



CONNECTICUT
VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE
PROGRESS

- Teacher Problems & Goals
- Farm Shop
- Supervised Farming
- Future Farmers
- Young Farmers
- Adult Farmers
- Local & Regional Organization

C O N N E C T I C U T P R O G R E S S

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This is the first number of a professional publication for teachers of vocational agriculture in Connecticut. It is planned to issue it on a quarterly basis. It is designed by and for teachers of vocational agriculture in Connecticut. The first number includes several items growing out of the Annual Conference. Major emphasis is given to the problem of developing local and regional consulting committees as a basis for improving programs of agricultural education.

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AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

William Hutton

To truly determine the role of agricultural education in the secondary schools as of yesterday and tomorrow, I think we must first determine the changes that have taken place in agriculture since yesterday.

At the turn of the century, agriculture was mainly a way of life and a self-sufficient unit of economy. Farming was a relatively simple operation with the operative power and the fuel for that power produced on the farm. Capital outlay was at a minimum. The farm furnished most of the materials for recreation and survival. Surplus production was traded at the neighborhood store for the few basic things that the farm could not produce.

Today the picture has changed. The farm is no longer a self-sufficient unit producing its own power and the fuel for that power. It is no longer a simple economic operation requiring a minimum of ability and a maximum of strength and muscle.

Farming today is a complex operation involving tremendous capital outlay, organization, human relations, credit, mechanized power, public relations, and legislation. Farming is a managerial operation involving many skills and trades.

From a largely self-sufficient unit, farming has progressed to the stage where farmers are now the biggest users of steel and petroleum products in the United States. They use rubber enough in one year to provide tires for six million automobiles. They use more electric power than the five largest cities in the United States, with fewer farmers.

All of these things must be paid for in cash. That comes from sale of products produced on the farm.

Forty years ago, the capital investment on a farm was 15 times the cost of operating expenses for one year, according to studies at Cornell University. Today, similar studies indicate that current cost of operating a farm business equal or exceed one-half of the capital investment. This indicates to me that the risk in farming has drastically increased. Forty years ago a man could have 14 years of complete crop failure and still retain an equity in his farm provided he started out without leins or mortgage. In contrast, today a farmer would be in serious difficulty if he had one bad year, and practically insolvent if he had two years of complete failure.

One thing I think we must accept is the risk in farming has increased. More capital is involved, more credit is involved. Everything a farmer does requires an outlay of cash.

Another thing that concerns me is the fact that legislation may have more of an effect on a farmer of tomorrow than his own efforts. This is definitely true in tobacco, cotton, and wheat, and may extend to other commodities. It indicates to me that courses in vocational agriculture tomorrow should be concerned with farm policy and its effect on young people about to enter the vocation of farming.

Another thing that should concern us, is the change that is taking place in our family farms. Farms are being expanded and consolidated.

Whether we like it or not, income tax laws have put the farmer in partnership with the government. A farmer cannot any longer take the profits of a good year and put them in the bank to apply against a poor year. Uncle Sam steps in and says: "This is my share of your prosperity."

Many people are concerned with the fact that the average age of farmers is increasing. To me this is not necessarily a degenerative process. Farmers can no longer afford to sell their farms and retire. Much of the increase in the value of farm property was accomplished by the use of farm labor, improving land, and building buildings. Under the income tax setup it was written off as operating expense and not as capital investment. As a result, most of the increase in the value of farm property is taxable as income in the event it is sold. Farmers have come to realize that what they put into farming cannot be recovered in one generation and as a result, we are seeing a change in our family type farms.

Farms are being incorporated to give the business continuity. Farmers are also taking on partners to help finance the cost of farm operation and reduce the risk to the individual.

All of these things add up to the fact that it is increasingly difficult to get into farming, and that the best way to get into farming is by inheritance or by marrying the farmer's daughter.

These changes indicate to me that we have reached a point where we should review and rewrite the objectives of vocational agriculture.

The question also arises, do we need agricultural education in our Connecticut schools?

