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**PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM
ON
GLOBAL GRAIN DISTRIBUTION
SYSTEMS: IMPEDIMENTS TO
INCREASED EXPORTS**



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INTRODUCTION: GLOBAL GRAIN DISTRIBUTIONS SYSTEMS:

Impediments to Increased Exports

Roland R. Robinson¹

The Land Grant Universities and State Agricultural Experiment Stations have a long history of agricultural transportation research. This area of research received a significant boost with the passage of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 which provided federal funding for regional research. The purpose of regional research is to promote cooperative research involving two or more Stations working on problems broader than one state. The pressures for regional research were the growth in marketing and distribution systems; the inadequacy of local and state focused research to handle broader problems; the increasing availability of data and information to define and analyze problems in a broader context and the increasing sophistication of researchers and analytical techniques.

An examination of early agricultural economics research projects conducted at the Experiment Stations reveals that the advent of regional research facilitated advancement to another stage in the evolutionary progression of agricultural economics research programs. At the turn of the century, station research projects focused on local area and state problems. The regional research program and federal funding provided greater opportunities for the Stations to conduct research on regional and eventually national problems. Prominent in the early regional and subsequently interregional (national) research projects was agricultural policy, marketing and transportation. Problems in these areas had to be examined in regional and national contexts to provide more complete and comprehensive answers. Participation in regional research projects in agricultural economics at the present time often involves a number of Stations from the different administrative regions and research agencies of the USDA. The significance and role of USDA agencies in regional research have expanded significantly as the problems examined have become broader in scope.

The same forces that drove Station agricultural economics research programs from local, area and state focus to regional and national orientation are now driving these programs to the international stage of development. Agricultural transportation research will be at the cutting edge in this next stage. Agricultural transportation problems do not stop at our domestic ports but involve the transoceanic movement of commodities and the distribution systems of importing countries as well. A search of CRIS (Current Research Information System) reveals few Station agricultural transportation research projects being conducted with a focus on international problems. The search also reveals that agricultural transportation research being conducted in the

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USDA, except for the work in the Office of Transportation (OT) has essentially been discontinued.

A nationwide group of Station researchers has developed an international agricultural transportation research proposal and are seeking federal support. If funded this consortium of scientists and administrators will not only find new insights and answers for enhancing the export of U.S. produced agricultural commodities but will pioneer the administrative and analytical structures so badly needed to facilitate the internationalization of Station agricultural economics research programs.

The purpose of this symposium is to identify the transportation and infrastructure barriers in domestic, transoceanic and foreign distribution systems that impede the efficient movement and effective marketing of U.S. produced agricultural commodities; formulate and prioritize the researchable questions that need to be addressed to resolve these problems and enhance the export to these commodities; and examine data sources, analytical models and working relationships necessary to conduct comprehensive research for improving the competitiveness of U.S. agricultural products in world markets.

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