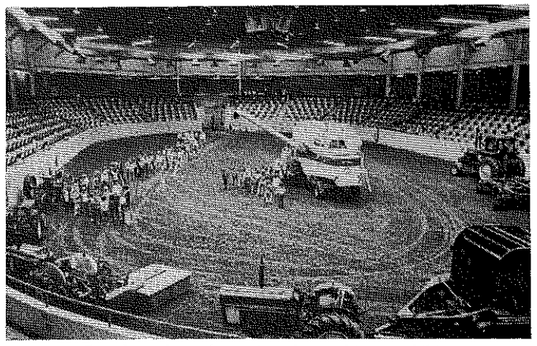
Imagine six hundred guests arriving at your front door within a fifteen minute time period. Action springs to life at Western's Agriculture Exposition Center about 8:45 a.m. on the days of farm tours.

The first group headed into the classroom areas for the movie presentation. The second group went to the sales arena for a quick welcome and then out the back door to wagons waiting to take them on a tour of the farm. The third group started in the animal holding area just outside the big arena where the fourth group was examining the machinery display.

Still another tour was checking out the crop and commercial displays around the upper concourse of the Expo Center. Groups of students rotated from area to area asking questions continually of their tour guides. Newly arriving groups went into the sales arena for a welcome, orientation and the computer demonstration.

Throughout the day and the area, tour presentations are frequently interrupted by "Smoky Bear" from the Kentucky Forestry Department, "Big Chicken" sponsored by Famous Recipe, and "Big Red", Western's lovable mascot.

A Western Kentucky University student shows first graders her milk goats at the Food for America program.



Fourth grade students view the machinery exhibit at Western Kentucky University Exhibit Hall.

New features are added annually. Two examples this year were the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's mobile exhibit and a cheese processing company which distributed free samples of ham, sausage, pepperoni pizza, salami and many other flavors of processed cheese. Free milk samples were distributed as students arrived back from the wagon tours of the farm. Chocolate milk won the popularity contest three-to-one. Most student groups spent just over two hours at the comprehensive and fast-moving tour day.

The payoff for the entire program provided by the Future Farmers and Western Kentucky will take years to assess. Of immediate interest are the thank you letters and attached handdrawn pictures sent by many of the first and fourth-graders. More lasting are the impressions and attitudes held, perhaps for a lifetime, by the participating students.

Here is a list of what we believe to be some of the benefits of our activity:

- encourages elementary teachers to work with vocational agriculture teachers
- provides a visible activity for public media coverage
- ties together elementary, secondary and higher education
- gets agriculture students interested in teaching opportunities
- tells us which administrators are cooperative
- ties agriculture and FFA together in the minds of elementary students
- teaches local chapters to cooperate rather than compete on activity
- reaches parents through activity of their children
- builds local support for vocational agriculture
- gets agriculture professors involved in elementary education
- gives agribusinesses an opportunity to tell their story to greater numbers of people.

THEME

Alaska's Hidden Industry

By Carla Kirts

(Editor's Note: Dr. Kirts is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.)

What does the average Alaskan citizen think about vocational agriculture? Nothing! Why? Because agriculture, the precursor to vocational agriculture, is Alaska's hidden industry.

Alaska encompasses 375.3 million acres. According to the Soil Conservation Service, 20.5 million acres has agricultural potential, of which 2.2 million acres has been allocated by the State for agricultural production. To date, however, less than .2 million acres is in production although the state goal is to have .5 million acres in production by 1990. Obviously, finding agriculture in Alaska is like "hunting a needle in a haystack".

Agriculture in Alaska is hidden from a physical perspective. That is, one does not find agricultural enterprises lining the Alaskan highways. In fact, Delta Junction and the Matanuska Valley are the only agricultural looking areas of the state.

Agriculture is also hidden from an economic perspective. The dollar value of agricultural contributions to the state economy are miniscule compared to petroleum development, tourism and fishing receipts.

Although visibility and scope are major deterrents to the unveiling of Alaskan agriculture, the most critical factor perpetuating the masquerade is public ignorance. In short, the average Alaskan understands neither the meaning nor the significance of agriculture.

Lack of Public Awareness

The public's lack of awareness regarding agriculture is not unique to Alaska. As a society, Americans are becoming further and further removed from direct participation in and, general knowledge of, modern agricultural practices. The latest statistics lend credence to this trend: less than two percent of the American population is involved in agricultural production. These producers supply food and fiber for themselves and 78 other Americans and, in addition, support a valuable export market. The balance of Americans, approximately 98 percent, are the consumers.

On the other hand, current literature is repleat with facts and figures exalting agriculture as the largest industry in the United States. For example, agricultural assets account for over 85 percent of the capital assets of all manufacturing corporations in America, and one in five Americans is employed in some phase of the industry, thus making agriculture the largest employer.

Having been confronted with apparently conflicting facts, it is little wonder that the public makes inaccurate inferences (i.e., two percent of the population comprising the largest workforce?) and is bewildered. Why does such confusion exist? Semantics. Some Alaskan scenarios demonstrate the magnitude of the problem.

An instructional activity used in an introductory course required for natural resources majors at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks illustrates the point. During the first lecture students are asked to write a definition of agriculture on an index card. Prior to the next class meeting, defini-

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Alaska's Hidden Industry

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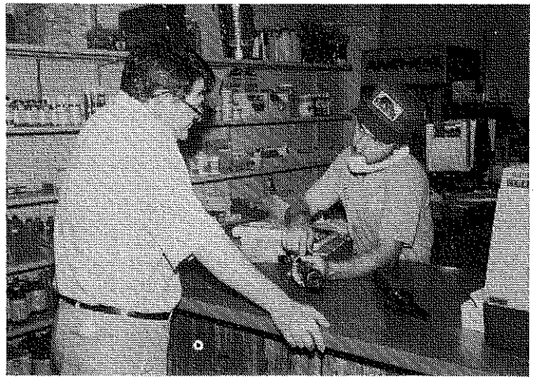


The concept of agriculture being more than food production needs to be emphasized through a multifaceted approach. (Photographs courtesy of Lindsey Keene, vocational agriculture instructor, Southeast Lauderdale Attendance Center, Meridian, Mississippi 39301.)

tions are condensed and categorized such that a handout containing the array of suggested definitions is presented to each student. The class is then asked to develop a consensus definition. Even after thorough, discerning discussion, the students definition invariably represents a narrow view of agriculture and generally contains such phrases as "livestock and crop production", "farming", "land management for food production". Ornamental horticulture, natural resources management, forestry, and agribusiness are seldom mentioned.