We are inclined to think of Connecticut and especially Hartford County as an industrial area noted for its insurance, defense production, and industry. However, Hartford County, in the 1950 census, rated first in the nation in the value of agricultural products per acre and 24th in the gross value of agricultural production per county. And yet, Hartford County is one of the smallest counties in the United States.

Connecticut is an important agricultural state. We raise about 10,600 acres of outdoor binder tobacco valued at 10 million dollars. We raise 8,500 acres of potatoes valued at 4 million dollars annually. Fruit and vegetables bring in 8 million dollars more and shade tobacco about 15 million dollars. These figures, plus 119,000,000 dollars for poultry and dairy, indicate that Connecticut is an important agricultural state and as such has definite agricultural problems. The impact on our economy is so great, we cannot afford to be without agricultural education.

As I look back on yesterday as a teacher, I envy the teachers of today. I taught during the depression of the 30's which was started by Herbert Hoover and ably abetted and prolonged by Franklin D. Roosevelt. During that period, people lost their faith in farming and many boys who would normally be farmers were guided and coerced into other occupations. This was a great loss to agriculture

and to the teachers of vocational agriculture for we were forced to accept students who did not have the qualifications or adaptability to be good farmers.

Agriculture, at that time, in the minds of many people including teachers, administrators, and school boards, was a degenerative vocation that required neither brains nor ability to be successful. Consequently, boys who could not make the grade in other classes were shunted to vocational agriculture.

This movement to my mind represented a breakdown and failure in the guidance program, for my own experience as a farmer indicates that boys of mediocre ability are perhaps more apt to fail at farming than in many other occupations.

Yesterday, our chief problem was to find students of the necessary ability and experience to become good farmers. Our facilities for training the boys who elected to be farmers was limited by the fact that we had a minimum of facilities and equipment for the educational process. People had lost their faith in farming as a vocation and agricultural education suffered as a result.

Today things are different. Farming has been defined as a way of life, but today in general farmers have the same cars, the same radio and television sets as other people, and participate in the same social and civic activities. Farmers are members of school boards, rotary clubs, parent-teacher organizations, and, in many towns, furnish the bulk of the tax dollars that are demanded for education. The public and schools are interested more and more in a comprehensive program that includes agricultural education.

Because of the changes that have taken place in agriculture, it might be well to rewrite, reclarify, restate the objectives of vocational agriculture and to determine what role vocational agriculture should play in the comprehensive high school of tomorrow.

The basic purpose of vocational agriculture is and should continue to be the training and development of boys who have entered or are about to enter farming as a vocation. But the change to mechanized farming and the total technology has developed many fields related to agriculture in which a background of farming is a valuable asset. Should the boys who will sell and service farm machinery take vocational agriculture? Should the prospective grain salesman have instruction in dairy and poultry problems? What boys should we include? At least some consideration must be given to boys going into related fields.

I have pointed out that it is getting increasingly difficult to get into farming as an owner but there is an increasing need for semi-skilled farm labor. To me it doesn't make sense for a farmer to give an 80¢ an hour man 5 or \$6000 worth of machinery to take out and wreck because of a lack of operative knowledge. Is it the farmer's job to train his own machine operators or should this be part of the work of vocational agriculture?

Because of the impact of agriculture in our economy and because the production of food and the conservation of natural resources is everybody's business, it seems to me that there is also a need for courses in agriculture in the comprehensive high school which are not vocational but informative in nature which would be open to all students (boys and girls.)

The Connecticut Consulting Committee has been studying the problems of agricultural education in our high schools and have made the following observations:

1. Facilities for instruction at present are woefully inadequate and unattractive in most schools offering courses in vocational agriculture.
2. Vocational agriculture is serving only one-third of the major farm towns of Connecticut.
3. Vocational agriculture programs supply less than one-fifth of the number of farmers necessary to replace losses to the farm population due to death and other causes.
4. Youth tends to develop interests in those areas encouraged in high school and the lack of agricultural education has probably caused youth who should be in farming to go into other vocations.

Recommendations

Vocational agriculture should be locally controlled.

