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Maintaining the Cutting Edge

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Comparative Advantage and Competitiveness: New Extension Programs to Teach Old Concepts

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A national task force of Extension specialists has developed a comprehensive set of educational materials to teach the basic concepts of comparative advantage and competitiveness as they relate to farm enterprise selection, interregional competition and international trade. An understanding of international and interregional competition is built on a foundation of individual farm decision making. The concept of opportunity costs is used as a cornerstone for competitive advantage analyses at all three levels.

Educational materials include a base book with separate sections for each level of competition; an instructor's manual with introductory video skits, visuals, a computer game, instructional video tapes and instructional micro spread sheet templates; and specialized analytical tools which include micro spread sheets and an interregional linear programming application.

The symposium discussion followed an exposition of the concepts and materials developed as they relate programs of individual farm decision making, interregional competition and international trade. Discussion centered on potential use of these materials in Extension programs.