Perhaps a more vivid example of public misconception of agriculture in Alaska is presented in the following letter to the Editor which appeared in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*. It was titled "Playing Farmer".

> I had to hold my crying child and try to explain why our cruel neighbor was shooting the cute baby cow she'd fed grass to this summer. How do you explain that this brutal killing is so he can play "farmer"?
>
> Some other people out here keep horses and pigs. None of these animals belong here. These same people cut down trees and then put dangerous electric fences up to play "rancher"! I checked with someone that knows and found the State of Alaska removed all fence laws from the books. So, as far as we know, fencing land for livestock is against the law. And this should be enforced.
>
> We moved to a rural area to enjoy the wilderness and teach our child to be one with nature. Now we can't even enjoy the farm because of the suffering of the animals. Horses in metal boxes, cows tied to walls, pigs and others in little cages. And for what? So some sadistic kids can rake in the money at the auction later.
>
> These same people also make the highways unsafe by carrying these animals in pickups or trailers so slow you take risks to pass.
>
> Also, the hay these "cowboys" haul should not be allowed on the highway as they are dangerous.
>
> All this leads up to my first line. I shouldn't have to see my child upset by these cruel people who seem to enjoy chopping off birds' heads, shooting cows and pigs, and subject [sic] other animals to horrors. Laws should be enacted to stop these "cowboys and farmers." They should go back where the other hay seeds are.
>
> They should no longer allow these people there, and if they do, then the humane group should oversee everything. Most of all, the Borough should stop these people from fencing the land which is against the law and destroying the natural beauty of the land in the rural areas. They should also make it against the law to kill these unfortunate animals where others can see or hear them.

Shocking, isn't it? Such a letter would not have been published in Iowa, California, Texas or some other agriculturally oriented state. The second assignment for students in the course is to write a response to this letter.

What is the significance of such a letter? First, it plays on the reader's emotions; second, it sounds convincing, especially to readers who are not and have not been involved in production agriculture. Thus, via such tactics, negative attitudes and misconceptions are fostered and perpetuated. Even though the writer's idealistic philosophy is unrealistic and a number of statements are pure conjecture, a misinformed reader is likely to be persuaded to sympathize and agree.

What impact does public perception have in the agriculture industry anyway? Consider the development of agricultural policy, particularly at the state level. Who has ultimate authority over policy development? Elected officials. Who elects the officials? The public. The impact of the problem is obvious.

A Multifaceted Approach

The most plausible solution to the problem is education. A multifaceted approach to agricultural education is most appropriate for Alaska.

First and foremost, one must understand that the development of agricultural education in Alaska will occur, and must occur, in an unprecedented and nontraditional manner. That is, secondary vocational agriculture, and other forms of agricultural education present in the Lower 48, were predicated upon successful agricultural enterprises. Even though agriculture has been active in Alaska since 1795, it has failed to evolve into a stable, progressive industry. Contrary to popular belief, climate and topography were *not* the limiting factors; instead politics and ignorance were, and are, the culprits.

Education in agriculture is urgently needed in Alaska, in fact, economic stability may depend on it. For many years, Alaskans have predicted a decline in petroleum-produced revenues and have realized that management of renewable natural resources must receive more emphasis.

Improving agriculture has been identified as one means of ensuring the long-term economic integrity of Alaska. Thus, the ultimate challenge in initiating a structure and program for agricultural education in Alaska is to implement a network concurrently with, rather than in response to, the development of the agriculture industry.

Demanding the immediate institution of a number of secondary vocational agriculture programs is not the appropriate first step, especially when several programs currently in operation are floundering. Experience has shown that the hasty creation of new programs, in many cases, has merely produced short-lived results; thus, leaving an aura of failure associated with the vocational agriculture concept. Unfortunately, this image precedes and inhibits the establishment of subsequent programs.

Further compounding the problem, Alaskans, in general, having a rather narrow understanding of agriculture, certainly do not understand the purpose, value or structure of vocational agriculture. Understandably, if the public's first impression is associated with program failure, statewide development of a viable and comprehensive vocational agriculture network definitely becomes increasingly difficult.

This is not to say that secondary programs in Alaska are not and will not receive support. Instead, a philosophy of quality versus quantity is being applied. Assuming that quantity is not necessarily indicative of quality, a few effective programs with Alaskan-based curriculum, active FFA chapters, practical supervised occupational experience programs, and adequate facilities are capable of forming the foundation upon which additional programs are built. Thus, the wholesale establishment of vocational agriculture programs will yield somewhat to other forms of agricultural education, the first of which is publicized support of Alaska's struggling agriculture industry.

Because agriculture is Alaska's hidden industry and because Alaskans perceive agricultural development from a negative standpoint, Alaskan agricultural educators must continuously endeavor to communicate with the public regarding the agriculture industry. Every opportunity to discuss basic concepts, trends, and issues must be utilized. Only through such efforts will citizens and elected officials acquire a more realistic (not necessarily pro-development) understanding of the value of and support mechanisms for the production, processing and distribution of food and fiber commodities in Alaska. Over the long term, support for the industry transforms into support for secondary vocational agriculture and other forms of agricultural education.

The development of Alaskan-based curriculum materials is another essential function of agricultural educators in Alaska. Although funding for such projects is difficult to obtain because of the exorbitant cost per student, it is imperative that vocational agriculture students be exposed to concepts pertinent to, and often unique, to Alaska agriculture. Even without outside funding, some curriculum materials will be developed, however, at a much slower pace. Materials available from local Cooperative Extension Service offices are currently providing the technical foundation for both informal public education programs and vocational agriculture classes.

