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Number 10



**THEME: Women in  
Agricultural Education**

# THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE



April, 1987

Volume 59

Number 10

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## ARTICLE SUBMISSION

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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# Professional Commitment to Women in Agricultural Education

Various concerns and hopes are offered in this issue for women in agricultural education. Several articles illuminate problems inherent in integrating women into a male-dominated profession. Scenarios presented should test the conscience of the profession because the pictures and faces are not distant and nameless. There are in fact real problems and issues facing not only women, but the profession as a unit. Fortunately, an article by Jim Knight presents details of a continuing effort to make women full members of the profession. Other professionals should consider the possibilities that can result when women are thoroughly immersed in a profession, thereby playing significant roles in the decision-making process. Clearly, there are three areas where the profession must first recognize its shortcomings and then channel its resources and energies: recruitment, placement, and career enhancement.

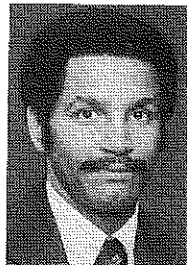
## Recruitment into Agricultural Education

Few taxonomy areas in agricultural education have been as successful as horticulture in attracting both female students and women vocational agriculture teachers. Other areas such as production agriculture, forestry, and agricultural mechanics have not been as successful. Do females shy away from these areas because of their rural-oriented content and an image epitomizing vocational agriculture from a traditional perspective? A similar question must be asked about horticulture. Are the successes of this instructional area because of genuine interest from females or is it because of intentional as well as unintentional steering practices? One hopes interest is the sole consideration.

When recruitment programs are being designed at all levels (elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and higher education), messages that stereotype instructional areas by sex must be avoided. Females must be comfortable enough that they will try and succeed in all instructional areas. In this regard, it is gratifying that female National FFA officers (key role models) have had a diversity of backgrounds. The carefully packaged images they create must be emulated and used widely. In particular, their promotion of agriculture as a viable career option rather than a program for career orientation experiments is noteworthy. Other far-reaching efforts must be planned by the profession to recruit and retain females.

## Placement

Once women complete instructional programs in agricultural education, the true test of the profession's commitment begins. Whether it is an 18 year old seeking a position as an agricultural mechanic, a recent honors graduate trying to fulfill life's dream of being a production agriculture



BY BLANNIE E. BOWEN, EDITOR

*(Dr. Bowen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)*

teacher, or a new Ph.D. seeking a faculty position, the profession must flex its muscles on the matter of placement. That axiom of graduates reflecting the instructional program comes into play, especially when future recruitment efforts are undertaken. Ignoring societal realizations by conducting instructional programs in a vacuum does injustice to dedicated and superbly skilled women graduates.

As Ellen Doese writes in this issue, when she plowed new ground as a production agriculture teacher, there were tests few males teachers ever face much less have to pass. Even more unfortunately, there are employers and governmental agencies that hire women very begrudgingly. Witness the number of women agricultural agents and specialists in Extension, the Soil Conservation Service, the Farmers' Home Administration, the U.S. Forest Service, etc. The profession's conscience should dictate that aggressive recruitment of women students be followed by no less than aggressive placement of women graduates. Career enhancement and progression ought to logically constitute the next step.

## Career Enhancement and Progression

A variety of career enhancement approaches must become the rule. Concepts such as networking and mentoring must become in vogue. The profession's obligation merely begins once a woman secures employment. Through it all, biological realities cannot be ignored. Today's norm is for women to start a career, have children, and then resume

*(Continued on page 4)*

## About the Cover

Being a vocational agriculture teacher requires considerable adjusting, especially during the first five years in the profession. Ellen Doese, an Iowa instructor, discusses in this issue how she copes with a two-career marriage, stereotypes from clientele groups, and other concerns about being a woman in agricultural education.



## Professional Commitment to Women in Agricultural Education

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their career. Employers must realize that a career woman who takes maternity leave and returns will be more productive than a new employee who must be trained.

Likewise, even the best marital experiments result in husbands doing less than 25% of the household chores (*Columbus (OH) Dispatch* Newspaper, February 10, 1987, p. 2A). Further, mothers still carry the bulk of the child-rearing responsibilities. A 50% divorce rate simply compounds the woes. Consequently, child care becomes exceedingly

valuable to women in agricultural education. The profession can assist in several veins. Creative yet flexible scheduling of professional meetings and activities is needed. Professional development programs for single as well as married women should be implemented to foster the mentoring concept.

Finally, programs aimed at changing attitudes of men are needed. All too often, one is willing to change behaviors if more desirable behaviors are clearly delineated and expected. Women have made and will continue to make significant contributions to agricultural education. However, their potential remains to be tapped. The profession owes it to itself to not let this vast resource remain an iceberg.

### THEME

## Women in Agricultural Education

The advent of women into agricultural education has been an evolutionary process, beginning as early as 1933 with the issue of FFA membership. However, it was not until 36 years later that the major advancement of women into agricultural education occurred with legislated change through laws addressing sex equity. During these last two decades of change, how much has really been accomplished? Enrollment of females has increased to some extent. While 20 to 40 percent of our enrollments may be female, it seems that few of them are actually hired or remain within agricultural industry. Are we fooling ourselves and defrauding our educational mission of vocational education?

This theme issue provides us many perspectives and insights into current situations, problems, and opportunities regarding women in agriculture. The more gradual shifts and changes that are occurring as well as directions for continued change are presented by the contributing authors in this issue. The authors represent classroom teachers, students, industry personnel, teacher educators, state supervisors, and high school administrators.

Having to first meet personal challenges before providing a quality educational program for students is not uncommon for the female teacher. Overcoming the disbelief, stereotyping, and constant testing by students, peers, parents, employers, and administrators to prove yourself and establish your credibility have been a challenge to women in the profession. It has been a challenge that has been met by those teachers who remain in the profession.

The current perspectives of students, presented by Marty Moore and Debbie Thompson, indicate their concern about employment. While they have a positive outlook for the future, they realistically recognize the vote from employers has yet to be cast. What does this mean for our students in the future? How can a vocational education program striving to provide a quality education for all students combat this very critical barrier of employment opportunities? What is our professional responsibility in exploring and finding solutions to this potential problem? Or, does



By JOY CANTRELL, THEME EDITOR

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our responsibility end when the student walks out of our classrooms?

Fleet, Cromwell, and Yoder provide an industry perspective to the employment issue of women in agriculture. Employment opportunities with various education levels are highlighted as well as the major barriers and biases that female students must be prepared to face.

Retaining both female students and teachers is a real challenge facing the continuation of the evolutionary process of women in agricultural education. A look at what we can continue to do in the areas of recruitment and retention is a necessity for all areas of our programs. Keeping parents informed and involved is one approach. Researchers have been especially interested in why females make non-traditional career choices. Studies have indicated that girls tend to derive their nontraditional choices from their parents or family situations. Do most parents have a real understanding of agriculture today? Even within farm families, traditional roles continue to persist that limit perception of broader career opportunities for women in agriculture.

Are we providing experiences for students to explore non-traditional careers? What is probably more important than the number of male pronouns and active male images in textbooks and tests are the opportunities that schools, especially in high education, and the job market, have that are opened or closed to female students and their career aspirations. The sex roles that girls learn and career choices they make are far more responsive to the opportunities available in

and the working world than they are to whatever hidden persuaders are present in course textbooks or student manuals.

These same thoughts can be reiterated with regard to women currently within the professional ranks. Our major discriminatory practice is failure to encourage qualified female teachers to pursue leadership opportunities and further their career opportunities. Professional encouragement through networking and providing support groups where possible are a few examples shared in this issue.

The commitment for continued self-evaluation for professional growth and change will keep up focusing for the future. However, for continued change our profession must respond not solely by changes in pronouns and pictures but with opportunities. Agricultural education, through supervised occupational experiences, FFA leadership activities, adult education programs, and classroom and laboratory training has all the appropriate vehicles to provide these opportunities to all students. Commitment is still needed, not just because it is legislated by law, but for the expansion and strength it provides our profession.

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## THEME

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# Opportunities and Challenges Facing Females in Agricultural Education

"So you're a vocational instructor, huh! I thought your husband would be the agriculture instructor! What is it like being a female vocational agriculture instructor? How many are there like you anyway? Boy, I wish I were 10 years younger and back in school, I'd take vocational agriculture for sure."

These are just a few of the questions and comments that I have become familiar with after being a vocational agriculture instructor for three and one-half years in Iowa. These comments come from all age groups and types of people. It seems that females are still not expected to be involved in teaching vocational agriculture even though they have been a big part of the FFA since 1969. According to the stereotypes developed over the years, a female doesn't belong in the vocational agriculture world. But how wrong these stereotypes are! Females are establishing their existence in vocational agriculture and doing an outstanding job of it. In this article, I share some of my experiences to create an awareness of the female world of teaching vocational agriculture in a male dominated industry.

### The Disbelief . . .

I spoke earlier of the remarks that my husband and I hear quite often when being introduced to someone for the first time. Actually, it can be quite comical. It seems as though people are shocked at a female or a wife teaching vocational agriculture and her husband being self-employed with a photography business. They expect just the opposite. They are always full of questions as to why I chose agricultural industry and how students react to my choice.

### Spouse Support . . .

My husband is very supportive of me and my teaching. He is willing to help me meet and overcome professional challenges although he was not involved in vocational agriculture in high school. However, he had a sister who was very active and her involvement gave him the opportunity to learn and become familiar with the program. When we married and I took my first teaching job he knew I was go-



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By ELLEN DOESE

*Ms. Doese is a Vocational Agriculture Instructor at Wapsie Valley High School, P.O. Box 67, Fairbank, Iowa 50629.*

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ing to be gone a lot at night and I would be teaching all aspects of agriculture. He was and continues to be very supportive of my career choice.