They should be located in high schools in the major farm areas.

Vocational agriculture centers should serve as regional centers for farming areas in order that more farm youth can be better served.

Conclusion:

If we are to have a progressive agriculture, we must educate people for agriculture.

To do a good job in agricultural education, we must provide adequate, well-equipped and attractive facilities.

Since it is agreed the agricultural centers should be regional, it seems logical that the state should underwrite a part or all of the cost of the plant and equipment necessary.

The state should probably subsidize the cost of tuition for those towns sending students to agricultural centers.

Agricultural education should be a continuing process and have a follow-up program.

One of the big problems is to get farmers behind agricultural education to gain their confidence.

In the long run, the conservation of our natural resources and the attitude of the public toward farmers and farm problems is going to depend on the type of individual we have operating our farms. It is the challenge of vocational agriculture to see that tomorrow our farms are manned by well-trained, qualified personnel.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND BETTER PROGRAMS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

A Report of a Panel Discussion 1/

What are some guides to objectives in vocational agriculture in Connecticut schools?

1. There is a need and demand for agricultural offerings in the secondary school on the avocational or general basis.
2. A first concern should be with up-grading of the vocational program of agricultural education.
3. A mutual understanding should be reached among farmers, administrators, teachers, and pupils as to objectives of the program in vocational agriculture.
4. Many problems of agriculture, including conservation of natural resources, are "everybody's business."
5. The work in vocational agriculture should be developed as a part of the total school program serving the community.
6. A major function of the teacher is the molding of character.
7. Quality of learning experiences should be stressed.

How can we progress towards our objectives?

1. Improve facilities and make them more attractive.
2. Improve working relationships, and thereby increase understanding between teachers and administrators.
3. Improve public relations through
 - Quality programs
 - Public information
 - Student recognition
 - Teacher confidence in community
 - Developing a more complete program.
4. Utilize a consulting committee to
 - Share in the task of setting objectives
 - Share in developing program
 - Share in a concern for improved facilities
 - Share in public relations.

1/ Connecticut Vocational Agriculture Conference, 1954.
 Members of Panel: Robert H. Brown, H. N. Hansucker, William Hutton,
 Arthur Kairott, and Philip Masley.

CONSULTING COMMITTEES FOR BETTER PROGRAMS

A Report of a Panel Discussion 1/

How do farmers and others feel about serving on committees?

1. It was nice to be asked.
2. A real chance to help vocational agriculture.
3. Wanted to help improve community.
4. Too many meetings may dampen enthusiasm.

Committee members expect the teacher of agriculture:

1. to volunteer aid to chairman in working out program and agenda.
2. to visit members.
3. to reflect community problems as he sees them.
4. to inform members on program of vocational agriculture and F.F.A.
5. to aid in giving publicity to committee activities.
6. to keep from taking over duties of chairman.
7. to serve as secretary to the committee.
8. to aid in locating and obtaining the use of consultants.

Committee members expect the superintendent or other school administrators:

1. to aid in conducting studies - (preparing forms and summarizings.)
2. to serve as a contact person with the board of education.
3. to assist in establishing the consulting committee.
4. to serve as a consultant to the board as requested.
5. to support and counsel the teacher of agriculture.

Committee members indicated ways in which they worked to build community programs for agricultural education.

1. Informal contacts with other farmers and with students.
2. Arrange for formal discussion of problems in groups of which they are members.
3. Inviting groups and individuals to visit classes.
4. Arrange for demonstrations, shows, etc., to which public is invited.
5. Encourage farmers to invite boys to use their farms for training purposes.
6. Participate in studying and working for improvement of the facilities and program of agricultural education, especially on a regional basis.

Valued accomplishments include:

1. Evaluation of the present program in agricultural education.
2. Studies of possible future size and scope of programs.
3. Sponsorship of events like a scrap drive and calf show.

1/ Connecticut Vocational Agriculture Conference, 1954.

Members of panel: John Anderson, John Briscoe, Edward Gaffney, John Goodrich, Richard Howes, J. E. Willenbrock, and Henry Young.