Post secondary instruction in agriculture is also receiving some attention. A two-year program is underway in a community college and an option in general agriculture is a new component of the degree in Natural Resources Management offered at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. If the option proves successful, as current statistics indicate, a full B.S. degree in agriculture may be feasible and become a reality in the near future. In the meantime, a teacher education program may also become feasible.

As the agricultural industry in Alaska expands, the value of congruent growth in agricultural education cannot be overemphasized. Agriculture is basic to human survival and once stabilized will prove to be a valuable asset to the state's economy. It goes without saying that instruction at all levels is basic to agricultural development. Adults are the current decision-makers regarding agricultural policy and their progeny are the labor force, voters, consumers and leaders of tomorrow.

For the first time an opportunity to prepare Alaska's first generation of Alaskan agriculturists has unfolded. It is an opportunity not to be ignored. Historically, agricultural education has rendered a remarkable influence on the development of agriculture as a national institution; agricultural education can produce the same effects in Alaska.

Coming . . .

December's Theme:

Assessing Student Performance

ARTICLE

Updating the Leadership

By Herbert Schumann

(Editor's Note: Dr. Schumann is Coordinator for Vocational Education at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas 77341.)

"I wish he would have to teach the kind of kids we have today."

"Things have changed since she was in the classroom."

"He ought to get out of the agency office and back into the classroom and find out what it's really like."

"Those theories that she talks about just don't work in the classroom."

Comments such as these are often uttered by teachers of vocational agriculture as they are besieged by suggestions, pressures, and demands from persons in leadership positions in agricultural education. Many teachers regard those in teacher education, administration, and state supervision as being completely out of contact with the reality of today's classrooms.

Keeping current is a problem for all in education; however, it may be particularly acute for those in teacher education, administration, and supervision. These groups must give careful consideration to the merits of these criticisms.

Keeping Current

There are numerous ways to keep abreast of the realities of the contemporary vocational agriculture classroom. Teacher educators in agriculture generally have much closer contact with teachers since they are more actively involved with inservice activities than their contemporaries in general education. State staff supervise various aspects of the vocational agriculture program and consequently have frequent interaction with teachers.

Administrators have the opportunity to visit classrooms often and maintain contact with the reality of the classroom. Participation in state and national conferences provide persons in leadership positions in agricultural education the opportunity to exchange ideas with other agricultural educators.

All of these activities do assist these groups in keeping up-to-date; however, actual classroom experience, involving all of its frustrations, problems, and uncertainties, is often lacking. It is true that many of those in leadership positions have not had experience in vocational agriculture classrooms in recent years. New groups such as females, disadvantaged, and handicapped students are receiving considerable emphasis in today's programs of vocational agriculture. Vocational agriculture classes are likely to be comprised of a greater percentage of non-farm youth than existed in the previous era.

Teacher educators, whose teaching backgrounds were obtained when these groups were generally excluded from the program, may lack the experiential base to prepare teachers to successfully work with these students. State staff and vocational administrators may likewise lack relevant experiences in working with these groups.

Traditionally, the top teachers of vocational agriculture have been selected for teacher education, state staff, and administration positions; however, even the best educator loses touch with the situation after several years away from the classroom. Many teacher educators have focused essentially on theoretical and academic approaches to teaching vocational agriculture to the exclusion of the pragmatic problems faced by today's teachers. Many critics charge that teacher preparation programs are irrelevant. They also point out that administrators and state supervisory staff often lack recent teaching experience.

Texas Standards

Recently, statewide hearings were held in Texas regarding the proposed revision of certification standards for the education profession. All components of the educational community presented recommendations regarding the proposed standards. One of the major concerns expressed by teachers throughout the state was the lack of relevant classroom teaching experience by persons in leadership roles in education.

An exchange program may offer the unique potential for teacher educators and vocational agriculture teachers to reverse roles for a period of time. This could be a positive experience for both parties. The university students could benefit from the relevance brought by the teacher of vocational agriculture. The high school students could gain from the vast reservoir of teaching skills of the teacher educator. This exchange would improve liaison between those who espouse recommended pedagogical skills and those who must practice them.

The proposed plan for vocational agriculture classroom experience does have some limitations. Some of the areas of concern may be:

1. Many of those in teacher education, state supervisory staff, and administration may feel insecure in the classroom. It is less threatening to be a theorist than one who must put these theories into practice.

2. Classroom teaching is only one component of the myriad of responsibilities faced by the teacher of vocational agriculture. Preparing for shows and fairs or assisting with other school and community activities may not be experienced by the teacher educator who is only involved in classroom teaching.

3. School systems may be reluctant to permit the regular teacher to engage in an exchange program. They may also feel hesitant to demand the same expectations of the visiting teacher as they would of their regular teachers.

4. It may be impractical, particularly for state staff and administrators, for some people to leave their positions for any extended period of time. There are usually numerous on-going activities which are difficult to delegate to co-workers.

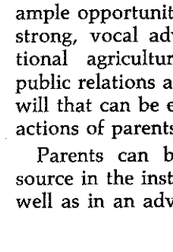
5. To obtain the optimum experience, persons in leadership positions should have a complete immersion experience comparable to that required of the student teacher. Many may be reluctant to leave their home and family responsibilities as well as their professional responsibilities for an extended period of time.

6. Technical agriculture has experienced dramatic changes since the time many taught vocational agriculture. Agriculture competencies, possessed by teacher educators which were approved practices twenty years ago, may be uselessly outdated in contemporary classrooms.

Although there are some concerns regarding the proposal for leaders in agricultural education to keep up-to-date through a return to vocational agriculture classrooms, it does have considerable potential for professional growth of these groups. It would be a significant opportunity to blunt the criticism of those critics who cry that many teacher educators, administrators, and supervisors are hopelessly out of contact with the reality of contemporary classrooms. Hopefully, it should result in an improved agricultural education program.

ARTICLE

Involving Parents



By Richard M. Foster

(Editor's Note: Dr. Foster is in the Agricultural Education Department, University of Nebraska, East Campus, Lincoln, Nebraska 68583.)

