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COMBINING ECONOMIC INFORMATION,
RESEARCH AND FARM MANAGEMENT SERVICE

by

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This paper is written for the purpose of exploring the problem of achieving effective educational results in the use of farm management and economic information of all kinds. Much of this type of education has been confined in the less populated western states to publication of bulletins, releases of outlook information and an occasional meeting at which these problems have been discussed. It is the writer's belief that this procedure has resulted in reaching very few farmers with effective assistance.

With limited personnel and funds still available in these states, a plan must be evolved which can, nevertheless, improve the service. As a start it is here suggested that research and economic information and farm management and accounting services be combined in giving intensive attention to clubs, consisting of 10 or 12 especially selected farmers. These farmers should preferably be young, progressive, fairly well educated and potential leaders. All should be engaged in a similar type of farming, which type is important in the county where this work is done. The size of farm business and amount of working capital of the members can very well differ markedly, at least, enough to represent various stages on the agricultural ladder to complete farm ownership.

The incentives offered to secure cooperation should be as complete a service as the state college can offer of all the necessary information and training to run a farm increasingly more efficiently and more profitably. This would involve extension and research specialists in so-called production fields as well as in agricultural economics. In addition, these clubs could be organized into a seminar in which the better-qualified men could make it a point to be posted on various phases of the farm problem, for example, one on marketing, another on price prospects, another on new crops, another on labor saving devices, etc. These men could report to the group at appropriate times during the year. The Extension Specialist in Farm Management and the Farm Management Specialist in the Experiment Station should cooperate in giving these men a complete farm accounting and farm planning service. This would yield much research data. The county agent should give his best services to this group also.

Perhaps two or three or more clubs could be organized within a certain type of farming area covering a number of counties. If this plan proved successful, these clubs could be organized in all major types of farming areas in the state.

The question has, no doubt, arisen why these few men should be given such extensive and intensive service. The first answer would be that these farms can be used for research projects and extension demonstrations for this type of farming. Tours could be conducted to these farms and management achievements displayed both to the eye and from accurate records. If this work was done correctly, these farms would represent well balanced farm efficiency. It would be more enlightening than tours as now usually conducted in

which the farmer visited is highly efficient in dairying, poultry or some one particular crop. These latter demonstrations are frequently misleading from the point of view of over-all farm efficiency. Several extension specialists and research specialists could be present under this club plan rather than one as is now frequently the case. In other works here we use the "case" method of research, but these cases would have been thoroughly "briefed" under expert guidance for a number of years. In some instances these farmers could be subsidized with research funds to try new crops, new practices, new equipment and new farm organizations.

Out of these clubs could rise new knowledge, new leaders and experience which would make possible self-supporting farm management associations. These could involve hundreds of farms in each type of farming area. In order to expedite the formation of these kinds of clubs and associations, a type of service being extended in New York State might now be considered. In that State each county may be given an associate county agent (not an assistant county agent) who will handle economic information, farm management and the work simplification phases of the extension work. He will devote 100% of his time to this work.

Further, the research specialist in farm management assisting with this work could well be used as a teacher of farm management for one semester each year. In his courses he could teach and train students to act as field men for farmer's cooperative farm management associations, private farm management services, extension workers and others closely connected with farm organization and management.

In conclusion, these clubs could also consider the effects of alternatives in public and private policies respecting their own welfare and that of the community. Out of these clubs could come greater factual information and more intelligent leadership in promoting a higher level of living for the community, state, nation, and world. These clubs could be useful in many other ways as need for leadership developed.