How does his behavior affect my position as the vocational agriculture instructor? When I first heard the comment, "So you're the vo-ag instructor? I thought you would be a guy," I felt very inadequate and alone. I needed the support of someone who understood and was willing to help me overcome these feelings. My husband also shows his interest in agriculture by helping on my parents' farm whenever possible. It is my philosophy that a spouse has to be very supportive of a vocational agriculture instructor/FFA advisor for the instructor to do the best possible job. If my husband did not hold this philosophy, I could have never made it teaching the few short years I have.

One of the hurdles faced by the female vocational agriculture instructor is the feeling of being alone. Regardless of where I go, I am predominantly around men. Speaking of always being around the male species, this not only deals with vocational agriculture instructors, but also in the classroom. The majority of vocational agriculture students are male. It is not uncommon for there to be only one female in the classroom — me! So how do the students react to that? They just get used to it.

### Establishing Credibility . . .

As a female I had to pass a tough credibility test with my students. I had to prove myself more than some of my male

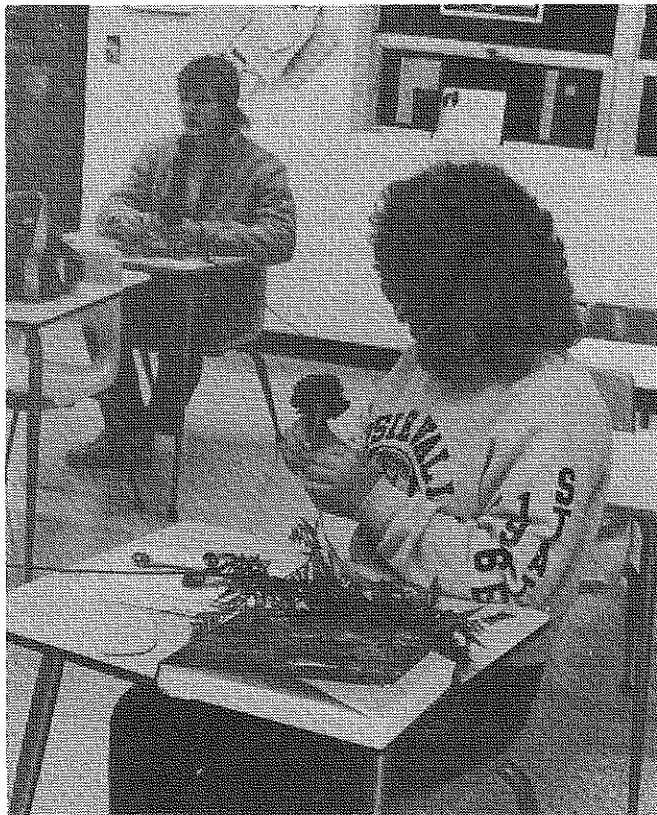
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## Opportunities and Challenges Facing Females in Agricultural Education

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counterparts and it took a little longer for me to be accepted. The students seemed uncomfortable with my welding ability and that I had castrated hogs. Why wouldn't they? These things are most commonly done by dad and brother at home — sister doesn't help too much. The stereotypes can be overcome by doing the job and doing a good job the first time. After this, students don't question you. I also learned that the students will accept you for who you are — don't try to be something you are not or do something you don't know how to do. They appreciate honesty. However, they expect you to take an interest in and teach all aspects of agriculture and rightfully so!

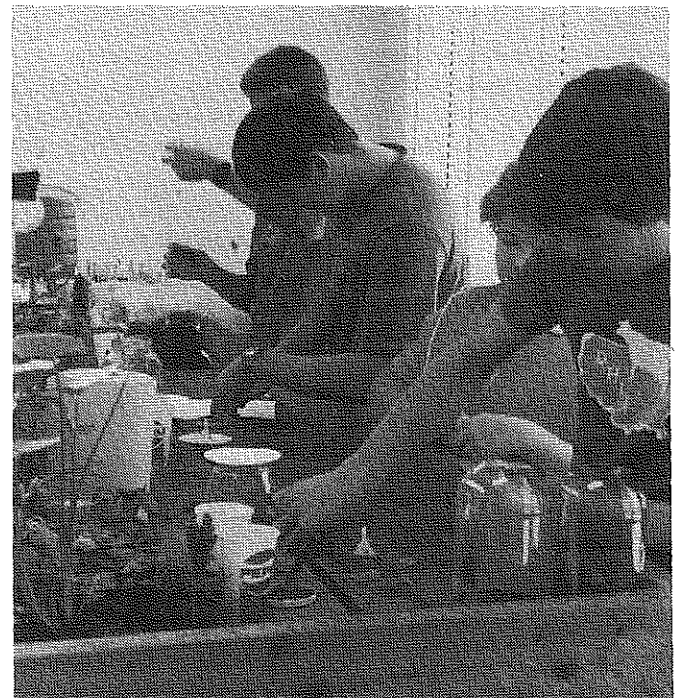
I was quizzed a great deal on my agricultural knowledge. They wanted to test my story of growing up on a dairy farm and milking cows. It was common to be asked about my herd of dairy cows, the feeding systems I used, what kind of corn my father planted, or the plant populations we used. The students also wanted to see if I held true to the female emotional stereotype. They repeatedly put me to the test to see if I would give up or cry. Once I passed those two tests, I was accepted. The students decided that a female could teach them vocational agriculture and they would learn something. It was just a matter of being honest, trying hard, and facing the reality of the situation. The same held true for the parents. They were a bit harder to convince, but a great deal of stamina, public relations, com-



Horticulture programs are becoming increasingly popular in vocational agriculture departments. Students are given a chance to do many hands-on activities such as making a boutonniere as shown. This is yet another tool to increase enrollment. (Photo courtesy of Ellen Doese).

mon sense, and achievement convinced most of them that a female could teach their children agriculture. I still had the personal advantage of being within 20 miles of my home community where my family farmed. Although some people within my school district knew me and my family through county fairs, I still had to establish my credibility. Once this was done, the challenges became more manageable.

Besides establishing credibility with the students and the parents, a vocational agriculture instructor must establish a professional relationship with the administration. Many times school administrators are somewhat reluctant to hire a female because of the stereotypes developed or because they have heard negative stories of females teaching vocational agriculture. The only reason they hired a female, in my case, was because that was all they had available. It is up to a female agriculture instructor to establish a favorable relationship with the administration. I found that I had to avail myself to the administration. I made special attempts to get to know my supervisors and was not afraid to ask for advice or seek assistance. I kept them informed of what was going on in my program and had them serve as ex-officio members of the advisory committee. I also made sure of where I stood as a professional in their eyes. I needed to know their perception of a female in vocational agriculture so that I could work with them, rather than fight them. I used the best public relations tool available — common sense. It made sense to keep first year mistakes to a minimum. I also tried to handle my own problems; I wouldn't let any situation get the best of me even though at times I was ready to throw in the towel. I also kept reminding myself that I was just as good or better than my male counterparts at being a vocational agriculture instructor. I strived to make my mark in the program by bringing vocational agriculture classes and the FFA to the community's



Students must learn the skills needed to succeed in their chosen occupation. Soil testing is one of those skills in crop production. (Photo courtesy of Ellen Doese).

attention. I ran articles in the newspaper about the program and about a different student each week. By making the administration and the community proud of the program, I was making them proud of their choice to hire me. Establishing good public relations and a good working relationship are important. They help establish that needed credibility with the administration. Without a sense of established credibility, it would be hard to feel accepted in a male dominated field.

### Being the Minority . . .

I'd like to mention the advantages of being a female vocational agriculture instructor. First, teaching vocational agriculture is fun and exciting. There are many rewards for the instructor to gain whether male or female. However, a female may have a few different rewards. For example, being a female vocational agriculture teacher has put me in the minority. Therefore, when it comes time for meetings such as the National FFA Convention, I usually have a roomful of girls from all different chapters. I serve as the female chaperone for all of them. This allows my students to meet many more people than they would otherwise. They are forced to intermingle with others instead of staying in their group. This helps me get to know the other girls' vocational agriculture instructors that otherwise I may not have gotten to know.

Although I'm in the minority, many of my male counterparts have accepted me to be one of them. They are not afraid to ask me for information. Some males are afraid to "lower" themselves to ask a female vocational agriculture instructor for assistance either on classroom material or FFA information. However, they don't accept me as a female

vocational agriculture instructor; instead, accept me as a vocational agriculture instructor.

### Bigger Challenges . . .

Yes, being a female teaching vocational agriculture presents some challenges. But, these challenges are waiting to be met and overcome. The class offerings in the program have no reason to change nor should the philosophy of the vocational agriculture department undergo restructuring. The concept of diversification that we are all becoming familiar with pertains to the female as well as the male instructor. We must change with the times and with agriculture. A close student-teacher relationship must be maintained and a caring bond must exist for our programs to continue. Being a female educator may attract more females into our programs because they know they won't be the only female in attendance, but all students still must be treated fairly.

It is up to the individual to make the situation and grasp the challenges and opportunities. I encourage all females wanting to become involved in vocational agriculture teaching to give it a chance and not let the stereotypes developed in the past scare them. It is definitely an enthusiastic, exciting, and education profession for both males and females alike. So the next time you hear — "for the vocational agriculture instructors and their wives" — please don't forget there are a few of us who have husbands not wives, and that we also care about the vocational agriculture program. There is room for the female vocational agriculture instructor, but she must be willing to accept a bigger challenge than the male counterpart in this male dominated industry.

## BOOK REVIEW

**SHEEP AND GOAT SCIENCE** by M.E. Ensminger & R.O. Parker. The Interstate Publishers and Printers, Inc., Danville, Illinois, 1986, 643 pages, price \$37.45.

The fifth edition of Ensmingere and Parker's **SHEEP AND GOAT SCIENCE** is a welcomed addition to all resource libraries and classroom textbook lists. It is the most complete, best organized, up-to-date text on the subject of sheep and goat production. It's scientific yet practical and will be an excellent asset to anyone engaged or interested in sheep and goat production.

This book is written in the traditional format all Ensminger's books are written. With each chapter containing a table of contents, questions for study and discussion, selected references, and a variety of charts, graphs, tables, and photos. But more importantly this text meets the needs of the 1980's sheep and goat producers.