Parent involvement has been a primary goal of education for decades. While most academic disciplines work hard to develop ways for involving parents, vocational agriculture instructors can easily stimulate the natural participation of parents in all areas of a comprehensive vocational agriculture program and reap tremendous benefits.

Parent involvement is essential in a well organized vocational agriculture department. After considering all aspects of the program and its impact on the community, it is easy to see that students' parents are one of the most important groups contributing to the success and/or failure of a program. It is in the best interest of teachers to actively involve parents in any manner possible.

Benefits

Parents still have the greatest impact on their son's and daughter's participation in the vocational agriculture program. Encouragement and support from parents can mean the difference in a student being able to attend a field trip, a leadership conference, or participate in the monthly FFA meeting.

Parents will ultimately make the decision about whether the activity is of great enough value to off-set having their son or daughter stay home. It clearly becomes imperative that parents have a good knowledge of the program and the potential benefits from student participation so such decisions can be made fairly and consistently.

Rawls (1981) reported that parents provide significant assistance in helping students develop and conduct SOE programs. Parents have a greater impact on the success of student SOE programs than any other adult. A basic knowledge of the interrelatedness of SOE, FFA and the classroom will enable parents to understand why SOE has been referred to as "The foundation on which vocational agriculture is built" (Crawford, 1983). Parental knowledge and understanding of SOE and vocational agriculture will strengthen SOE and provide a higher quality experience program for students.

Vested Interest

Parents, as taxpayers and school district patrons, generally have the ear of school administrators, school board members, and advisory committee members. Parents have an interest in school operating procedures. They visit with each other, with other teachers and with civic leaders and organizations.

This community involvement allows ample opportunity for parents to be a strong, vocal advocate for the vocational agriculture department. The public relations and community goodwill that can be enhanced through the actions of parents is immeasurable.

Parents can be an immediate resource in the instructional program as well as in an advisory capacity. They have a keen interest in the program, because their sons and daughters are enrolled. It is only reasonable that they should want a high quality program and be willing to assist the teacher in providing the resources to make that possible.

Parent assistance can take the form of hosting field trips and judging clinics or serving as a guest speaker for a classroom topic. They may help in chaperoning students at FFA activities. They can serve on advisory committees or on special committees. Parents are a knowledgeable and readily available resource to vocational agriculture.

Cultivating Interest

We, as agricultural educators, need to cultivate parent involvement in secondary programs. If parents are not informed about vocational agriculture, some opportunities for program success are being compromised. Several activities could be carried out to enhance parental involvement.

1. Get to know parents — SOE instructional visits should not be geared only to students. It is just as important to talk with parents and inform them of the vocational agriculture program. Such information may be essential on the first SOE visit, but it is also quite important to maintain lines of communication on a continuous basis. Parents should know the instructor, the program, and the educational benefits for their child.

2. Invite parents to special functions — It is customary for parents to attend annual FFA banquets. They attend for a variety of reasons, mostly because they have a son or daughter who is expected to be there. However, there are

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Involving Parents

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many opportunities throughout the year when parents can be made to feel a part of the program. These include a summer family picnic and recreation meeting; an orientation meeting for students, parents, and administrators; initiation ceremonies; special recognition events; meetings with topics of interest to parents; etc. Make an effort to include parents in all types of activities.

3. Utilize parents in the program — Ask for assistance in carrying out departmental activities. Vocational agriculture activities and FFA events are natural for involving others, especially those with demonstrated interests. Serving as resource persons, chaperones, and advisory committee members will further enhance parental acceptance and support. People like to help! Parents want to help!

4. Seek advice — A teacher cannot know all the technical information or keep up with new innovations in all areas. However, agribusiness owners and farmers do keep current in their own areas of specialization. Seek out information from parents. The simple fact that their opinion is being requested indicates they are important to the program; they are making a contribution; and that the teacher has the initiative to seek supplemental information.

5. Acknowledge parental help — It is not enough to acknowledge community support only at the annual banquet, although it is certainly proper. A verbal expression of gratitude or even a short note of appreciation is appropriate at any time. Parental support needs to be recognized with both the informal handshake and the public recognition.

Conclusion

Generating community support, enhancing public relations, and working with administrators are all important. However, to have the greatest and longest lasting impact on any vocational agriculture program, put a major effort into improving the involvement and support of the parents. The perception they have of vocational agriculture can and does have a definite impact on our program as well as on the success of individual students. Involvement of parents is a critical linkage that agricultural educators must continue to cultivate. This is one group of clientel that makes a critical difference in our program. Their perception of vocational agriculture has to be positive.

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ARTICLE

Women Are In Agricultural Education to Stay

Federal legislation, prompted by social changes in sex roles, has challenged vocational educators to provide sex equity in their programs. Of all the traditionally male vocational programs, agricultural education has made the greatest progress toward removing sex stereotypes.

Evidence to support this progress can be obtained from many sources including secondary, post secondary and adult program enrollment, the number of female agricultural teachers and teacher educators, and female FFA membership and officers.

JOHN H. HILLISON AND PENNY L. BURGE

(Editor's Note: Dr. Hillison is an Associate Professor in the Agricultural Education Program and Dr. Burge is Assistant Professor of Home Economics Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.)

Enrolllment Trends

Female enrollment in all levels of agricultural education has increased. The increase in the number of women has been larger than any other vocational service area's increase in attracting opposite-sex students.[1] As recently as the middle 1970's, agriculture was described as the most male intensive teaching field in the country with less than 1 percent of the teachers being female.[2]

By the late seventies, the number had increased to almost 3 percent. The decade of the eighties has seen an even larger percentage of women completing agricultural teacher education programs and many of these women find employment as agricultural teachers in the public school system.

Since opening membership to females in 1969, the FFA has seen an increase in female members in all states, with certain states having a large female membership. For example, 39 percent of California's FFA members are young women and almost 50 percent of local chapter officers are females. There have been seven female national FFA officers, including the current President, Jan Eberly, Additionally, female members of the FFA have done proportionately as well as their male counterparts in winning contests and proficiency awards.

