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Food Distribution Research for Developing Countries

Discussant

Food 70's

Emphasis on need for establishing practice of adoption of existing knowledge and use of problem-oriented research in developing countries.

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● As I first read Dr. Kriesburg's paper "Food Distribution Research In Developing Countries", I was delighted. He had really fully explored the subject in hand and presented a comprehensive overview of it. With subsequent readings, however, I became less happy and decided that it was simply an overview, that some important questions were either not mentioned at all or, if mentioned, treated in a cursory manner. Some of these were-- How do we start? How do we establish priorities? How much of the research available elsewhere can we adapt and how much will we have to conduct from "scratch"?

Without pretending that my comments are the final answer, I would like to spend these few minutes looking at two of these questions. Admittedly the comments are based largely on limited personal experiences and observations but I believe they are worthy of consideration.

A. Priorities

Limited resources, both human and other, would make me recommend a micro-approach to research. At least in the initial stages, much of the efforts could be directed toward adaptive rather than original research. As experience is gained, more complex research could be undertaken. I sincerely feel the returns to investment would be far greater.

B. Orientation Organization

Again I would prefer a micro or recognized problem approach. Too often huge macro, industry or nationwide studies are made without proper consideration as to how the results are to be used. The net result is libraries, offices, and you name it, filled with thick research reports covered with a layer of dust just as thick.

Micro or recognized problem research invariably finds new and more complex problems that need research. Again they can be defined and approached so that results are usable. It wouldn't be long before you get to the macro projects. However, now you would be generating data to solve problems, rather than generating data.

In a rough way, I've tried to say that research skills and resources, especially in this area of food distribution, are extremely limited in developing countries. I'm convinced that the greatest return from this research would come by spending much of the resources on analyzing and adapting research done elsewhere and that problem oriented, micro-level research is the place to start. ●