The extensive coverage of sheep and goat science is indicated by the table of contents: History and Development of the Sheep and Goat Industry; World

and U.S. Sheep and Goats. Part I specifically explains topics concerning Sheep Building and Equipment; Feeds and Feeding; Fitting and Showing; Marketing and Slaughtering Sheep and Lambs.

Part II explains issues of goat production including dairy goats, angora goats and meat goats, with dairy goats receiving the most coverage. Part II contains information applicable to both sheep and goat production. Where possible, the similarities and the differences between sheep and goats are needed.

Breeding and feeding are the two most important concerns of producers. For this reason, these topics are given extended coverage. Chapter 18 covers futuristic sheep and goat production; it contains an extensive discussion of cross breeding and production testing, including guidelines for uniform improvement programs. Through diagrams and narrative, Chapter 19 supplies a solid foundation of anatomy and physiology for practical application in the breeding of sheep and goats.

Useful and interesting topics in the Appendix include animal units, the metric system with conversion factors, names and addresses of sheep and goat magazines, names and addresses of breed registry associations, warranty guidelines for the purchase of rams and ewes, all-time top individual sales, and addresses of colleges of agriculture in the United States and Canada. Throughout the book, numerous graphs, tables, and figures compliment the narrative and present information in a clean and concise manner.

This book would make an excellent reference for any vocational agriculture teacher who would like to develop a unit of instruction on sheep production or is assisting adults with the management of their flocks of sheep or goats.

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# An Industry Perspective on Women in Agriculture

Working nine to five,  
For service and devotion;  
You would think I deserve a fair promotion;  
Want to move ahead,  
But the boss won't seem to let me.  
I swear sometimes,  
That man is out to get me.

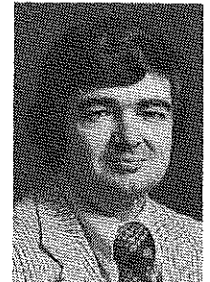
Does the previous lyric written and recorded by Dolly Parton in the Twentieth Century-Fox film "9 to 5" describe the situation encountered by women employed in agricultural industry?

Some of our female vocational agriculture graduates have moved into agricultural jobs predominantly held by men, whereas, other female graduates have found employment in emergent agricultural jobs. Regardless of where the employment was found, the female employees, male employees, clients, and employers have had to deal with issues related to the employment of women in the business sector. We have all had to use some common sense and be willing to accept each other for what we can do and what we know and put aside our biases based on the individual's sex. Unfortunately, in some cases these biases and barriers still exist. In those instances where biases and barriers regarding the employment of women in agriculture have been reduced, there has been one primary reason for that change. The main reason is that women have won their clients' and colleagues' confidence because the women have done their job very well.

## Opportunities in Industry

Agricultural employment opportunities for women are no longer limited to working in a family-run farm or agribusiness. Agriculture is an established industry which potentially provides a variety of opportunities for our female graduates. There are opportunities for female vocational agriculture graduates to become directly involved in production agriculture. Recent U.S. Census data indicate that women represent approximately 6% of the nation's farmers (Sachs, 1983). However, production agriculture represents only a small portion of the agricultural related employment opportunities for women. Some have suggested that opportunities in agribusiness for women are virtually wide-open and untapped (Bucher, 1981). Of course, the kinds of jobs women secure in agribusinesses depend, in part, on the amount of education they have completed.

The following types of jobs represent some of the agricultural employment possibilities in larger agribusinesses. These jobs illustrate only a small number of employment possibilities available for females having completed different amounts of formal education. The types of jobs are also representative of only a small number of those available in the agricultural services and supply sector.



By SUSAN E. CROMWELL, WILLIAM C. FLEET AND EDGAR P. YODER

(Ms. Cromwell is Manager of Recruitment and Management Development for Agway Training Center, 9 Adler Drive, East Syracuse, New York 13057; Mr. Fleet is a Field Sales Agronomy Manager for Pioneer Hi-Breed International, Box 280, Mount Joy, Pennsylvania 17552-0280; and, Dr. Yoder is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802.)

Women who have completed a high school education may find employment in the following types of agribusiness supply and service areas:

- Customer service
- Sales
- Warehousing
- Nursery operations
- Clerical
- Technical assistants (helpers)

After a female high school graduate has been employed with the company for a period of time, a possibility would then be to move into management level positions. In some cases, the company would have a management program which the individual could enter.

Women who have completed a two-year, postsecondary agriculture program may find the following types of employment possibilities with larger agribusiness supply and service companies.

- Department manager
- Operations manager
- Assistant manager
- Construction manager
- Management trainee
- Production technicians
- Production quality control
- Sales



Females who complete a four-year, postsecondary agriculture program may be hired by an agribusiness supply and service company for the following types of positions.

- Manager or assistant manager of a distribution center
- Manager or assistant manager for a petroleum plant
- District manager for financing
- Area or district sales
- Staff member of marketing, accounting or finance divisions
- Production management
- Area or regional technical specialists

Most large agribusinesses have their own management development programs which the four-year graduate would participate in before moving into the management positions. There is a perception by the public that a woman must start in sales to later move into management positions. This is not true; females can move into management positions without having spent their time selling products.

### Major Barriers

Let's not kid ourselves or our students by claiming all is fair, and that federal legislation has eliminated the major barriers to employment of women. There are still some definite barriers and perceptions regarding the employment of women in agriculture that need to be changed. There is still some of the "old boy network" out there in business and industry, and it is no different in agricultural businesses than it is in other businesses and industry (Kleiman, 1986).

The most significant barrier that women encounter in agricultural employment is the employers' and clients' perceptions. Their perceptions typically relate to two major areas — the women's experience and expertise and the ability to do physical labor.

Often fewer women have an agricultural background than do men. Farmers still have a predominant perception that women representing an agricultural business don't have all the experiences needed to directly interact with the farm clientele.

Farmers and clients typically will "test" a woman representing an agricultural business. One common way clients "test" a woman's agricultural experience is to ask a series of in-depth technical questions to see if they can "stump" the person and let the woman know she doesn't know everything. A second way farmers "test" a person is to ask the woman questions not related to her area of expertise. For example, a farmer may ask a woman seed company representative for advice on feeding dairy cattle. Others have indicated that some farmers will walk through the barnyard to see if the women objected to walking through mud and manure and could put up with the smell (Bucher, 1981).

Although the previous examples identify ways in which farmers check the woman's agricultural experience, peers and employers in agricultural businesses can be just as critical of the woman's agricultural background. It may not be atypical for the boss to give a new female employee the opportunity to show her brilliance by giving her an exceptionally tough customer or technical problem to handle.

There is still a very definite feeling that women can't do some of the physical work required for some of the agricultural jobs. There is no denying that there are some jobs which require a great degree of physical strength. The point is that there are probably just as many men who don't have the physical strength to do that job as there are women. Many employers would provide a man the opportunity to prove he can or can't do the job but never give the woman the chance to prove whether she can or can't do the job. Too often physical strength is overemphasized as a primary requirement for a job.

Some clients, peers, and employers may view a very competent woman employee as being aggressive. Women often feel they have to work extra hard and seek out opportunities to prove they are capable and competent. Women also believe they are watched more intently by their supervisor and peers. However, this may put them in the position of being caught in a "Catch-22 situation." Because they strive to prove their ability and competence to their peers and supervisors, they may be viewed by the peers as being aggressive. Thus, their intent to prove their competence is now viewed by some as aggressiveness and creating opportunities for themselves. Thus, they now may be viewed as using others as a "stepping stone" for their own goals rather than being a team player.

### The Teacher's Role

We need to help our female students prepare themselves for their chosen career and to be aware of the situations they will find in agricultural businesses. Perhaps our greatest role is summarized in a lyric to the song, "The Young and the Restless."

Reach for the stars while you have time,  
Your restless dreams will lead the way.  
So dream your dreams and live for each day,  
While you are young.

As teachers, we have a responsibility to help students set realistic career aspirations and to reach for their dreams. Female vocational agriculture students may have career goals for which few, if any, female role models exist. Teachers have a responsibility to help students strive toward their dreams and reach for their stars. The teacher assumes the role of facilitator and motivator. Often the teacher assumes a counseling role with the female vocational agriculture student. In this role, the teacher may need to encourage the student to continue to strive for a goal, in spite of what others may be saying to the student. It is not unusual for the female vocational agriculture student to have her dream(s) shattered by other well meaning individuals, simply because the student's goal does not fit conventional roles females are expected to assume.

A second major role is to help female students gain those educational and occupational experiences which will help them reach those dreams. We strongly recommend that women desiring to enter careers in agricultural businesses obtain practical agricultural experiences. Women students with work experience in a non-agricultural retail store are going to have a difficult time finding employment in agricultural businesses. Retail store experience as a cashier or clerk simply isn't enough. Teachers need to advise

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## An Industry Perspective on Women in Agriculture

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students of that fact, and then help them locate and develop an appropriate agricultural experience program. Somewhere in that experience program the female student needs direct exposure to production agriculture and some farm work experience.

Agricultural businesses are also looking for women who have been involved in leadership roles through their school experiences and community activities. Involvement in FFA and other school organizations is highly valued by potential employers. Such experiences and activities provide evidence of the person's ability to communicate and assume responsibility. Such activities also provide evidence of a person's ability to adjust to different settings and situations and be flexible. The ability to adjust and be able to change will be an important factor in the success of women in agricultural careers.

The teacher also has a responsibility to help the female student develop skills and knowledge through appropriate course work. Obviously the student who can use computer technology will be a valued asset to any agricultural business. The individual who has a knowledge of basic business principles and understands how businesses operate

will have an advantage. Such knowledge can be gained through formal course work in special business courses or in the concepts taught in an agricultural curriculum. For the female agricultural student at the high school level, this knowledge can be reinforced through supervised experience programs. Students with experience programs have an opportunity to apply their knowledge and make decisions in a real-life setting.