Involving Women

According to a recent United States Department of Agriculture Report, 5 percent of the nation's nearly 2.5 million farms are operated by women, about 128,000 altogether, and a much larger percent are co-managed by men and women.[5] With this many farms being managed by women, certainly more should be enrolled in adult agricultural education classes. Co-managing of farms by a husband-wife team (especially where the wife keeps the records) also indicates a need to teach both sexes in adult programs.

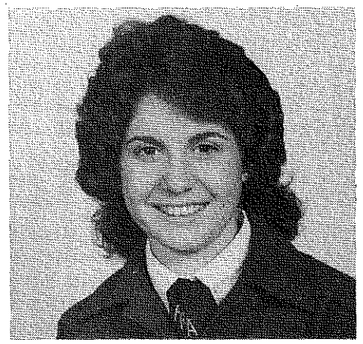
With the increased participation by female students in the total agricultural education program, successful role models are needed. These role models will both influence current students and help recruit future students. One of the best and most influential role models for students is their teacher.

The successful woman teacher would greatly enhance the prestige of females enrolling in agricultural education courses and belonging to the FFA. A second practical way to provide role models for female students, in order to help them participate more fully in agriculture, is to see a female resource person in an agricultural occupation. Such a worker may be more likely to emphasize the opportunities available to females in the field.

Agricultural education professionals can take pride in the progress they have made. Yet, while more sexual balance in enrollment, student officers, teachers, and teacher educators in agricultural education can be cited as evidence of a movement toward sex-equity; there are other factors to consider. More detailed enrollment analysis indicates that females are entering only a limited number of agricultural areas, most often horticulture and animal science, while males continue to select these as well as all the other agricultural areas.

Female teachers also usually prefer to teach only selected agricultural areas. Some studies suggest that once educated in agriculture at any level; secondary, post secondary or college; women have difficulty obtaining certain types of jobs, especially in some geographical areas. Wages and salaries are often lower for women than men in similar positions in agriculture related work.

Also, the FFA has some interesting sex-related figures to consider. While almost half of the chapter officers in California are female, most are clustered in the clerical positions of secretary and reporter while males fulfill the role of president, vice president, treasurer, and sentinel.[4]



The National FFA Organization has been and continues to be served with distinction by its female members. (Photographs courtesy of John Hillison).

It is not reasonable to expect enrollment or employment in agricultural education to soon reach a perfect sexual balance.

Yet, there is room for more efforts to seek equity. Futurists, when considering agriculture as well as other occupational areas, vary in their predictions of things to come. But one thing they are in agreement on is the complete and equal involvement of both sexes in occupational scenarios. This involvement calls for agricultural programs that prepare females as well as males in all agricultural roles and areas. Even today, there is a large clientele whose needs could more effectively be met.

Teachers of agriculture can seek assistance from school guidance counselors in the recruitment and retention of female students. Counselors play a major role in students' curriculum selection and career choices, but many are not aware of the progress females have made in agricultural education programs and the new opportunities available to women in agricultural occupations.

Guidance counselors may not be as aware of opportunities in agriculture as agricultural education teachers. Consequently, teachers need to inform counselors at their schools with both fact and examples of females involvement in the field of agriculture.

Another opportunity to increase involvement of women in agricultural education is in the composition of advisory councils. Women residents in the community as well as females in agricultural occupations can be of great assistance in making programmatic decisions in the agricultural education department. Members selected for departmental advisory councils should be reflective of community interests, having both men and women on the advisory council would make the council more representative.

Room for Improvement

Agricultural education has done much to open its membership to females. For example, progress can be noted at the secondary level, in the FFA, with classroom teachers, and with students enrolled in adult education program.[5] While a great deal of improvement has been made, there is still room for more involvement of females in the total program.

Teachers, counselors, supervisors, and teacher educators all must build on the success stories of previous female participants in agricultural education and use them as examples to encourage greater female participation. Women are in agricultural education and they are here to stay.

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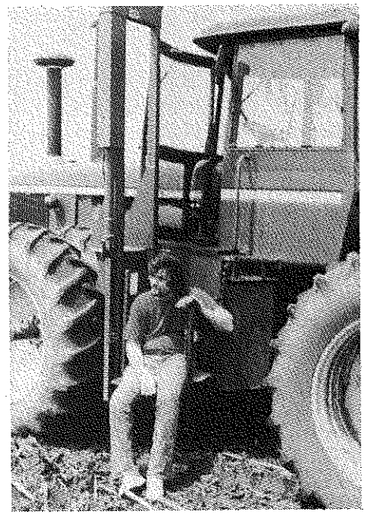
ARTICLE

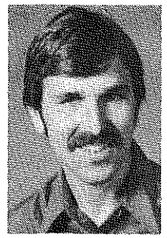
Physically Impaired Farmers: Can We Help Them?



Bill Gundrum, of Royal Center, Indiana, is able to mount his John Deere 8430 tractor with the aid of a hydraulically operated manlift. Bill was paralyzed from the chest down in an automobile accident.

Bill rolls his wheelchair out the front door of his house, down the ramp and across his paved driveway. He brings the wheelchair to rest beside a big 4-wheel drive tractor where he transfers from his wheelchair to the specially designed lift attached to the tractor. Once positioned upon the lift's platform, Bill flips a switch and the hydraulically operated lift takes him up level to the floor of the tractor's cab. Bill slides, on his rear-end, through the cab's door into the tractor cab.

When Bill has positioned himself beside the tractor's seat he reaches overhead, grabs hold of a specially mounted bar and lifts himself into the seat. From the seat Bill is able to operate the tractor with the aid of a specially designed hand clutch and hand brake. This modified tractor has enabled Bill, a quadraplegic due to an automobile accident, to perform practically all of the field preparation work on the 700 acre cash grain farm that he and his dad operate.



By Roger Tormoehlen

(Editor's Note: Mr. Tormoehlen is a Graduate Research Associate in the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.)

