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**caribbean
food
crops society**

19

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Vol. XIX

WORKSHOPS RECOMMENDATIONS

CARIBBEAN FOOD CROPS SOCIETY WORKSHOPS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research and Extension Strategies

The discussion group on evolving research strategy and methodology for development of agricultural technology and on extension strategies and methodologies for agricultural transfer has agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Generation of information and technology transfer should be a component of an integrated agricultural development system that includes infrastructure and marketing.
2. More involvement and participation (a two way mechanism) between research, extension, the farmer and other users.
3. Development of a mechanism to coordinate research and extension by means of a development or coordinating officer.
4. More emphasis should be placed on applied research conducted at the farm level, including on-farm research.
5. More emphasis should be given to small-farm research.
6. Greater emphasis should be placed on regional research in the Caribbean. A mechanism should be established to coordinate these efforts.
7. The Extension Agent must be an active partner on the generation of information at the research level and the researcher should have an active role as a component of the extension system.
8. The research program should include traditional and new farming practices as part of the methodology to be evaluated.
9. Information retrieval should be an integral component of the design of research and of extension delivery systems.
10. The Extension Agent should develop the means to reach the farmers preferably by direct contact. This could

be accomplished by organizing farmers in some type of arrangement that facilitates direct contact with them, such as cooperatives, corporations, federations or other types of groups. The research plot in the farm could be used as a demonstration plot to bring the farmers together.

Human Resources Needs and Development for Extension

As Dr. Bernard L. Pollack quoted from Dr. Charles McDougal, the "mission of the Extension Service includes both technical transfer and human development components. Extension is a special type of education. It is oriented to the solution of problems and to help people apply information on their farms and in their homes. Therefore, the mission of Extension should be broadly conceived as the development of people, even though the current situation may place a high priority on the task of increasing food production".

Human Resources Needs: The need for extension personnel must be based on a genuine demand from the farmer for education and services. They should not be appointed just for the sake of creating jobs and employment. This destroys the morale of the Extension Agent and reduces the credibility of the Extension Service. Additional people should not be employed in Extension if they cannot be effectively used.

To maintain a continuity in the system it is important that staff turnover be held at a minimum and that important positions be covered as soon as possible. Investments in Extension could be given greater assurance of success by setting up a pay schedule or incentive program that will attract and retain the people needed to make it successful. A competitive pay system must be adopted.

Training Needs: A very high priority must be given the reliability of the information provided by Extension. The farmer must learn from experience that Extension people can be relied upon as to the accuracy of the information or to frankly admit when they do not have answers. Without proper education and training the extensionists will never be convincing.

The following training programs must be available for the Extension Agent:

1. Induction training (New Agent Training) - This should be given to each Extension Agent when appointed. The type and length of training will depend upon the assignment.

2. Long term training - Usually six months or more are intended to upgrade skills on new technology. Can be used also for advanced degree work.

3. Professional improvement - A professional or highly technical meeting of experts where technical papers are presented.

4. On the Job or In-service training - One day sessions weekly or two or three days sessions every two or three months at the district or area level.

Evaluation and Reporting: Every staff member should be aware of his reporting responsibilities. A system of reporting and regulations regarding due dates should be set for all professional staff members. Training of staff members to fully understand reporting procedures, content and regulations should be done prior to initiating the reporting system.

Organization, Management and Institutional Coordination for Extension

The institutional structure should be capable of providing all required logistic support for a technology transfer system including personnel management and training, infrastructure development and maintenance, vehicle procurement and preventive maintenance, and acquisition of other required goods and services; budgeting, accounting and financial management.

An extension system should conform to the existing conditions and the availability of human resources. The basic thrust in improving an Extension system must be to minimize institutional changes; take advantage of existing strengths and improve upon the weaknesses.

Critical to the success of any technology transfer activity is the logistic support to field personnel. Field mobility is essential. Extension workers also require well-equipped offices where they can meet with farmers to plan activities. They also need office supplies, equipment, and materials including films and slide projectors, photographic equipment, videocassette systems, radio-cassette recording equipment, off-set printers, duplicating machines, movie-making equipment, video cameras and editing paraphernalia.

Institutional Coordination: An effective technology transfer program also requires close coordination among members of the public agricultural sector at the local, regional and

national levels. In addition, active participation of the private farm and agribusiness sector is needed.

Reporting on program activities and progress is essential for evaluation of program responsibilities.

An evaluation of all training programs should be established. Agent performance and accomplishments and impact of program efforts based upon objectives are essential to determine the overall effectiveness of Extension. An evaluation of personnel at all levels is basic for promotions and is a very good personnel development tool. Through the identification of problems and weaknesses, training programs can be devised and specific remedial counseling provided.

For this reason the following coordinating committees must be established :

a) At the local level, a Local Committee for transfer of technology. This committee should include personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture, farm-leaders and representatives of agro-support agencies to provide feedback and interchange of information between the public and the private sector.

b) At the regional level, inter-institutional responsibility for coordinating must be vested upon a regional committee including regional directors of the various agricultural institutions, representatives of agricultural support agencies, farmers representatives, and others.

c) At the national level, a committee should be established with the participation of high ranking officials of agencies related to agriculture which will ensure proper coordination of the programs of the various agricultural agencies.

Information, education and communication needs for Extension

A well equipped information, education and communication center to support an extension program is very important.

The Center will produce and distribute printed material such as technical publications, bulletins, and leaflets. The Center will also prepare and release news for television and radio programs and educational radio and television programs. This unit should produce didactic photographs, films, slides, and graphic material. The Center should give technical assistance and training.