



The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

Papers downloaded from AgEcon Search may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.

No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



The agency I head, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is responsible for protecting our nation's livestock and crops from pests and diseases, whether of domestic or foreign origin.

APHIS has two program organizations: Plant Protection and Quarantine, or PPQ...and Veterinary Services, or VS.

Deputy Administrator Harvey Ford heads PPQ and John Atwell, VS. Both gentlemen are here today and will be talking to you about their particular programs. I will just try to give you a brief overall view.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

APHIS inspectors, assisted by U.S. Customs, stand guard at our major ports of entry--sea ports, border stations, and air terminals--keeping out foreign diseases and pests that could harm our agricultural economy. They are our first line of defense.

They inspect not only incoming animal and plant shipments, but also other cargo--anything that could carry animal or plant disease organisms or pests. This includes foreign food products and the personal luggage of incoming travelers.

If a disease or pest slips past our border or port defenses, and a disease or pest outbreak occurs, APHIS emergency eradication and control teams go into action. These teams are located in various parts of the country. They are directed by an APHIS emergency headquarters staff in Hyattsville, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.

These emergency teams also cope with outbreaks of domestic pests and diseases.

Of course, wiping out a pest or disease is sometimes impractical from the agricultural producers' point of view. They may decide the pest or disease is economically tolerable. We usually take our cue from the agricultural community. However, as a rule, we urge eradication rather than control, because over the long run eradication is cheaper...and the risk of a major outbreak is greater during control.

60th ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE • USDA
OCT. 31-NOV. 3 1983 • WASHINGTON, D.C.
60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

APHIS PHILOSOPHY: SEE

So our approach is simple: Keep it out or wipe it out!

But to elaborate a bit, I "see" the approach summed up in the acronym "SEE"--that is:

- o "S" for "Surveillance"
- o "E" for "Enforcement"
- o "E" for "Exotics"

This acronym represents the three responsibilities, or functions, the federal government must assume, or a significant share of them, because the states cannot always handle these areas alone.

SURVEILLANCE

The first function of any federal agency is to take those tasks the states cannot accomplish--and surveillance is often one of them.

For example, each state can survey its own territory for a particular disease or pest. But each state cannot know what is next door, and therefore, what to look out for. The federal government can, because of the wide geographical sweep of its programs.

ENFORCEMENT

The states should have as much enforcement authority as possible. With that authority comes responsibility to enforce the laws thoroughly and equitably.

At state borders the state enforcement level stops, and the federal government steps in to do what the states cannot do. When an animal or plant is brought across the state line, determining whether it is infested or disease-carrying becomes a federal responsibility.

In some areas, federal and state authorities share enforcement, with the states assuming primary responsibility.

Take the problem of uncooked garbage. It can contain a variety of animal diseases, such as trichinosis, African swine fever, hog cholera, and foot-and-mouth. If swine are fed uncooked garbage they can become infected.

So the Swine Protection Act requires that garbage be cooked before it is fed to swine, to kill any disease that might be present in it. It sets "minimum standards" for the cooking of garbage--that it must be cooked at a certain temperature, by someone who is licensed, and so on.

By setting "minimum standards," the Act in effect says that the states, if they wish, can set tougher ones--and many have. In fact, 16 states forbid the feeding of any garbage to swine, uncooked or cooked. All told, 36 states have passed garbage cooking laws that either meet or exceed federal minimum standards.

So this is an example of states assuming a primary responsibility for enforcement. There are other instances of the federal government assuming sole responsibility.

Like animal welfare. The Animal Welfare Act specifically gives enforcement responsibility to APHIS.

EXOTICS

"Exotics" refers to the foreign diseases and pests--and by extension to our international activities.

APHIS's international arm has grown substantially in the past several years. It makes sense to spend dollars on diseases established overseas, rather than allow them to invade the United States and try to combat them on our own soil.

Fortunately, the United States has none of the world's most-feared livestock and plant diseases, and we want to keep it that way.

As the result of a lot of hard work, we are further advanced in plant and animal health than most other countries. We don't want all that hard work to have been in vain. So we must do everything we can to protect and defend our agricultural economy from exotic insects and diseases.

Foreign pests and diseases are frequently more destructive and costly than domestic organisms, for a number of reasons:

- o U.S. crops and livestock have not built up natural immunities.
- o Vaccines and biologicals may not be in production or stockpiled here.
- o We may not have developed resistant plant varieties. And we may not have natural enemies to counter invading plant pests.

The most effective way to prevent invasions by foreign pest and diseases is to attack them while they are still far from our borders. APHIS has an outstanding track record of cooperation in international eradication efforts...from locust control in Africa to screwworm in Mexico. Generally, APHIS' policy is that the closer threats move to U.S. borders, the greater the danger to U.S. agriculture.

INCREASING INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

Let me expand a bit on our increasing international activity.

Much of our inspection takes place overseas, in the country where animal and plant shipments originate. For example, for years now, we have pre-cleared tulip bulbs in Holland, before they are shipped to the United States. We are now doing more preclearance in foreign countries.

In fact, we are now giving increasing emphasis to all overseas activities--not only to overseas inspections, but also to participation in cooperative international disease and pest control and eradication programs, and to helping other nations eradicate animal and plant diseases and pests. By helping others, we help ourselves.

EXPORT BENEFITS

Greater international involvement helps our export effort. As we do more overseas, our customers perceive a greater willingness on our part to protect ourselves from pests and diseases. This perception then strengthens the confidence of foreign importers in our products...and encourages them to import more of them.

So we maintain and build on our reputation of exporting only healthy and pest-free farm products. It's this reputation that sells our farm products abroad--our wheat, soybeans, citrus, meat, animals, or whatever.

It's important to do all we can to encourage our farm exports, because they continue to run a surplus, in contrast to our overall non-farm trade exports. Our annual non-farm trade deficits would be a lot larger if it weren't for our farm export surpluses.

In FY 1982 we exported \$23.7 billion more in farm products than we imported. This cut our non-farm trade deficit--which was \$57 billion--by about half.

Two other benefits that flow from our greater international involvement:

First, we extend our line of defense overseas, which eases the burden of increasing international traffic on our border defenses.

Second, we build up our expertise on diseases and pests we never had--or had so long ago that we have forgotten how to deal with them firsthand.

OUTLOOK

So what's the outlook?

Looking around here at home we see that we are the best-fed nation in the world. We spend proportionately less of our household budgets on food than people of most other nations do. Less than three percent of our population--the farmers of America--feed us, and then help feed the rest of the world.

We are fortunate to be blessed with our "agricultural miracle." But that miracle would not be possible without an effective defense against animal and plant disease and pests, not only at home but overseas as well.

We must maintain that defense--using all the environmentally safe means at our disposal.

Looking ahead, I see APHIS continuing to do the job of protecting America's agriculture--as long as it has the people and tools to do it with.