Many Affected

A complex question that has been raised recently is whether or not efforts should be made to assist physically impaired farmers, such as Bill, remain active in their farm operations following a crippling accident or illness. As a vocational agriculture instructor you will probably encounter, in your community, physically impaired farmers who need help to continue to farm.

Recent focus on the needs of the handicapped, partially due to the International Year of the Handicap, has indicated that there are a substantial number of farmers suffering from physical impairments. To help shed some light on this area, the Agriculture Engineering Department at Purdue University conducted a survey to determine the nature and proportion of physical impairments among Indiana's farm operators.

Impairments

Hearing impairments affected 25.0 percent of the farm operators (Table 1). Approximately twenty (19.9) percent of the farm operators indicated that they were hard of hearing. Though not a serious impairment in the operation of a farm, hearing loss can complicate some activities such as adjusting certain types of equipment and also create serious safety hazards.

Twenty-four percent of the farm operators revealed that they suffered from a cardiovascular (or heart) impairment. High blood pressure, the most commonly cited cardiovascular impairment was possessed by 12.2 percent of the farm operators. Farm operators, who are affected by a heart impairment, may find it extremely difficult or even impossible to perform tasks that involve climbing, such as mounting a tractor or combine. A heart condition may also affect the farm operator's ability to perform tasks that involve heavy lifting, such as carrying feed bags, hay bales and water buckets.

Nearly twenty-two percent of the farm operators disclosed that they possessed a respiratory impairment. The most common respiratory impairment; allergy other than hay fever, was cited by 9.2 percent of the farm operators. Farmers with respiratory problems may find it extremely difficult to work in confinement livestock buildings, hay mounds, and other dusty situations.

The remaining impairment categories are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Physical Impairments Among Indiana's Farm Operators

Impairments	Percent of Farm Operators Affected
Musculoskeletal	30.6
-arthritis	20.9
-chronic back problems	9.2
Hearing	25.0
-hard of hearing	19.9
Cardiovascular (heart)	24.0
-high blood pressure	12.2
-prior heart attack	5.1
Respiratory	21.9
-allergy other than hay fever	9.2
-hay fever	4.6
-asthma	3.1
Vision	7.1
Amputations	5.1
Congential Malformations	2.6
Physically Impaired	66.8

Not all of these physically impairments were severe enough to prevent the farm operator from performing essential farm-related tasks. Some physical impairments were so minor that they did not provide a significant degree of hindrance to the farm operators during the performance of essential farm-related tasks. On the other hand, physical impairments that hinder the performance of some farm-related tasks. The physical impairments suffered by 17.3 percent of the farm operators were so severe that the performance of certain essential farm-related jobs were completely prevented. Some of the farm tasks that farm operators indicated that they could no longer perform because of a physical impairment were:

- combining (too dusty)
- quit raising hogs because of dust in lungs
- spraying chemicals
- heavy lifting
- scooping and shoveling
- limit some climbing
- milking (too high humidity)

Some of the farm operators, in an effort to make the performance of essential farm-related tasks easier, have modified their farm tractors, implements and/or buildings. Modifications cited by the 4.6 percent of the farm operators who have made modifications included:

- added more steps to tractors and combine
- air conditioned cabs on tractors and combines
- additional pit ventilation in hog buildings
- bought tractor with cab to avoid sunlight
- added power steering to loader tractor
- changed controls to fit impairment

Eliminating Causes

Before we attempt to help physically impaired farm operators, maybe we should work to identify the causes of these physical impairments and then eliminate or reduce these causes. Of the farm operators who were physically impaired, 9.2 percent indicated that their physical impairment was the result of a farm accident.

To a degree, agricultural educators have control over farm accidents in that they can stress farm safety in vocational agriculture classes. However, it is impossible to eliminate all farm accidents. Thus, there will always be farm operators who, because of a farm accident, are physically impaired.

Another cause of physical impairments, in addition to farm accidents, is age. The physically impaired farm operators were significantly older than the physically non-impaired farm operators. The physically impaired farm operators averaged 53.6 years of age while the physically non-impaired farm operators averaged only 46.5 years of age.

Another reason for physical impairments that appeared from the study was being overweight. Physically impaired farm operators were more likely to be overweight than their counterparts, the physically non-impaired farm operators. Approximately fifty (50.4) percent of the physically impaired farm operators were overweight while only 36.9 percent of the physically non-impaired farm operators were overweight.

Perhaps the biggest cause of physically impairments among farm operators is health-related problems. For instance, respiratory problems affected 21.9 percent of the farm operators, and cardiovascular impairments affected 24.0 percent.

Physically impaired farmers need our help if they are to have the opportunity to remain active in their farm operations. If we are to help, we must continue to:

1. identify the physical impairments that cause farmers to experience difficulty in performing essential farm-related tasks.
2. identify the essential farm-related tasks that are difficult or impossible for physically impaired farm operators to perform.
3. identify what is being done by physically impaired farmers to overcome these barriers.
4. modify farm equipment and buildings such that physically impaired farmers can work with and around them.

Summary

A resource center must be established so that physically impaired farmers, who need assistance, have somewhere to turn for help. Since not all of the physically impaired farmers would be able to come in to the resource center, workshops should be held throughout the United States. The workshops would not only benefit the physically impaired farmers, but a rehabilitation specialist and others who work with physically handicapped people would benefit also.

Research into making farming accessible for the physically handicapped has just begun; thus, the potential in this area is unknown at this time. At present, the only factor preventing handicapped people from farming is society's attitude; the technology needed is available.

BOOK REVIEW

Indoor Plants: Slide Series, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Columbus, Ohio. $64.11.

Indoor Plants is a slide series which includes Foliage Plants, Diagnostic Problems in Indoor Plants, A General Health Guide for Indoor Plants and Selecting and Using Pesticides on Indoor Plants. The slides are excellent and will be a great teaching tool. They are clear, well exposed and provide close-up examples of specimen plants and plant disorders as well.

The slide scripts are well done. For the portion of the slide set on identification of indoor plants, a particularly useful feature that is provided is a phoenetic pronunciation of scientific names. It also contains a glossary.

