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IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM FOR
FARMERS AND MANAGERS

by

GORDON W. LUGG

ABSTRACT

This paper gives the basic statistics concerning the numbers concerned with the UK agricultural industry and also suggests the definition of a profession. It places Farm Management firmly in the list of professions and outlines the need to relate academic qualifications with practical experience. The lack of formal recognition of professional status in the past is stated and details given of the new Institute of Agricultural Management. This Institute clearly bestows professional status on those that qualify for membership. This situation should now help to harmonise qualifications on an international basis.

This paper is concerned with the professional status of all those concerned with Farm Management in the United Kingdom. However, before giving details it is necessary to provide a few background statistics.

There are approximately 550,000 people concerned with agricultural production of which 270,000 are farmers, partners and directors (180,000 full time). In addition there are 170,000 full time farm workers and 88,000 seasonal farm workers. At the same time there are approximately 8,000 salaried farm managers.

In addition to the above, those industries allied to agriculture, i.e. advisory, academic, agricultural banking, agricultural supplies, agricultural engineering, processing and retailing, probably provide employment for at least another 600,000. Thus in the United Kingdom over 2% of the population is concerned with agriculture and its ancillary industries. It is interesting to note that this compares with 7% in the EEC as a whole.

WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

The traditional idea of a profession is that of Law, Medicine and Accountancy. It is interesting to note that before becoming fully qualified in these professions it is necessary to obtain formal academic training plus substantial practical experience.

There are numerous dictionary definitions of a profession, e.g. a protestation, a pretence, a vocation especially one involving high qualifications. So taking this last definition there is no problem in listing Farm Management amongst the recognised professions.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS IN THE UK

There are numerous institutions providing academic qualifications and there are many grades of qualification. This is not the time to give a complete list but there are:

Universities - 11 - Degrees, Higher Degrees, Post-Graduate Diplomas
 Agricultural Colleges - 5 - Diplomas, and some now provide Degrees
 Agricultural Education Centres - 34 - Diplomas and Certificates
 Agricultural Training Board - Numerous courses leading to Certificates

So the foundations for a professional qualification can be laid in one or more ways from degree courses to part-time training organised by various bodies.

WHAT IS FARM MANAGEMENT?

Farm Management is regarded as a very broad subject in the United Kingdom concerning various aspects such as Planning, Budgeting, Farm Accounts, Farm Records, Financial Management, Use of Computers, Personnel Management, Agricultural Policy, Taxation etc.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Until recently there has been no formal recognition of practical experience added to the academic qualifications previously mentioned. This practical experience can include:

Managing a Farm
 Managing a Farm Unit
 Advisory Work
 Academic Work
 Appointments in the ancillary industries which include:
 Accountancy, Surveying, Banking, Engineering, Processing.

In the United Kingdom there are many highly proficient managers but there has not been one qualification giving recognition of all aspects of training and experience. This is a matter which is now of even more importance when the UK is a member of the EEC. Steps are being taken for the harmonisation of qualifications throughout the EEC so that those from one country will automatically be recognised in another. Work is being carried out in Brussels and in each member country to carry out this harmonisation but it is clearly a very complex and long term task. The work so far has tended to be clarification of the definition of husbandry tasks, e.g. dairyman, tractor driver etc. Much more harmonisation of professional qualifications is awaited.

FARM MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

In the United Kingdom an organisation called the Farm Management Association was set up in 1965 which had (inter alia) the objective of the formation of a professional Institute. Unfortunately since 1965, whilst FMA became an important farm management organisation, it did not set up a professional Institute. However, it did foster the concept of a profession with the organisation of training courses, conferences, farm walks, publications etc.

FMA enjoyed a period under the wing of the British Institute of Management. This was from 1978 to 1987 when the name was changed to the Centre of Management in Agriculture. This close liaison with BIM was expected to hasten the formation of a professional Institute with a Royal Charter, but sadly it did not.

CMA withdrew from BIM in 1987 and once again became independent.

INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

In 1992 the Centre of Management in Agriculture decided to inaugurate the Institute of Agricultural Management. The Institute is open to all those concerned with management including associated rural businesses. The Institute consists of various grades with strict qualifications for entry and these are outlined below:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Student | full time or part time, studying for a qualification which includes management as a specific subject. |
| Associate | minimum age 23 years - qualification through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Degree or Higher National Diploma plus 2 years post qualifying experience. (b) National Diploma (or equivalent course) plus 4 years post qualifying experience. (c) One year course (including some farm business management) plus 6 years post qualifying management experience. (d) Some (minimal) agricultural college training (including some farm business management) plus 8 years post training management experience. Appropriate National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) will also be considered. |
| Member | minimum age 26 years with appropriate management experience qualification through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (e) Degree or HND plus 5 years post qualifying experience. (f) National Diploma (or equivalent course) plus 7 years post qualifying experience. |

- (g) One year course (including some farm business management) plus 10 years post qualifying experience.
- (h) Some (minimal) agricultural college training (including some farm business management) plus 12 years post qualifying experience. Appropriate National Vocational Training Qualifications (NVQs) will also be considered.

Fellow This is the highest grade and is restricted to those who have made, or are making, an outstanding contribution to the industry. The present list of Fellows is impressive and consists of leaders of the UK agricultural industry.

The awarding of an appropriate grade of membership is by peer assessment by the Chairman and Committee of the Institute or by a team of Assessors.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A strict Code of Conduct must be adhered to. The basic elements of the Code are that all grades of membership shall:

1. Conduct themselves in a manner which will merit the respect of the community for persons in their profession.
2. Uphold the reputation of the Institute and the dignity of the profession.
3. Not knowingly engage in any illegal or illicit act.
4. Observe financial probity.
5. Take reasonable steps to maintain their professional expertise.
6. Maintain confidentiality about their business and the personal affairs of those involved in the business and not disclose confidential information to any unauthorised person.
7. Comply with the law, including the regulations on Health and Safety, Environment and Taxation.

Failure to observe the Code may result in a member being expelled from the Institute.

THE FUTURE

The Institute of Agricultural Management now has a considerable number of members and this is growing rapidly. Even so it is still a small proportion of those that could be eligible. Immediate tasks are to achieve further recognition in the UK and in the EEC. Direct contact still needs to be made with comparable organisations in the EEC to ensure that membership of the Institute receives the recognition that it deserves.

However, membership of any grade and the use of the appropriate designation (F.I.Agr.M.)(M.I.Agr.M.) will give confidence to all concerned that they are dealing with a true professional.