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same. Where has the money gone? Salaries now take up 85 to 90 percent of the total extension budget leaving very little for experimentation with new programs or new clientele groups.

Following Cochrane, I conclude that it is time that a new federal agency be formed to target funds for projects designed especially for the part-time farm and the farm that is in transition from a full-time farm. As Cochrane points out, the elimination of the Commodity Programs, which cost \$26 billion in fiscal 1986, could provide the funding. Extension personnel all over the United States could submit competitive proposals for funding to this agency, which could function like the National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Mental Health. These institutions have set the precedent for awarding federal funds on a competitive basis to professionals who serve the larger society's interests. And clearly, it is in society's interest to safeguard our food supply system and preserve the knowledge of how to farm.



PRACTICAL MARKETING:

Cure For Extension's 'Doom and Gloom'

by Barry L. Flinchbaugh
and Kathleen W. Ward

The nation's Cooperative Extension Service is experiencing an image crisis. This, in turn, has already created a crisis in funding. Extension's faculty have become "doom and gloomers" who gather at national meetings for muted talk about hiring freezes, lost positions, and eroding programs.

In attempts to cope with the crises, Extension's educational network has decided to concentrate its resources on eight initiatives, identified nationally as being central to Americans' economic and social progress.

Will this approach eliminate the organization's stresses? Or, will it become just another busy work project that ties up high-priced talent in committees and generates reams of paper to gather dust on some shelf?

The answer may lie in the hands of Extension's economists.

Perceptions Equal Reality

In Kansas, at least, the organization's image crisis didn't develop among its general clientele. Last year a statewide telephone survey indicated that more than 91 percent of the population knew Extension or one of its programs. Only 2 percent were dissatisfied with the job Extension was doing, and just 3 percent called for a decrease in its funding.

These results are remarkably close to those Warner and Christenson found in a 1982 assessment of the national Cooperative Extension Service.

As any public policy analyst will point out, however, perception equals reality in the political sector. And the reality is, important public leaders are among Extension's "dissatisfied" respondents. Their perceptions have emerged not only in bud-

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get cuts but also in such labels as "irrelevant," "anachronistic," and "out-of-tune with the public it's paid to serve."

Extension workers' doom and gloom won't counter these leaders' perceptions. Extension's citing a long history of useful and sometimes amazing service to the American public won't do the job, either.

Practical Marketing Needed

What's needed is some practical application of the principles underlying sound marketing. In this case, Extension must meet the changing needs of its clientele and then communicate its success to administrators and officials.

To do that nowadays, Extension workers will have to ignore arbitrary boundaries of staff level and subject matter discipline. They'll have to reallocate resources and work as a team to support on-target initiatives.

That's much easier to say than do. For example, consider the eight initiatives national Extension identified as its future educational core:

- Competitiveness and profitability of American agriculture.
- Alternative agricultural opportunities.
- Water quality.
- Conservation and management of natural resources.
- Revitalizing rural America.
- Improving nutrition, diet and health.
- Family and economic well-being.
- Building human capital.

Few will argue that sound, research-based education on these subjects would not benefit the American public. Few will say the issues aren't broad enough to allow for flexibility in programming to meet local needs.

But do these issues, in fact, *best* meet the current needs of Extension's present and potential clientele? Will the organization's funders, traditional clientele and other publics *perceive* the initiatives as being both on-target and the wisest use of Extension's limited budget?

Will Extension Support the Initiative?

Furthermore, will Washington's having chosen eight issues actually lead to initiative-related programs across the United States? For example, are the Land-Grant university-based state Extension systems perceiving themselves as involved in developing and implementing these initiatives? Or, do they see these issues as federally forced, top-down programming?

Will Extension use budget problems and low morale to justify meeting these initiatives with tired old programs, packaged under such buzzwords as "revitalization" and "biotechnology"?

Are Experiment Station scientists geared up to help insure the success of issue-oriented Extension efforts? Extension education must be research-based, not research-governed—even if that makes getting grants more difficult. And, by definition, research isn't always working on problems that worry ordinary people *today*.

Will Extension workers "out in the trenches" concern themselves more with protecting their turf than with developing issue-based programming? Will they be more concerned about the conflicts within/among the initiatives than about an issue-oriented approach to delivering their educational product?