This is a comprehensive set of slides and supporting materials on the increasingly important area of indoor plants. No horticulture teacher would want to be without this set of materials.

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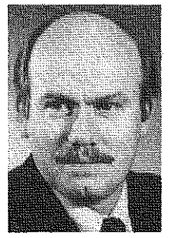
ARTICLE

Small Farm Operations: An Opportunity For Vocational Agriculture?



By R. Dean Shippy and
Steven E. Hastings

(Editor's Note: Dr. Shippy is an Associate Professor in the Agricultural Education Program, and Dr. Hastings is in the Agricultural Economics Department, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711.)

With the declining number of high school students in several states, the small farm population offers an opportunity for vocational agriculture teachers. Some small farmers have education needs which can be served by adult programs, while other small farmers with off-farm employment may be interested in hiring high school students with agricultural skills to assist with farm operations.

Small Farm Definitions

Many definitions of a small farm exist. Each has advantages and disadvantages. One definition is a farm with total acres less than some specified acreage, for example 10, 25, 50 or 100 acres. The 1978 Census of Agriculture showed that 28 percent of all farms are less than 50 acres, and 43 percent are less than 100 acres.

Congress, in 1977, defined small farms simply as those with annual sales of agricultural products less than $20,000. According to the 1978 Census of Agriculture, almost two-thirds (63.97 percent) of the total farms in the United States had agricultural sales of less than $20,000. It should be noted that this sizeable number of small farms accounts for only 8.05 percent of total U.S. agricultural product sales.

Regardless of the definition used (acreage, sales, etc.) small farms account for nearly fifty percent of the total farms in the United States. Because of the large number of current small farmers and new entrants to the field, agricultural educators should give consideration to educational programs to serve this sizeable clientele.

Characteristics of Small Farm Operators

Several states, including Maine, Virginia, Tennessee, and Delaware, have conducted studies of small farm operations. Differences in sampling procedures, survey instruments, and item definitions preclude direct comparisons of the information in these studies. However, several general similarities regarding small farm operators typically have the following characteristics:

- Late, middle age operators (45-60 years).
- Wide range of educational backgrounds.
- Average size of operation less than 100 acres.
- Wide variety of crop and livestock enterprises, even within the same state. (Low labor enterprises commonly predominate.)
- Heavy dependence on off-farm income. (Two-thirds of Delaware small farmers received some income from off-farm work in 1980.)

Educational Needs and Interests

In the Delaware study, small farm operators were asked a series of questions concerning their educational needs. The questions focused on the areas of agriculture with which they needed assistance and their interest in additional training to improve both farm and non-farm skills.

Subjects, in order of importance, in which small farmers expressed the need for assistance from governmental agencies (Extension Service, etc.) included: 1) soil testing, 2) weed control, 3) insect control, and 4) fertilizer and seed selection.

Over one-third of the respondents in the Delaware study expressed an interest in farm skills training. The major areas of interest listed, in order of importance, were: 1) crop production techniques, including no-till production, 2) livestock production, 3) general farming information, 4) insect control, 5) weed control, 6) fertilizer and seed selection, and 7) animal health.

Only 15 percent of the small farmers in Delaware were interested in training to improve their non-farm skills. Specific non-farm interest areas included: 1) welding, 2) electricity and plumbing, 3) building construction, 4) equipment maintenance, and 5) air conditioning. Although listed as non-farm skills, most of these areas are related to farm operations and commonly taught in agricultural mechanics classes.

Recommendations

Considering the results of small farm research in various states and especially in Delaware, the following recommendations are offered as an aid in the development of educational programs to serve this audience:

I. Subject matter areas:

1. **Crop production methods** (for labor extensive crops)

a. Concentrate on corn, soybeans and hay (most small farmers grow crops requiring minimal labor because of time required for off-farm employment.)

b. Weed control, insect control, soil testing, and seed and fertilizer selection are high interest subject matter areas.

2. **Livestock production** (for labor extensive enterprises)

a. Beef and swine are typical small farm enterprises. Broiler production is an important enterprise in several East coast states. As with crops, livestock enterprises selected by small farmers are typically those requiring minimal labor.

b. Animal health, parasite control, and marketing are topics of interest to small farm livestock producers.

3. **Equipment repair and maintenance**

Concentrate on basic maintenance and repairs to equipment used in cash crop production. (This is an important area, since a sizeable number of small farmers utilize old equipment. Nearly half of the tractors (46 percent) in the Delaware study were over 20 years old.)

4. **Marketing**

a. Small farmers could use information on more creative methods of marketing their relatively small output. A majority of them currently sell their crops and livestock to local elevators and dealers.

b. Marketing topics of relevance to small farmers include: 1) group marketing programs; 2) direct marketing of livestock, i.e., arrange with local slaughter house to butcher and process livestock for direct sale to local residents; and 3) roadside marketing of any fruits and vegetables grown.

II. Format and approaches

Although they face many of the same problems as large operators, small farmers tend to be reluctant to attend meetings directed to large farm operators. With this in mind, the following suggestions are made to educators desiring to reach the small farm audience:

1. Use individual instruction (farm visit approach) to start your program, develop rapport, and create interest in specific meetings and classes.

2. Promote your meeting or class as designed specifically for small farm operators.

3. Provide as many easy to use reference materials as possible; i.e. fact sheets, charts, bulletins, newsletters, etc.

4. Conduct tours of successful small farm operations.

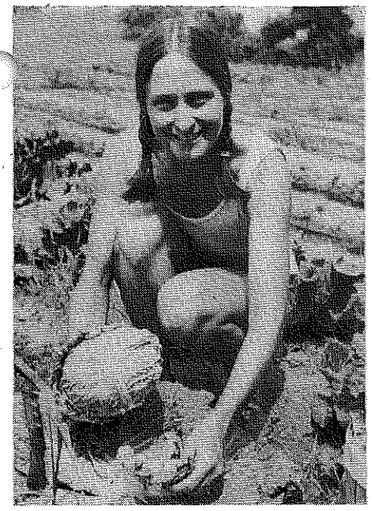
5. Explore the possibility of setting up some supervised occupational experience programs for your high school students with small farmers needing trained workers to assist with farm operations. This might be a method to encourage the production of more high value crops like vegetables and fruit.

