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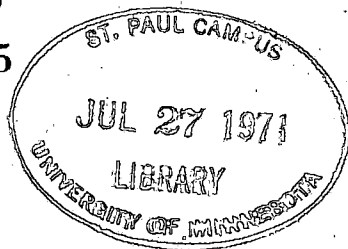
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GROUP 11 (b). ANALYSIS AND USE OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

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The Group concentrated upon: (1) The analysis of census data, (2) methods of forecasting production of individual commodities, and (3) methods of classifying farms.

The analysis of census data

It was agreed that census data as currently classified were not yielding sufficient information for analytical purposes. More detailed classifications could aid researchers in forecasting the areas where changes in resource use were most likely to take place.

The Group noted that many of the statistics currently available were not useful for international comparisons. Agricultural economists should continually strive to remedy this handicap.

The advent of electronic-computing machines has made it possible to carry out elaborate analysis of data. Such equipment should be exploited to the maximum extent, particularly since the collection of data is onerous and expensive.

The opinion was expressed that in some countries agricultural economists are lagging behind other scientists in the use of computer facilities. The lack of sufficient and reliable data is often cited as the reason for this, but further exploration is required to determine whether a gap does exist and if so why.

In many regions the census returns obtained from individual firms are confidential. For this reason research workers outside the collecting agency cannot obtain access to the original data. As a result analysis of individual schedules has to be performed by the statistical authority. Accordingly research workers and other users of statistics



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should continually make their analytical requirements known and make such requests as specific as possible.

There is a wide variation in the reliability of agricultural statistics and it is often suggested that analysis of such figures will not yield very fruitful results. The fact that data are often defective should not, however, curtail development of analytical work. Useful analysis can often be made of, for example, trends and tendencies over time and space.

Besides, deficiencies in data often only come to light when the figures are being analysed; such studies are one of the means of improving the reliability of statistics.

Forecasting production of individual commodities

A useful exchange of information, experience and ideas, took place related to both long-term and short-term forecasting of the supplies of individual commodities. Most attention was given to dairy products.

Regression analysis is the method commonly used for making long-term forecasts in this field. Economists in the various countries included different variables in their equations depending upon the structure of the dairy industry, its geographical location and system of production.

Methods of making short-term forecasts did not differ substantially from country to country.

Classification of farms

Farms may be classified in various ways depending upon the problem being studied.

Classifications based upon area are most common but have limited uses. Classifications based upon size of business and type of production were considered more meaningful. Consideration was given to the difficulties of obtaining objective measures of size of farm business.

Three measures of size;

1. gross value of sales of farm production;
2. estimated gross or net farm out-put, or assessed net farm income; and
3. total labour requirements, were discussed. Group members thought that for both national and international uses measures based on labour requirements were of greatest value. This measure could also be used to classify farms by type of production.