Admittedly, the eight national extension initiatives could bring to light some discord facing traditional Extension program emphases. For example, the most efficient ways to improve the profitability of American agriculture may not be the best ways to preserve natural resources or develop agricultural alternatives. Revitalizing rural America may not be the most profitable route to family economic well-being; it may not

even be best for agriculture if the revitalization includes building a Toyota plant in western Kansas, rather than a meat-packing plant.

Solutions for these conflicts are directly relevant to the educational needs of many Americans. Even so, will Extension faculty with expertise in agriculture, natural resources, home economics, 4-H and community development turn their offices into multiple war camps and use conflicting or incomplete programs to compete for funds?

Issues More Important than Subject Areas

For the national thrust to work, Extension will have to find positive answers for all those questions. But, the fact is, the idea of programming issue-by-issue will be more important to Extension and its success than any subject matter turf or even the eight federal initiatives.

After all, vital and creative Extension field workers can adapt all kinds of subjects in ways that meet their local publics' needs. Beyond that, even if Washington's eight initiatives are on-target nationwide, they'll have to change as people's needs do.

Without an issue orientation in today's complex world, however, Extension won't be able to address the basic fact that people need help with problems, not programs. Producers don't worry about animal science at 10 a.m., agronomy at 11, and the family's budget over the noon hour. When they plan or address problems in today's stress-producing technological world, people want answers, not fragments of subject matter turf.

Whether it's called inter-disciplinary "systems" or issue-based programming, this approach could be difficult to imple-

ment. Extension's volunteer and advisory groups, professional reward systems, and traditional programs often are structured on subject area or academic department lines.

Economics Links Subject Area

Nonetheless, Kansas Extension Agricultural Economics Programs has demonstrated that developing and delivering issue-based programs is possible. The economists are in their second year of coordinating a program called "Target on Profit," which welds the ag-related disciplines together to teach producers how to maximize profits, not production. The economists also are leading "Balanced Farm and Family Living," a program which utilizes expertise from almost every Extension subject matter area.

They have found economics has the model for the issue-based approach in its "alternatives-consequences" framework, used so successfully in public policy education.

In addition, they've discovered economics is a natural bridge among disciplines. It reaches into almost every problem or issue. Beyond that, economics faculty often are the best equipped to teach Extension about marketing—e.g. identifying "market holes" and "selling" targeted programs.

Local Targeting Breeds Success

Economists know that on-target products don't emerge in isolation. After all, you may be an expert on raising cattle. Some national group may be right in suggesting Americans now want leaner meats. But if all you've done is raise a skinny steer, you're not ready to market steak in your hometown grocery store or even your state.

First, you need a pretty good idea about the kinds of people who buy beef in your area. You must discover which cuts they prefer, how they want those cuts processed and/or packaged, and how much they're willing to pay. You have to figure how to get your steer into preferred condition and let potential buyers know your beef is available. And you may have to figure how to communicate the message that red meat isn't a health or diet hazard.

In a similar vein, a state Extension specialist may be an expert in a subject. Washington may be right in suggesting a national initiative on the subject. But neither fact guarantees a marketable Extension program.

Extension's present and potential publics require continuing study—formal and informal—on as localized a basis as possible. The object is to identify target groups that can/must be reached effectively—given today's local political realities, educational competition and Extension resources.

For example, Kansas' present accountability-minded politicians aren't impressed by intuitive programming or Washington dicta. Kansas Extension will have little problem, however, supporting the national initiative on agricultural competitiveness and profitability.

But Massachusetts Extension can't ignore Boston. California has to keep its environmentalists in mind. And no educator can forget today's information and technology brokers in the private sector; these competitors necessitate the most fine-tuned analyses of current educational needs.

For instance, is confusion or dissension emerging from collisions between agriculture and urban sprawl, between the tried-and-true and new technology, or between family developmental needs and economic necessities?

These are situations that could only lead to locally targeted, politically supportable education—but only if Extension workers believe issue-based programming is more important to economic survival than subject matter turf.

Have You Read...

"Designing Foods: Animal Produced Options in the Marketplace"

...a report of a committee of the Board of Agriculture of the National Research Council headed by David L. Call, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University? The report compliments the responsiveness of the industry in developing new food products to meet demands of more nutritionally aware consumers. It also points to promising new technologies and production methods for improving nutritional attributes of animal products and argues that the "real solution" to excessive dietary fat, saturated fatty acids and cholesterol "lies in the production of leaner animals."

For copies, write to the National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20418. The cost is \$29.95 (paper).