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Summary of the discussion held on Monday, July 18th, 1977

Farm Management - really the same task world-wide?

"Farm Management - worldwide the same task under various conditions" - this was the title (without the question-mark!) of the first day of the Congress. The chairman for that day was a Frenchman, the reports came from the Netherlands, USA, Poland, Tansania and Brasil; the discussion was led by a German and introduced by an Englishman. One of the speakers described convincingly how his success was widely attributable to the principle of the highly-developed family enterprise. However, the reports delivered by a Farming Company in North America, a socialist Agricultural-Industrial Union in Eastern Europe and by farming companies on the opening-up of new territories in South America were no less impressive. And the example of an African developing country, where the setting-up of administrative districts and the leasing of agricultural land - generally under State ownership - to steadily flourishing family enterprises and communal farms did not take place until 1973/74, showed just how great the differences in economic conditions are between the most varied parts of the world. Hence, it came as no surprise that a participant from Greece asked: "At present in Greece the average size of agricultural enterprises is 3 hectares; which road should we take?" - and that the question remained virtually unanswered.

In the face of such differences, is it still possible to speak of the "same task the whole world over" for Farm Management? From the very first day, the discussion was conducted vigorously and the participants from 43 countries of the world understood one another without difficulty, last but not least thanks to the excellently organised simultaneous interpreting. Many points of interest emerged: firstly, there is a further difference depending on

whether a farmer runs his farm as a "farm-owner", where property and management lie in one hand, or whether he runs it in the narrower sense as a "manager" who manages someone else's property as a managerial staff. The farmer has inherited his profession. He is concerned with the survival of his farm which is the basis of his existence. The manager, on the other hand, is continually forced to re-assert himself in his profession. He is dependent on his owner (or on his share-holders or on his Plan) and on his fellow workers whom he has to be able to lead in whichever form of the various social orders.

Secondly, each farmer who runs a farm must make decisions here and now - the English term "Farm Management" is to be understood in its broadest sense. He must know his aims, and those which can be carried out under the given conditions, no utopias! He must choose from among the possible means for achieving these aims and, in striving for this aim, he must continually check back and make corrections. Many farmers - the majority? - do not realize the continual need to make decisions. They do not understand that it is also a decision if they continue as before or as is generally the case; and they tend to ascribe the results of this decision - for example, poor farm output - to other causes.

Thirdly, agricultural management techniques are in need of development everywhere in the world, in the North, South West and East. Everyone could learn from one another in this area and work together, independent of the respective political, economic and human conditions. In so doing, the necessary management techniques are by no means limited to the area of economic and production techniques; they must take in increasingly the social area, i.e. inter-human relations. The amount of work still to be done here, became particularly clear from the contributions to the discussion made by African participants, who described,

with great frankness, the difficulties they encountered at the beginning and sought aid for the necessary information on management.

Therefore, Farm Management is, after all, mainly the same task throughout the whole world. The question mark can be removed from the title of this report. In order to underline the world-wide similarity in this matter, a practitioner inserted a question mark in the first report, thereby intending to criticise the frequently all-too-great distance between reality and science by using the English play on words: "science or nonsense". This fourth central point in the discussion was taken up many times during the following days of the Congress. Obviously, the question is in many cases not totally unjustified. It was all the more reassuring to see that on the next day of the Congress of practitioners the English scientist, Nix from Wye College, who introduced the discussion, and the German scientist, Reisch from Hohenheim, who led the discussion, obviously did not speak "nonsense" - this could be seen from the applause.