We do have female vocational agriculture students who are capable and have the dreams for successful careers in agribusiness. Vocational agriculture teachers play a significant role in such students realizing their dreams. We may serve a coaching role encouraging them to strive for their dreams, or we can literally assume the role of the boss described by Dolly Parton in the song, "Nine to Five." Personnel from agricultural industry believe you as a vocational agriculture teacher need to continually make female students, in fact all students, aware of the varied opportunities in agricultural businesses regardless of the person's sex.

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## THEME

# Role Models and Support Groups: A Real Need For Women in Vocational Agriculture

With the enactment of Title IX and later Title II of the educational amendments, the federal government took decisive action to eliminate or at least reduce in some significant way sex bias, stereotyping, and discrimination at all levels of education. Many programs have been created to involve women in educational areas that are not traditional for their sex. In Ohio during the 1970's, there was a steady increase in the number of women teaching vocational agriculture. Over the last few years, however, that number has appeared to plateau and in fact, has even diminished somewhat. There are 44 women who teach vocational agriculture in Ohio. In total, there are 625 Ohio vocational agriculture teachers.

It is clear that many women who are currently teaching vocational agriculture in Ohio would do an outstanding job of taking a professional leadership role in agricultural education. However, for some reason that door has not yet opened. Many explanations can be offered for this phenomenon. One is that of lingering bias and stereotypes on the part of the vast majority of vocational agriculture teachers who are



By JAMES KNIGHT

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male. At times it appears there has even been some mild resentment to the very powerful role female students have had in the development of the FFA in Ohio. Another explanation that also appears to have merit is that the women have simply not asserted themselves in the profession. They appear to lack networking skills and have not been very active professionally. Perhaps because of their generally traditional role in family life, they have chosen not to be involved as an officer in the teachers' association or to take major leadership responsibilities.

## Role Models and Support Groups: A Real Need For Women in Vocational Agriculture

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Time will tell if this effort makes a significant contribution to those women who are currently teaching and to those preparing to teach vocational agriculture. However, because of the conference evaluations made by the participants, it appears that optimism is in order. One response has already taken effect. A woman was elected to an office at the annual conference of the OVATA. In addition, several women have taken steps to become qualified to be cooperating teachers in the student teaching program for the Department. Further, the planning committee was asked by a national

organization interested in sex equity to make a presentation on its efforts during a meeting in Dallas last December.

### Conclusions

With only about 7% of the teachers of vocational agriculture in Ohio being women, it is clear that a long road is ahead for women currently teaching and those preparing to teach. With the cultural changes occurring coupled with the situation in agriculture generally, the expanding roles of women will continue. By ensuring that women have access to the same kinds of supports and benefits will be important to the health of all involved. Women can and do perform well as teachers of vocational agriculture. As we become more successful in recruiting and retaining excellent women teachers, it is much more likely that the quality of instruction offered will be up to the level that will be necessary for training people for the dynamic industry of agriculture.

## THEME

# The Ballots Are Being Counted

**"Women in the agriculture field have been one of the most talked about issues in agriculture. Yes they are limited in heavy duty work, but in general I think they can handle the job." — James W.**

The field of agriculture has traditionally been thought of as a man's occupation, but today an increasing number of women are choosing agriculture careers. In the past, women were not allowed to enter the agricultural curriculum in the high schools. Girls did not aspire to become agriculturists and their interests were normally channeled in other directions. But things began to change and as the world became more liberal, so did high school educators.

**"Women in agriculture have a hard enough time in sex discrimination . . . Most guys in our ag class said women belong in the house taking care of the kids." — Timmy S.**

The issue of women in vocational agriculture came up as early as 1933. Although women were admitted into vocational agriculture in the mid-sixties, it was not until 1969 that the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) constitution was amended, allowing female students to be eligible for national membership. This was really great for some women, but for others it meant "learning to do" while watching males "doing to learn." Discrimination against females in high school vocational agriculture programs was rampant in the early 70s. Is there still that stigma or have women really "come a long way baby?"

The feelings about women in agriculture differ from high school to high school, city to city, and state to state, but the main differences seem to be between rural settings and urban settings.

**"Girls occasionally presented a problem in the shop. There is definitely a difference in their skills and those of boys. They usually needed extra help and wanted special treatment. I am not saying that a girl's place is in the classroom,**



BY MARTY MOORE AND DEBBIE THOMPSON

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**but care should be taken when they are in the shop." — John D.**

In the majority of rural areas, while there are some females in vocational agriculture programs, the numbers are still low. Males in this type of situation generally feel that females do not belong, while females in the situation may believe that they are sometimes discriminated against by other students in the classroom and, in some cases by the teacher.

**"Women in agriculture have a bright future. They are involved in all phases of agriculture. The females in my vocational agriculture class make up about fifty percent of the students. They are more active and devoted FFA members, and they often provide the leadership needed to get the group moving." — Laura L.**

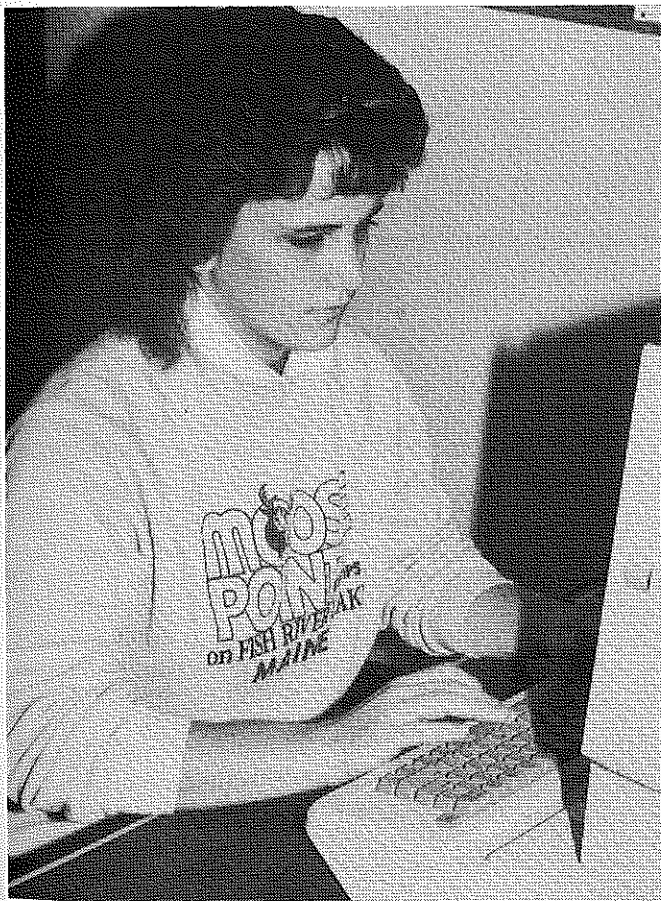
Urban programs, on the other hand, have been more receptive to females students. Some urban areas have initiated new programs such as horticulture and agribusiness. Females students have shown such a strong interest in these

areas that in some cases it has become necessary to recruit male agriculture students.

**"I never participated in an agricultural program until I enrolled in a small college in New York State. It was at that time I was introduced to agriculture as a profession as well as a way of life. I am adamant in my belief that women do and will continue to play a vital role in the agricultural field."**  
— Lynne F.

In colleges across the country, it is not unusual to find large numbers of female students enrolled in the agricultural education curriculum. Many of these students have aspirations of becoming vocational agriculture teachers with particular emphasis in horticulture and classes for special needs students. Regardless of their area of interest, agricultural education majors in general have a positive attitude toward their role in the agricultural community.

Women in agriculture courses are perceived as equals by both their professors and fellow students. In all aspects, they are given the opportunity to reach their fullest potential in this protective environment. The bomb of reality doesn't really hit until these students enter the semester of their student teaching and are sent off to what is too often a discriminating situation. Similarly and subsequently, searching for a position in teaching agriculture often reveals a final hurdle for women in agricultural education to overcome.



Computing experiences must be provided for all students enrolled in vocational agriculture. Males must not be allowed to dominate the equipment available in vocational agriculture departments. (Photo courtesy of Dave Hall, an instructor at Pennsylvania State University.)

**"The girls in my high school FFA were more vocal and better achievers. Most of the time their academic grades were higher and their SOEP were better."** — Andrea P.

An overall look at the FFA shows that females have been accepted into this national organization over the years with few reservations. Females have held chapter and state offices, received the State and American Farmer degrees, served on winning judging and leadership teams, competed in national public speaking contests, served as national officers, and participated in the FFA in many other ways.

**"Our president of the FFA was a female. We were well accepted by the men. I believe vo-ag is an open opportunity to all students regardless of their sex."** — Pam S.

In 1976, for the first time, a female was elected to a National FFA officer post. Since that time we have had a female, Jan Eberly, leading the organization.

**"I think women have a very definite role in agriculture. My own experience in agriculture classes and the FFA was very positive. I learned the same thing the guys did and enjoyed every second of it. Women in agriculture can only add to, not take away from, agriculture."** — Perri O.

Female involvement in agriculture is not the controversial subject that it was 10 or even five years ago. The liberal attitude that many states have taken is the reason. People and society are naturally resistant to change. It wasn't easy to accept for an organization known as the "largest farm-

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Barriers that inhibit women in agricultural education from developing the required technical skills must be removed. (Photo courtesy of Dave Hall, Pennsylvania State University.)



## The Ballots Are Being Counted

(Continued from page 13)

boy organization in the world" with a magazine published for the "young man on the farm." Women today have as many options open to them as their male counterparts. The discrimination issue is fading out.

"I think in the past few years women have come to be accepted in vocational agriculture. People don't even think about the fact that women are so involved anymore. I do think it is a great step forward that women are getting involved in agriculture." — Cody D.

Yes, the jury is in, and the ballots are being counted. If this is a civil case, and only 10 to 12 "yea" votes are needed for conviction, then women in agriculture are guilty as charged — guilty of achieving equality in educational opportunity in agriculture. However, if we're involved in a case needing a unanimous decision, then the case is unresolved. The one remaining juror to convince is the prospective employer of women desiring to enter agriculture. With more and more women beating on the door, the verdict is inevitable. The employer simply must follow suit and recognize the inevitable — women in agriculture — working, contributing, succeeding, advancing.

