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FOOD POLICY WORKSHOP

Doyle Spurlock, Chairman

Food policy cannot be equated with farm policy. Food policy includes most aspects of farm policy, foreign trade policy, food distribution policy (including welfare and food stamps), energy policy, and the like.

However, definition of a food policy is not a requisite for effective work on food policy problems. Educational programs should simply address issues that affect food policy.

National policy makers increasingly consider food policy and farm policy as closely related. For instance, the stated purpose of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965 was: "To maintain farm income, to stabilize prices and assure adequate supplies of agricultural commodities, to reduce surpluses, lower Government costs and promote foreign trade, to afford greater economic opportunity in rural areas, and for other purposes." By 1970, concerns for the consumer and suggestions of food policy began to be more evident. The stated purpose of the Agricultural Act of 1970 was: "To establish improved programs for the benefit of producers and consumers of dairy products, wool, wheat, feed grains, cotton, . . ." The Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 came more to the food policy point by amending the 1970 Act "for the purpose of assuring consumers of plentiful supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices." Further evidence of legislators' tendency to closely associate food policy and farm policy is the inclusion of the food stamp and foreign food aid programs in the "farm bill."

The definitional dilemma was likened to that of rural development programs in their early days. Several years were spent in definitional frustration without reaching agreement. In the meantime, different people began working on what they perceived as some of the significant problems in community development, and effective programs resulted from their efforts without benefit of precise definitions. Likewise, there are effective extension education programs in progress on food policy issues despite definitional difficulties.

From the policy education standpoint, a program should describe who the participants are, their many relationships, the interests of each group, and the trade-offs necessary. This approach would identify the players and their roles—farmers, consumers,

taxpayers, export demanders, and the like. Obviously the same individual may play more than one role.

Food policy education should relate policy objectives to constraints (constraints, in this sense, being the objections of groups adversely affected by the policy alternative under consideration). One approach might be to explore how to increase consumer satisfaction without adversely affecting producers; or how to maximize returns to farmers with minimum penalty to consumers and taxpayers; or how to inflict the least injury on one group in exchange for maximum satisfaction for other groups. An effective teaching device for this might be a matrix such as that below, preferably worked out with the program audience.

Policy Issues	Probable Impact on					
	Farmers	Consumers	Taxpayers	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
Price stability						
Cheap food	Indicate probable impact upon each group <i>as group members are affected in that role</i> . For instance, the farmer is also a consumer (and a taxpayer), but the impact of a particular policy will be defined under "Consumers" as it affects him in his role as a consumer.					
Etc.						
Etc.						

PART III

Energy Issues