Summary

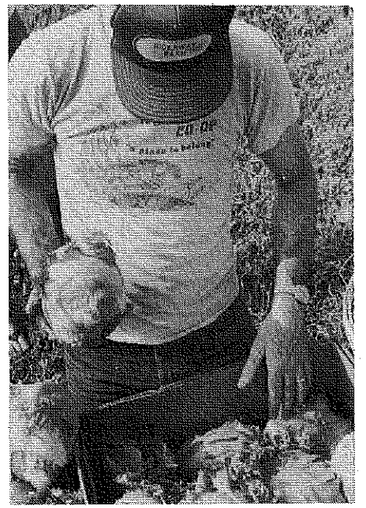
There are many small farms in the United States. In many states, this segment of American agriculture appears to be quite viable. This viability is influenced by such factors as a farming background, a preference for farming and rural life, maturity level of small farmers (45-60 years old), a variety of available resources, and income stability supported by off-farm employment.

The number and viability of small farms implies that this may be a productive clientele for agricultural educators.

Small farmers tend to utilize low labor crops and livestock enterprises to allow time for off-farm employment. Many small farmers have a need for educational programs to improve their current operations, or to direct their skills to alternative enterprises to utilize their land, labor and capital more effectively. Vocational agriculture teachers should evaluate the small farm situation in their local area and consider their opportunities to serve this sizeable audience.



Farming is hard work, especially when you're growing labor-intensive high-value vegetable crops, but it is one way to go on limited acreage.



Growing quality produce such as lettuce for local markets or direct sale is one way this farmers makes small acreage pay.

To make every part of their land productive, small-scale or part-time farmers with woodlots sometimes seek management advice from state foresters, county agents, and agricultural teachers.

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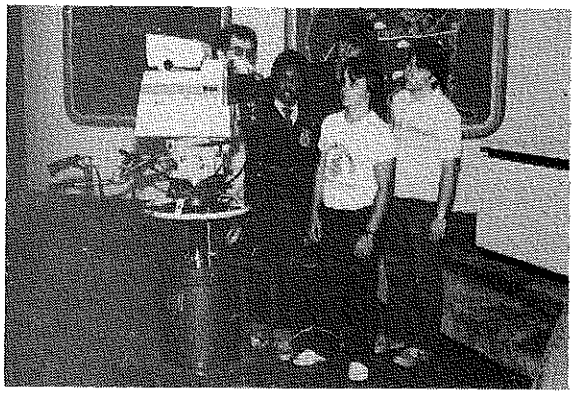
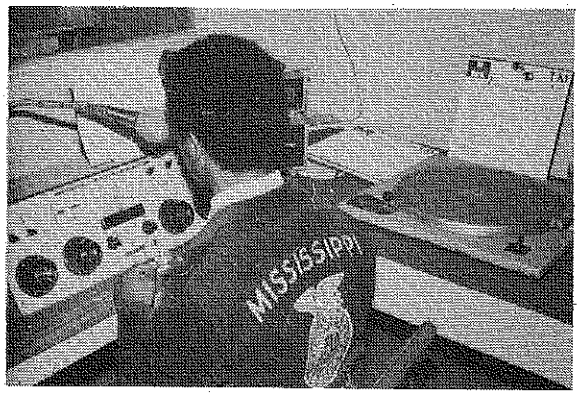
Stories in Pictures

How Others Perceive Us Is Affected By:



Television



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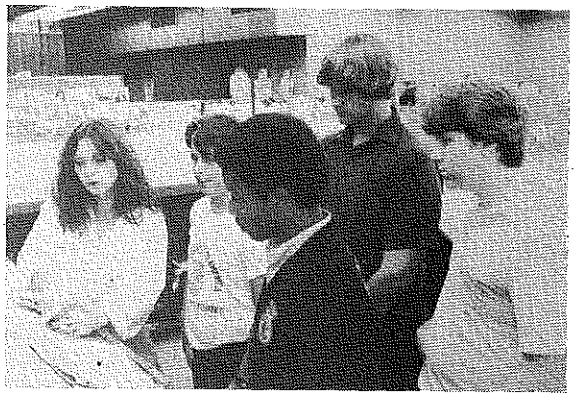
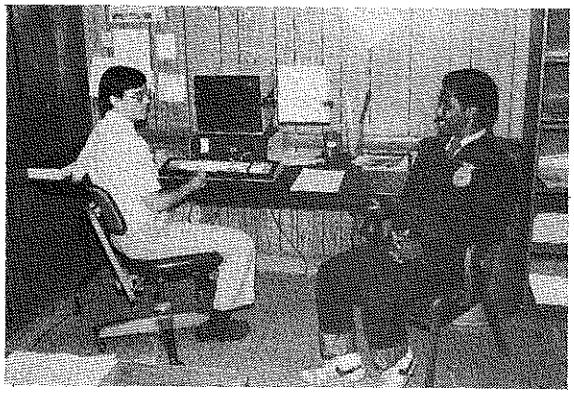
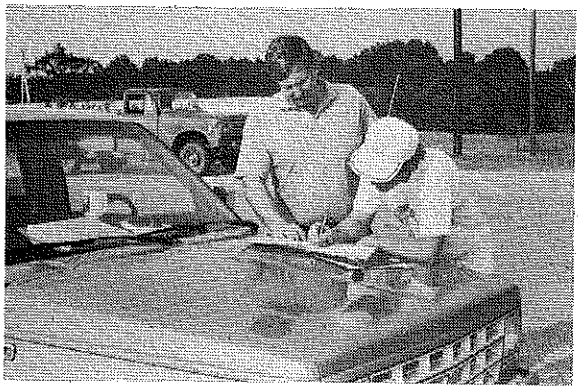


Newspapers



Electronic Newsletters

Quality of Students



Personal Contacts

(Photographs courtesy of Lindsey Keene, Vocational Agriculture Instructor, Southeast Lauderdale Attendance Center, Meridian, Mississippi 39301.)