### THEME

## Self-Evaluation to Ensure Sex Equity

Vocational agriculture education has come a long way from the FFA's image as "an organization for boys studying vocational agriculture." The curriculum providing for education in agriculture, from its beginning with the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, has educated millions of students in the various aspects of agriculture. Students who were referred to as "Smith-Hughes boys" in the early days of agricultural education to the present day "agriculturalists" or "agribusiness persons" are a testimony to what we know as one of the brightest success stories in vocational education.

How has vocational education in agriculture changed in the past 70 years to allow equal opportunity for girls and boys in the curriculum? What should vocational agriculture teachers and school administrators be doing to ensure that the present and future vocational agriculture programs in our schools are not only exemplary educational programs, but also programs which are available to and equally beneficial for any student who chooses to enroll.

As educators, we are proud that vocational agriculture education has been at the forefront of many progressive and innovative happenings in vocational education. And so it has been with providing equal opportunities for male and female students. In the earliest days, vocational agriculture programs were almost exclusively made up of male students, although females were permitted to enroll. As early as 1933, the National FFA Organization was petitioned to extend membership to girls enrolled in vocational agriculture. The number of girls enrolled in vocational agriculture gradually increased, and delegates at the National FFA Convention in 1969 permanently solved this issue by voting to amend the FFA constitution and make girls eligible for membership.

Changes in federal legislation as well as changing societal norms have definitely been factors which have affected the changing make-up of the vocational agriculture enrollment. Obviously, changing roles in society resulted in more women pursuing careers and entering the labor force and this too has had an impact. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and subsequent amendments greatly broadened the scope of vocational agriculture to include preparation of



By ROBERT W. FISHER

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students for careers in areas other than production agriculture. Female enrollment in vocational agriculture and FFA participation have increased significantly in the last 20 years.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was adopted to ensure that "No person . . . shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." This sweeping legislation had ramifications throughout the educational community, not excluding vocational agriculture.

### Self-Evaluation Needed

Self-evaluation of education programs is a necessary step in the elimination of inequities based on sex. Sexual discrimination, where it exists, is probably more traditional than intentional. Society restricts people by putting overt or implied sex labels on jobs. It also constantly shows via different media modes, images of men and women that reinforce traditional practices and attitudes. Since schools are basically reflective of the standards, values, and attitudes of society, the educational community often perpetuates the traditional and is slow to react to change.

As mentioned earlier, agricultural educators have taken the lead in many educational concerns and so it has been in the area of sex equity for students. Many vocational agriculture students were encouraged to pursue nontraditional career goals before it became a thrust of the Federal government and a national educational priority.

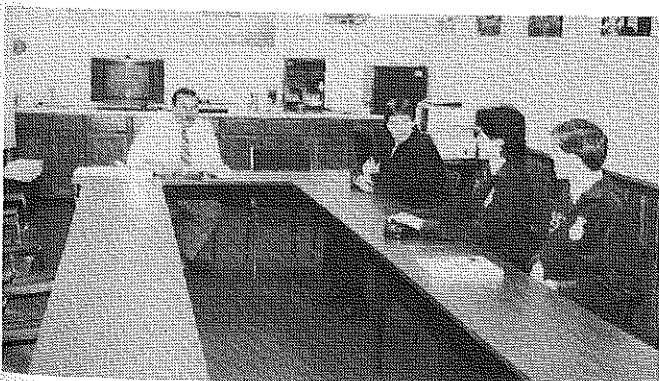
What can vocational agriculture teachers and school administrators do to make sure that vocational agriculture programs comply with Title IX regulations and are indeed free from sexual bias? A thorough self-evaluation of the programs is a necessary undertaking to assure that all of the students have equal opportunities free of discrimination and bias. Several major components of the vocational agriculture program should be reviewed including: access to the program and recruitment practices, course offerings and content, FFA activities, and the supervised occupational experience program. Answering the following questions in each of these areas is a helpful first step in a program self-evaluation.

### Access to the Program

- Are males or females unlimited by number for entrance into the program?
- Have descriptive materials for course access been reviewed to ensure that content, language, and illustrations are sex-fair?
- Are recruitment efforts and activities delivered to all students, both male and female, in a manner that encourages the enrollment of all students on an equitable basis?
- Do school guidance services have access to appropriate materials and background information which enables the promotion of the program to male and female students on an equitable basis?
- Has a policy statement specific to access to the program been cooperatively formulated by the school administration, the agricultural advisory committee, and the vocational agriculture program personnel which affirms the right of access to all courses.
- Have tests or criteria used in the admissions process been reviewed to ensure that they are sex-fair?

### Course Offerings and Content

- Are all course offerings and units of instruction presented in a manner which is free of sexual stereotypes and bias?
- Has there been a review of all resource materials in the department, including textbooks, workbooks, films, circulars, periodicals, and other pertinent educational materials to ensure that they are sex-fair?
- Are the course requirements the same for male and female students in all areas of instruction? (e.g. Do all



Female State FFA officers learn about agribusinesses when they make statewide goodwill tours with their male counterparts. (Photo courtesy of Jim Scott, Ohio Department of Education.)

students complete the same units of instruction in the agricultural mechanics laboratory?)

- Is the evaluation of student progress and the subsequent assignment of grades done without regard to sex?
- Do departmental course offerings encourage male and female students to explore nontraditional roles and careers?
- Are all students encouraged to participate in various course offerings of the department without regard to sex?

### FFA Activities

- Are all leadership roles in the organization equally accessible to all students without the presence of sexual bias or stereotype? (e.g. Is a boy as likely to be elected the FFA secretary as a girl?)
- Do male and female students have an equal opportunity to prepare for and participate in all FFA contests?
- Are recipients of awards selected on a sex-fair and equitable basis?
- Are all FFA members encouraged to participate in the development and implementation of all areas of the program of work without regard to sex?
- Are male and female students encouraged to pursue advanced degrees on an equal opportunity basis?

### Supervised Occupational Experience Program

- Are male and female students encouraged to formulate career goals based on individual student interest instead of sexual stereotype?
- Are all students encouraged to select and participate in a supervised occupational program without regard to sex?
- Are male and female students encouraged to participate in supervised occupational experience programs based on nontraditional career goals?
- Are job sites evaluated on the basis of equal opportunity for both male and female students at the site?
- Do all copies of written agreements include a policy statement of nondiscrimination?

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Students participating in FFA judging contests must be provided the needed Supervised Occupational Experiences to supplement their FFA activities and classroom instruction. (Photo courtesy of Dave Hall, Pennsylvania State University.)

## Self-Evaluation to Ensure Sex Equity

(Continued from page 15)

- Are students encouraged to participate in awards programs regardless of sex?
- Is the job performance of male and female students evaluated on an equitable basis?
- Are students recommended for job placement without regard to sex?

If the above questions can be answered affirmatively, a vocational agriculture department is treating students on an equitable basis. Most likely it is also in compliance with Title IX regulations.

### Summary

Sex equity in a vocational agriculture program does not imply that all vocational programs must have a balanced

membership of males and females, or that the FFA officer team should consist of an equal number of boys and girls. Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments entitles all students to take advantage of every educational opportunity regardless of sex. It is the law! But even more than that, it is an effort to treat students fairly and equitably. Agricultural endeavors and the matter of sex equity are no exception. A concerned vocational agriculture teacher continually evaluates and modifies the program to guarantee all students, both male and female, every educational opportunity possible.

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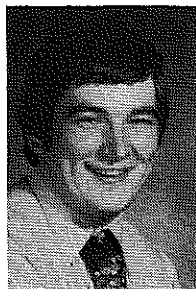
## THEME

# Recruitment and Retention Strategies To Reach Nontraditional Students

Many parents view vocational agriculture with a narrow vision and see it as strictly farming. With today's public image of agriculture, parents are not only discouraging their daughters from enrolling in the local vocational agriculture program, but also their sons. Are parents solely responsible? What influences, if any, do friends, employers, guidance counselors, and vocational agriculture teachers have in molding the image of vocational agriculture in the minds of potential female students? Each of the above groups plays a significant role in shaping the image of vocational agriculture in the minds of our youth. Once nontraditional students are recruited into the vocational agriculture, the problem then becomes one of retaining them. This article identifies reasons why parents may not encourage their children to enroll in a vocational agriculture program. The article also establishes a clearer definition of vocational agriculture and identifies some possible recruitment and retention strategies for non-traditional students.

According to the STATUS REPORT ON MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES IN OHIO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 1983-84, females enrollment in secondary vocational agriculture held constant during 1982 (17%), 1983 (16%), and 1984 (16%). In addition, the number of female vocational agriculture instructors remained the same during that time frame (12% in 1982; 10% in 1983; 13% in 1984)<sup>1</sup> The question of what is the ideal equity percentage in any vocational area arises and is not easily answered. "The important thing is — does every student know his or her options? And, does every student have access to any vocational program he or she wishes to pursue?"<sup>2</sup>

Parents may hesitate to encourage their daughter(s) to enroll in vocational agriculture programs for several reasons:



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parents' perception of the traditional role model women should play in the work force; their lack of understanding of vocational agriculture and its career opportunities; the public image of agriculture today with declining grain prices and numerous farm auctions; or perhaps, the quality of instruction available in the local vocational agriculture program in the high school or vocational center.

How do we enlighten parents about the positive side of vocational agriculture? The answer is simple — education. Education leaders must continue to educate the public about vocational agriculture today. Agriculture is no longer just farming; it offers many rewarding careers in agribusiness sales and services; agricultural - industrial equipment service; animal production & care; environmental management; food processing; forestry; horticulture; and natural resources. The concept of three integral parts of a total vocational agriculture program needs to be fully developed and shared with the public. Those phases being classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised occupational experience program, and personal development. All three are vital to a successful vocational agriculture program.

