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Scientific and Technical Information as a Factor in Improving Managerial Skill in Agriculture

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An indispensable condition of effective management is a knowledge of the most up-to-date scientific and practical achievements in a given field. News of progress in agriculture is supplied by a network of agricultural scientific and technical information centres. A basic principle in the organization of this network is that there should be close contacts between particular information centres and agricultural research, administrative agricultural organs and practical farming over the whole country.

The Agricultural Information Centre in the Central Agricultural Library is the chief information centre for the whole of agriculture, acting at the same time as a coordinator of the activities of the agricultural information network. The branch information centres, numbering 14, act within the organizational structure of the agricultural research institutes and transmit agricultural information. Territorial information centres, 19 in total, have been organized in every province and are located at the regional experimental stations. They act in their particular regions as transmitting and receiving units in touch with the managers responsible for the development of production and also serve the needs of agricultural practice in those regions.

The Central Agricultural Library organizes library services. Its main activity is the collection of books, periodicals and other documents which constitute the source of information, work them up and render them available for use. In addition there is an international exchange of agricultural literature by cooperation with libraries and research institutes in 52 countries. About 1600 titles of periodicals and about 5000 agricultural books, both home and foreign, are subscribed for. They constitute a basic source for building up information services. The information is spread mainly by means of special publications as well as by information workers in the course of their professional training as agricultural spe-

cialists and by direct advisory services concerned with the extension of new inventions.

Among the main publications provided for managers in agriculture the following deserve attention.

A publication for central and provincial authorities and local agricultural administration centres is the "Ekspress-Informacja" (Express-Information). This publication contains selected synthetic works on the actual situation in world agriculture, on agrarian policy trends and on forecasts of agricultural development in the world.

Surveys of actual achievements of science and practice in particular agricultural branches are published in the "Opracowania Problemowe" (Elaboration of Problems) issued by the Central Agricultural Library (also in the Polish version) in collaboration with the International Information Centre of the MEAC* countries.

Selected news on world agricultural progress for all technical staff is contained in the monthly *Biuletyn Informacyjny — Postęp w Rolnictwie* (Information Bulletin on Advance in Agriculture) which is published jointly by the Central Agricultural Library and the Agricultural Engineers' and Technicians' Association.

The results of investigations applicable directly to practical farming are propagated by means of folders. These are compiled by particular research workers in the form of recommendations for immediate practice. In the period 1964-1967, for the needs of technical staff in agriculture, 140 folders on selected subjects were published in a mass edition for the use of the agricultural producers (farmers) as a whole.

Information for agricultural administrative organizations, technical staff and farmers in any given region are worked out and distributed by the territorial information centres. In addition, publications for the needs of research workers, like *Przegląd Zawartości Czasopism Naukowych* (Survey of the Content of Research Periodicals), various bibliographies, world literature abstracts on particular problems (about 200 a year) as well as information materials and popular journals are issued by the branch information centres. Information for the managerial staff and the producers in particular regions are assembled and distributed by the territorial information centres.

Thus, the information services embrace all the basic groups of those working in agriculture, i.e. research workers, officials, technical staff members and farmers.

On the whole the technical staffs make more and more use of the information services. A growing interest in professional literature and closer contact with the information centres and research organizations is evident.

* Mutual Economic Aid Council.

This is due especially to the greater need for professional qualifications among the technical staffs who are in charge of production and responsible for its development along the lines of Polish agrarian policy.

There exists a demand, particularly on the part of the specialists performing the managerial functions in the big state and collective farms, for a systematic supply of information on the newest production technology and economic problems connected with the wider improvement of agriculture. Agricultural advisory staffs working in economic organizations for individual farmers, make use mainly of information in the form of ready recommendations of the research units for practical farming and also ask for organizational and methodical instruction on how to adapt the findings to the conditions of given regions.

The agricultural administration specialists and managerial staff members lay stress upon information of a general agricultural and economic character, such as enables them to size up the state of progress of agricultural research and practical farming, with a view to meeting the needs of their home agriculture. A growing interest of technical staff engaged in scientific and technical advance in agriculture, as well as a growing demand for information, oblige the information services to adapt the content and form of their information in a flexible manner so as to satisfy the interest and needs of the technical staff. The information service aims at making the information they provide for technical staff a theoretical and empirical basis for taking decisions about production.

For the full and effective use of information services a close contact between transmitter and receiver is required. The information services must spread their information over the whole technical staff, particularly over the specialists working in localities far from research centres. On the other hand, the technical staff must be stimulated to acquire the information and apply it in their professional work. This could be achieved by including advisory and extension work in the training and higher professional standing of technical agricultural staffs.