- Career Day with nontraditional workers
- Visits to vocational centers
- Exploratory classes
- Role-plays with role reversals
- Presentation of pay scale comparisons and projections
- Team teaching with nontraditional roles
- Exploration of family occupational tree
- Nontraditional role models in classroom presentations
- Case studies
- Nontraditional biographies
- Course title and description changes
- Class exchanges
- Nontraditional lottery
- Credit for on-the-job volunteers
- Exploration of reason why students "can't" do jobs
- Linkage of nontraditional careers to subject area (e.g. engineering presented in math class as potentially related career)
- Career resource center displays
- Input sessions with parents
- Use of nonstereotyped language
- Reversal of staff roles for a day (male in home economics, female in industrial arts)
- Vocational education clubs - focus on nontraditional jobs
- Field trip to career centers
- Hands-on experience in vocational areas
- Grab bag of nontraditional options to explore
- Nontraditional society simulations
- Interest and aptitude test to identify nontraditional career possibilities
- Shadowing nontraditional jobs in community
- Nonbiased career and counseling materials
- Bulletin boards display of nontraditional careers
- Interviews with workers in nontraditional jobs
- Group guidance sessions
- Provide a sex fair classroom setting and instruction
- Student recruiters
- Research on "secret career goal"
- Career inventories
- Exploration of reasons why student would and wouldn't want nontraditional jobs
- High school student involvement in nontraditional demonstrations to elementary students
- Scholarships in nontraditional areas
- Input sessions with community employers
- Poster contest with nontraditional job themes
- Awareness sessions for staff, administrators, school board, parents, community, employers

FIGURE 1: Recruitment Strategies to Reach Nontraditional Students for Vocational Agriculture.

Since 1969, the FFA has encouraged female participation in the vocational student organization and females are making great strides in vocational agriculture and the FFA. Still, we find parents who wrestle with the thought of their daughter being enrolled in vocational agriculture and a member of the Future Farmers of America. Even the National FFA Organization is concerned with its image. In the past two years, the National FFA Organization has developed brochures, public service announcements, films, and videotapes highlighting the new fields of agriculture in an organized effort to make the public aware that vocational agriculture is diverse. We must utilize these resources locally to help turn the negative image of vocational agriculture into a positive one that shows numerous and exciting career opportunities to students.

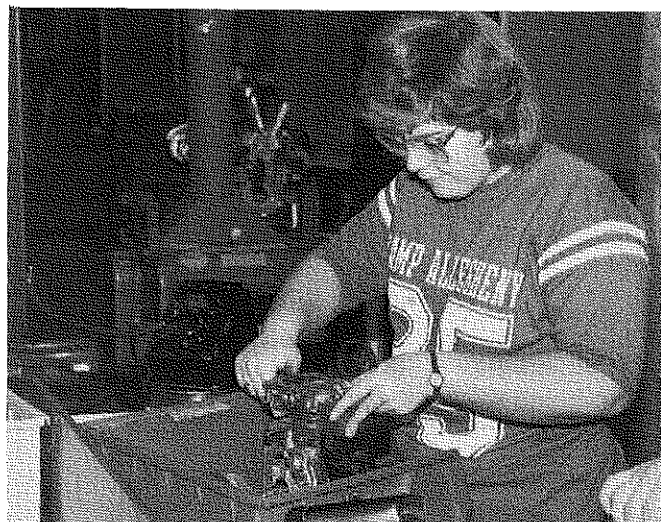
According to a study directed by John D. Parmley of Kansas State University, "The prevailing opinion that agricul-

tural occupations are more appropriate for men than for women seems to be a major barrier to increased enrollment of girls in high school vocational agriculture program."<sup>3</sup> This study involved vocational agriculture teachers, school administrators, and parents from selected high schools. We must diversify our recruitment techniques to attract more nontraditional students into local vocational agriculture program. Listed in Figure 1 are 41 strategies that can be utilized in recruiting nontraditional students.

Additional recruiting strategies not necessarily aimed at nontraditional students may include:

1. Use of officers to present quality presentations to prospective students.
2. Conduct a one time only basic agriculture class for prospective students.
3. The local vocational agriculture teacher(s) offer an introductory agriculture course to prospective students. This

(Continued on page 18)



Students are retained in agricultural education when they receive the opportunities and experiences needed for career entry and advancement. (Photo courtesy of Dave Hall, Pennsylvania State University.)



Students participating in national FFA contests have demonstrated their interest and desire to be successful in agricultural education. (Photo courtesy of James Scott, Ohio Department of Education.)



## Recruitment and Retention Strategies to Reach Nontraditional Students

(Continued from page 17)

course may vary in length from nine weeks to a year.

4. Develop a quality slide/tape presentation featuring present and past students in your program.

5. Keep routinely in touch with guidance counselors. Invite them to various functions, have them serve as escorts, judges and speakers.

6. Send a complimentary copy of THE NATIONAL FUTURE FARMER magazine to guidance counselors, school libraries, principals, superintendents, board of education members, etc.

7. Sponsor an open house visit day for prospective students and their parents.

8. Conduct a farm day for elementary and junior high students.

9. Conduct a Food for America or similar program.

10. Develop a local vocational agriculture handbook detailing your local program, including a 2 or 4 year plan of action, for prospective students and their parents.

11. Enlist the help of business, industry, and farmers to speak to prospective students about the benefits of enrolling in vocational agriculture.

12. Offer a quality adult education program.

13. Invite prospective students and parents to FFA meetings and activities.

14. Collect placement data on graduates and use as a recruitment tool.

15. Conduct a quality vocational agriculture program EVERYDAY!

Several strategies are a must. Perhaps if any one recruitment strategy from the above lists can be called the most important, it would be the last one — conduct a quality vocational agriculture program every day.

Recruiting the nontraditional student to the vocational agriculture program is half the battle; retention is often more challenging. Positive steps can and should be taken to help a student withstand peer pressures and, thus, can result in an improved retention rate. Some possible steps that can be taken may include:<sup>4</sup>

- Placing several nontraditional students in the same non-traditional program.

- Enforce fair and consistent discipline, dress standards, safety regulations, achievement expectations, and grading procedures for all students.

- Emphasize each student's strengths and encourage students to develop and work toward realistic vocational goals.

- Encourage nontraditional students to stay in the program for at least a few weeks until they have adjusted. Offer continued support and keep the line of communication open.

- Provide and encourage participation in support groups where nontraditional students can share problems and concerns and experience solutions.

- Offer shadowing experiences with nontraditional workers in the field where students can gain first-hand experience with a role model.

- Encourage participation in vocationally-related extracurricular activities such as the vocational student organizations.

- Provide students with role models to reinforce their choices.

In conclusion, parents do play a key role in influencing their children in electing to study in a vocational agriculture program. We must make a concerted effort to better inform parents and the rest of the public that vocational agriculture is a quality program to study in high school, to pursue in post-secondary schools, and that it offers many dynamic, diverse, and exciting career opportunities for today's youth. The future is bright for women in agricultural education.

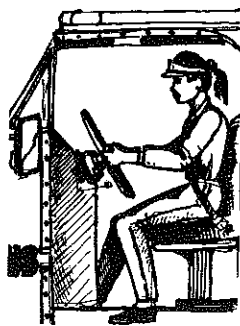
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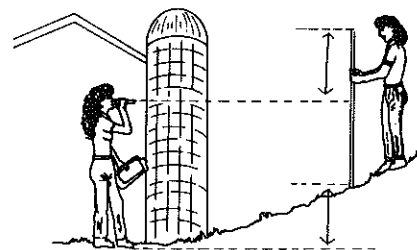
## Preparing Women for Careers in Agricultural Education



Heather Heaven



(Drawings by)



Lori Briggs

# The FFA — A Complete Educational Tool

Have you ever read an advertisement for a Swiss Army Knife? If you can believe all that the ad portrays, you have the perfect tool for all occasions. Any obstacle from sawing down a tree, stripping electrical wire, magnifying that sliver in your thumb, measuring the length of a pine needle, or picking the chicken out of your teeth can be accomplished if you own one of the deluxe models.

What if we were to write a similar type of ad to try to sell the Future Farmers of America as an organization for all occasions to students of vocational agriculture? The ad might look something like this:

## FFA — A Swiss Army Knife

Tool comes enclosed in a blue and gold corduroy handle, crafted by one of the oldest vocational organizations in America. Blades are realistic, experience tempered through the learning to do method. Deluxe model comes with the following 11 blades: (1) supervised agricultural occupational experience, (2) cooperations, (3) community service, (4) leadership, including communication skills, (5) earnings, savings, and investments, (6) conduct of meetings, (7) scholarship, (8) recreation, (9) participation in state and national activities, (10) public relations, and (11) alumni relations. There is an unlimited guarantee on the usefulness of this training. Training can be adapted to any professional or social situation.

Does this ad sound too "hard sell?" Maybe, but it only requires talking to former FFA members or to potential employers to concur with the ad. The 11 blades mentioned in the ad are the areas of a complete FFA program of activities. If all students could become sharpened in these areas, they would have the needed survival skills. The blades and tools on the Swiss Army Knife each has a specific purpose; the same is true of the FFA tool.

Closer inspection shows other comparisons between the tools. The Swiss Army Knife has eating utensils which can be compared to the socialization experiences in the FFA, including banquets and travel. Swiss army knives have screwdrivers and saws that are used for work just as FFA skills contests relate to occupational skills. The fish scaler on the Swiss Army Knife represents recreation, another blade of importance on the FFA tool.

The owners of Swiss army knives think of them as tools, not as pocket knives. Individuals in agricultural education should view the FFA as a tool instead of a club.

When using a Swiss Army Knife, one must be careful not to use the wrong blade for the job or use one blade to the point that it is dull and ineffectual. The same students participating in the same FFA activities every year may hone their skills in one area but may dull the overall blade. Advisors' over use of a blade include such examples as: (a) allowing students to raise a single county fair market hog



By JACQUELYN P. DEEDS AND DAVID HALL

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for four years as the students' only supervised occupational experience, (b) providing participation in only livestock judging or agricultural mechanics contests to the exclusion of leadership or farm management programs, and (c) doing lots of community service but never attending leadership camp or the State FFA Convention. The list of examples could go on for pages, but the effect is all the same — the development of a tool that is not well balanced and therefore not used effectively.

Some are guilty of not using the tool to its full potential. Others are guilty of not using it safely. If you attempt to use more than one blade on the Swiss Army Knife at a time, you are likely to damage the tool and injure yourself or someone else. The same is true of misuse of the FFA tool. By trying to use too many of the blades at one time, none can be used to its best advantage. The injury caused is not likely to be physical but mental. We have often heard vocational agriculture teachers say they are leaving the profession because they are burned-out from too much time.

The Swiss Army Knife that is mishandled will not be the intended survival tool. An FFA program that is mishandled will not provide students with the needed survival skills.

Some guidelines recommended for maintaining a well balanced program include:

1. Let your instructional program be your guide in FFA participation. If the subject is not important enough to be taught in the classroom, it doesn't rate time in the FFA program.

2. Base activity selection on student interest and career objectives. Find out your students' goals and build to their strengths and interests.

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## The FFA — A Complete Educational Tool

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3. Don't let your personal interest and expertise drive the program. You must like what you do, but don't exclude other areas because you don't enjoy or feel comfortable with the subject. As the old saying goes, "Try it, you might like it."

4. Tradition in an FFA program is excellent but don't tie yourself down to "we have done it for years." If you are a new teacher in a program, don't let yourself be pressured into maintaining traditions that don't fit your program — build new ones.

5. Don't try to overdo. Remember balance in your FFA program includes balance in your personal life.

6. Keep in mind state and national program of activities priorities as the local program of activities is developed.

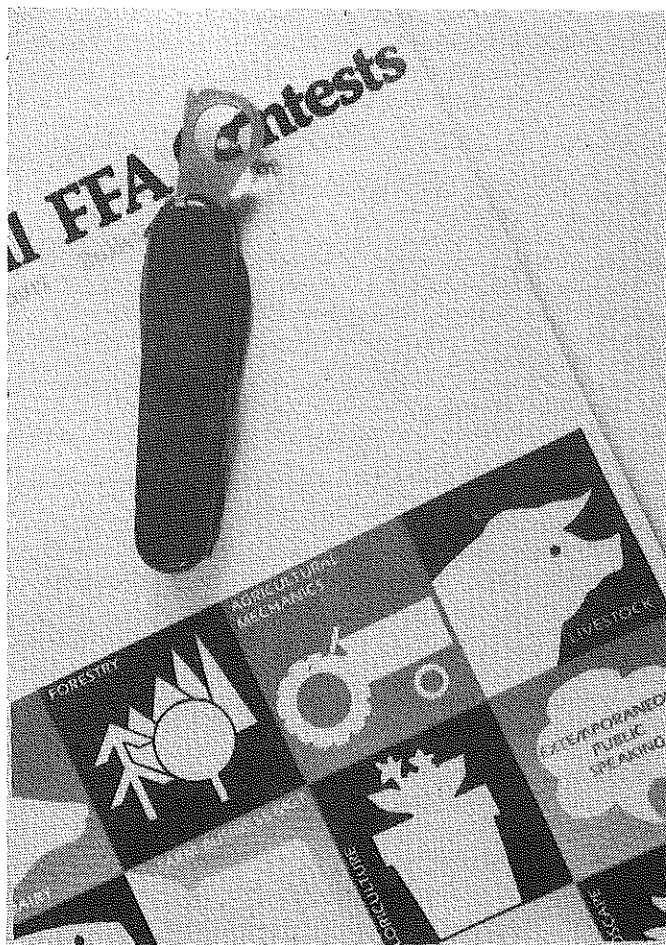
Schedule local and district activities to the state activities. Proper scheduling and sequencing can help keep overload to a minimum.

7. The most important guideline of all is back to the basics. A well balanced student-developed FFA program of activities will make all the other guidelines easy to follow. Note the words **well-balanced** and **student-developed**. These are the key.

If employers are asked to list the proficiencies wanted in future employees, the list would undoubtedly be very similar to the skills developed on the 11 blades noted in our ad. We have the means of providing these essential skills to high school students. We just need to sell them on the finished product and then make sure that they receive the proper chances to hone each blade. Remember that we need to prepare our students for survival. Everyone can use the FFA — THE COMPLETE EDUCATION TOOL!



The FFA has a program or activity to meet the needs of every student and the Swiss Army Knife has a blade for every job.



FFA advisors must closely examine all contests to find the ones best suited to reach the goals of the instructional program. (Photos courtesy of Jacques Deeds, Mississippi State University.)

Coming in May . . .

## Teaching the Basics

# Motivating Students in Vocational Agriculture

Motivating students to do school-related work always seems to be a challenge for educators. In my vocational agriculture program, a heavy emphasis is on ornamental horticulture. The problems and solutions I have encountered not only apply to my area, but most relate to any program within the educational system.

Although there may be many factors contributing to a student's lack of motivation, the major one is the absence of parental participation in the educational process. Obviously, this is not true for all students, teachers, or parents. But there are students who lack motivation when it comes to doing the work required by the instructor. Parental involvement may be the solution to many motivational problems.

The lack of parental involvement comes from two sources. First, the parents may not want to (or can't) be a part of the educational process. The second source is caused by the school (or school system) alienating parents from the process. Whatever the reason, the lack of parental participation is detrimental to high quality educational progress for many of today's students.

The lack of parental participation can be grouped into two main categories. There are, however, many factors which cause the above condition.

## Parental Alienation

First, let's look at factors contributing to parents not being interested and therefore, not willing to participate in the educational process.

### Factor 1: Parents do not see the importance of education.

Some parents do not see the worth or importance of a good education. Therefore, the student does not receive the encouragement and/or the support needed to achieve educational success.

### Factor 2: Lack of parental success in school.

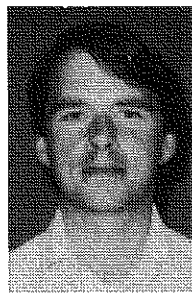
Many parents may not have done well in school yet went on to have relatively successful careers. These parents may project the attitude, "I did poorly in school, but I turned out okay." The student lacks a role model who will ensure positive motivation needed to perform well in school.

### Factor 3: The attitude, "Well, that's okay. Just do as good as you can."

Such an attitude allows most students to do just the minimum. Minimal effort follows, thus, allowing the student to perform haphazardly with little care for the quality of work completed. Parental attitude fails to encourage the student to put forth the best effort possible.

### Factor 4: Parents can't participate in the educational process.

In today's society, both parents often work to support



BY DAVID WARREN

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the family. In this instance, the parents may not have the time nor the energy to devote to the educational process.

### Factor 5: The Idea, "It's the teacher's job to teach, so teach."

It is true that teachers should teach, but without parental backing and encouragement, the student may not see the importance of education. Again, the motivation for a job well-done is eliminated. Many parents feel alienated from the educational process by the school or school system. There are several factors which contribute to this feeling.

## School Alienation of Parents

### Factor 1: Parents feel alienated from the classroom.

Most of the time parents do not have input about (a) the curriculum within a class, (b) the school administration, or (c) the methods used in teaching their children. The parents naturally begin to feel their input isn't needed or wanted at any level of the educational process. Therefore, to the detriment of the educational process, they don't participate.

### Factor 2: Teacher "expertise" or parent "inadequacy."

The educational establishment is expected to solve all problems and know all the answers within the educational system. Perhaps we should, but parental help is needed if the educational process is to be complete. Many parents are not familiar with the schools or the school system. The parents are left out; they do not know what the problem might be because these problems are never discussed with them. In addition, their opinions are seldom solicited. They feel they have nothing to offer; they do not participate in the process at any level.

### Factor 3: The job of the educational system is to educate the educator.

This factor is very similar to another mentioned factor. The difference is this idea is supported by the school system or school. It is true that the educational system should educate, but it can't do the job alone. The system needs support, specifically parental support. The process of education should and must be a team effort of school and parents. School and family are the two most influential institutions

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## Motivating Students in Vocational Agriculture

(Continued from page 21)

in most individuals' lives. It only makes sense that these institutions work together for the betterment of the student.

### Factor 4: Schools alienate themselves from the parents.

Today's educational system seems to want only token or worse, no participation by parents. We leave parents out of the educational process. The only time parents are contacted is when the student becomes a discipline problem. We must realize that the parents' role is essential. If education is promoted by parents, then the student will (more than likely) be motivated to work more diligently. We don't have all the answers and we can't take all the responsibility; we need parental support.

The major factor contributing to this lack of parental participation is not a lack of concern, but of opportunity. Parents would participate if given a genuine opportunity. Parents who are not interested in participating are a low percentage. Most want the best for their children, including the best possible education. The opportunity must be available for the sake of all concerned.

### Options for Involvement

There are several options which allow parents to participate in the education of their children. Because I represent the view of vocational education, some ideas may not be applicable in all types of programs. Nevertheless, they are worthy of consideration even if modification is needed.

**Home Projects** — Students may have projects at home which relate to material covered at school.

**Suggested Projects** — Try vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, small home greenhouses, or several house plants. These projects may or may not be used to earn money. An orchard and/or garden, for example, provide something useful that the student is learning in school. The student actually uses these skills at home. The parent may want to become involved in the project. Now the student, parents, and the teacher are working cooperatively in the educational process.

**Home Visits** — These are visits made by the instructor to the home of the student. The reasons are varied - to review the project, to advise the student, and of course, to meet the parents and students in a non-school setting.

I have found that the project and home visits are most effective in motivating students. First, the parent and student see that the teacher really cares about the work that is produced. More importantly, they realize that this educator cares about their child as an individual. The student, parents, and teacher are involved in the educational process. In addition, the instructor begins to know the students better - "What makes them tick?" Eventually, the instructor will know how to motivate all students more effectively. Finally, parental interest is heightened because **they know they are involved** in the education of their child.

I have witnessed a 180-degree turn-around in behavior, attitude, performance, and even discipline situations after visiting students to see their home projects.

**Job Placement** — Place students on jobs related to what is taught in the classroom. This phase is usually accomplished upon completion of the program, but may be effective at any time the student is in the program.

**Possible Job Sites** — Seek stations that include florists, garden centers, nurseries, landscape companies, landscape maintenance companies, etc. Here again, parents can see skills acquired at school being put to work. They see a usefulness for the vocational program because the student benefits from skills learned in school.

**Career Planning** — Help students determine careers that match their abilities and interests.

**Possible Careers** — Encourage students to seek positions as florists, nursery employees, landscapers, maintenance workers, and salespersons. Parents, students, and the teacher cooperatively determine what career might best suit the student's needs. School work, home projects, and on-the-job training can be coordinated to teach the student the skills needed for the career goals that have been set. Again, parents play a vital role.

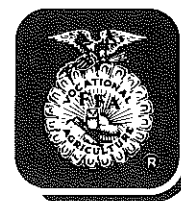
### Summary

At this point, a unique problem relating to vocational education arises. Many associate vocational education with students who can't make the grade in academic classes. This stigma may create a problem when seeking the support of parents because they may see this class as just another unimportant elective, "babysitter," or a class for "dummies." An instructor might have to prove the value and importance of the program.

All programs, not just the vocational ones, need more parental participation. Schools cannot educate unilaterally. The process must include active involvement and support of the parents.



# EXPLORE HIGH SCHOOL AGRICULTURE



# Changing Times: What Effect on Secondary Agricultural Education?

Secondary agricultural education in the U.S. has, on more than one occasion, been likened to a dinosaur. The program has some critics who feel it is a program for a past era and has outlived its usefulness. The program has been in existence for a long while and has developed some deeply held traditions that are important to those closely associated with the program. But, has secondary agricultural education become so encrusted with tradition that it has not adapted successfully to the changing realities of the modern world?

To answer the question posed above, one must carefully examine the secondary agriculture program and compare what exists to what existed some time in the past. The examination of such a large program would be very difficult to accomplish and very time consuming. However, examination of one of its many facets has provided some hints on the dynamism of the program.

Perhaps as important as any other facet of the agricultural education program is the supervised occupational experience program. The supervised occupational experience program was installed in the early years of secondary agricultural education as an integral part of the program. To many, the "traditional" supervised occupational experience program came to be equated with the supervised farming option.

How has the supervised occupational experience program changed to accommodate student and industry needs in modern times? Two recent studies at Michigan State University gave clear evidence that deep changes had taken place in the agricultural education programs in Michigan.

## Changes Are Occurring

Shahrokh<sup>1</sup> in his study of Michigan high school seniors enrolled in agricultural education found 38.9% obtained their primary occupational experiences in the supervised farming program, 32.9% in the school land laboratory option, and 28.1% from the placement option.

Powers<sup>2</sup>, found that teachers rated supervising the occupational experiences of their students as their second most important role activity. The disconcerting aspect of the study was when teachers rated the execution of their roles, supervising occupational experience programs was the least well conducted role in the agriculture program.

## Additional Evidence

Bobbitt<sup>3</sup> conducted a study to examine the opinions and programs of agriculture teachers in 16 randomly selected states. State supervisors and teacher educators were asked to select the 5 best directors of supervised occupational ex-

BY FRANK BOBBITT

(Dr. Bobbitt is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1039.)

perience from among their secondary agriculture instructors to participate in the study. The results of a survey of the teachers indicated that the supervised occupational experience program throughout the country is, indeed, a very diverse affair.

The study showed that nationwide of the 91% of senior agriculture students with a supervised occupational experience program, 47% were utilizing the supervised farming option and only 9% were employing the school land laboratory option. The findings confirmed the decline in use of the supervised farming option.

The teachers in the survey generally reported that supervised occupational experience was more important in their program today than it had been in the past and they expected it to be more important in the future. They also felt that under their working conditions, the school land laboratory was the least effective supervised occupational experience option and the supervised farming the most effective option.

## Summary

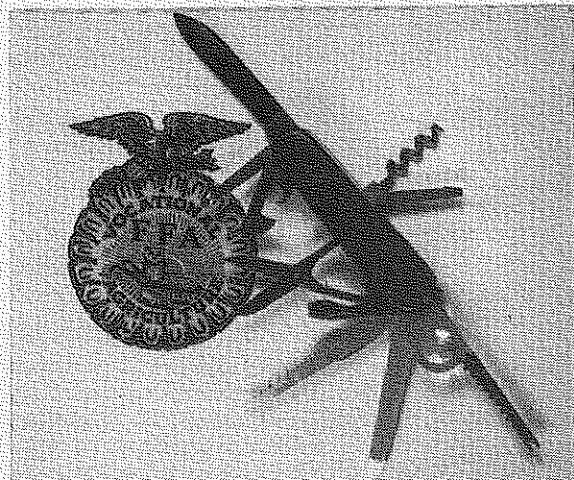
Is secondary agricultural education a dinosaur? One only has to be casually acquainted with the profession to observe what the research is confirming: agricultural education has been, and continues to be a dynamic program. The program has made major adjustments to the realities of the modern agricultural industry. Perhaps some of these changes have evolved in such a manner that a number of individuals in the profession have not been aware of the extent or depth of the changes that have taken place. It is highly desirable to understand the dynamics of a program if policy and procedures are to be developed that enhance the opportunity of the program to attain its potential.

## References

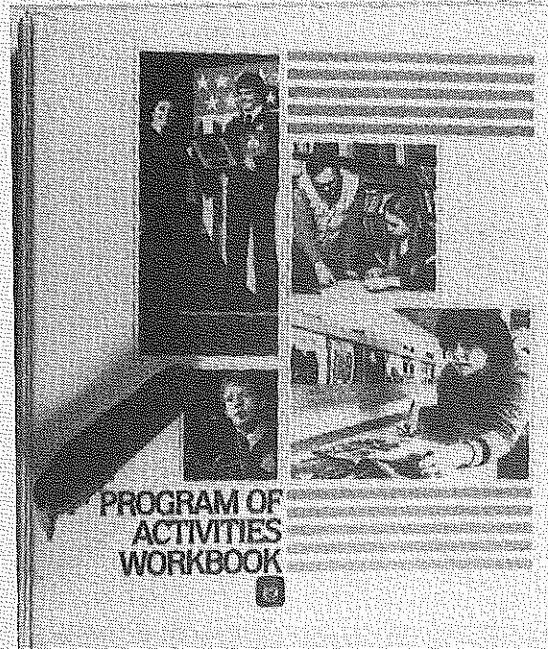
1. Darysough Shahrokh, "A Study of the Agricultural Competencies of Senior Vocational Agriculture Students in Michigan Based on Their Supervised Occupational Experience Programs" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1983).
2. Larry Powers, "A Study of Professional Role Perceptions Held by Two Selected Groups of Vocational Agriculture Teachers in Michigan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1985) page 206.
3. Frank Bobbitt, "An Examination of the Opinions and Supervised Occupational Experience Programs of Selected Secondary Agriculture Programs in the U.S." (Staff study, Michigan State University, 1986).

# Stories in Pictures

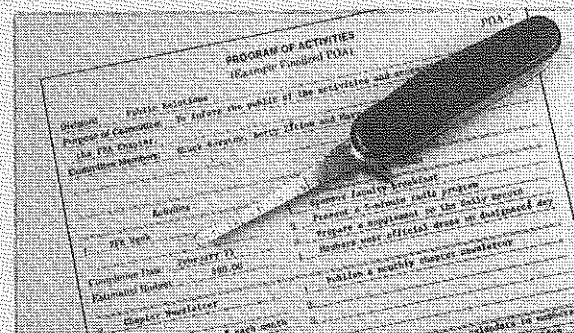
## Two Complete Tools — The FFA and A Swiss Army Knife



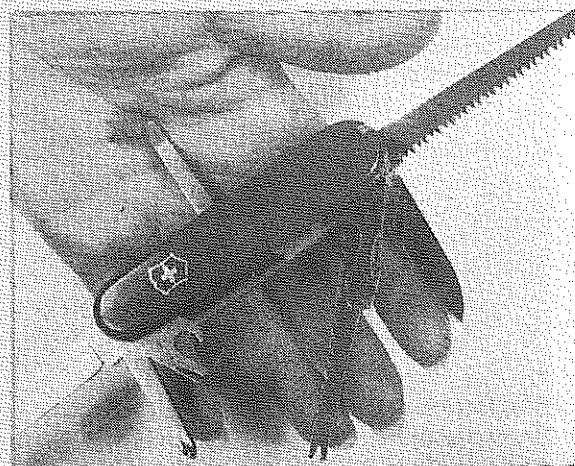
A Swiss Army Knife is the perfect tool for all occasions. The FFA is the perfect tool for helping all students reach their vocational goals.



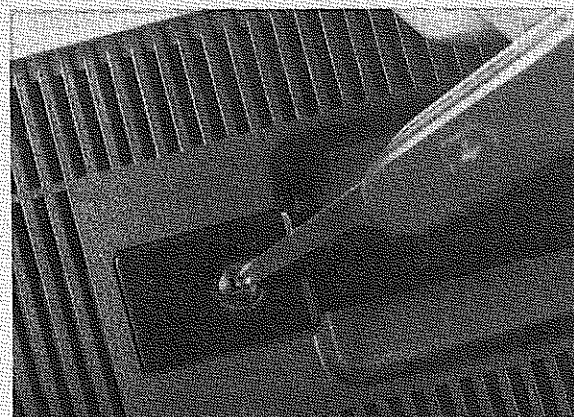
A well developed program of activities gives an FFA program the potential to be the complete educational tool.



A student developed program of activities guided by the instructional program is an effective measure of a well balanced FFA tool.



Trying to use too many blades of the FFA tool at one time can be hazardous to the health of the program as well as the advisor.



FFA contests and activities, like other tools, must be used to perform the job for which they were designed and not misused.

(Photos courtesy of Jacque P. Deeds of Mississippi State University, Photo Editor of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*.)