Extension Service Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Agricultural Extension Service Twenty-five Years Of Age

Many Changes in Extension Work—

On May 8th, 1914 President Wilson signed an Act of Congress known as the Smith-Lever Act which stated its purpose as "the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in Agriculture and Home Economics to persons not attending college and imparting information through field demonstrations, publications and otherwise." This Smith-Lever Act provided for Cooperative Agricultural Extension work. The term "cooperative" implies cooperative financing among the Federal, State, and the County Government's represented respectively by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the State Agricultural College and the County Commissioners.

The Maryland Agricultural College now known as the University of Maryland set up an administrative agency called "Extension Service of the State Agricultural College" on July 1, 1914 through the action of the President of the College and its board of Trustees.

Governor P. L. Goldsborough had accepted the benefits of the Smith-Lever Act in June of 1914 and named the Maryland Agricultural College as the logical institution to administer the Federal funds. The office of "Director of Extension" came into being with Dr. Thomas B. Symons as Director. He has been a very active head for the more than twenty-five years since his appointment.

Much Educational work had been done in the field by College Professors, but not in a coordinated manner. They had an active part in forming many farm organizations which became and still are very active in behalf of the farmers interests. Kent did not receive a County Agent until 1916 at which time a State appropriation for the support of the County Agent work became available. History records that 12 counties had agents appointed during 1914 and 6 additional agents were appointed in 1915. In the early days the support of the County Agent depended largely on local funds. Beginning with 1916 the State appropriations for the work became available and have continued. Since its establishment Extension in Maryland has been supported entirely by public funds.

Three County Agents in Twenty-four Years

Kent's first County Agent was appointed April 1, 1916, and since that time has had continuous County Agent Service. L. L. Burrell, the first agent, served a little over three years. He was followed in Mid-August of 1919 by H. B. Derrick who continued as Kent's County Agent until the first of March, 1929, a period of 9½ years. Since that time the present County Agent, J. D. McVean, has served nearly 11 years.

In 1928 the first of three assistant County Agents was appointed. Mr. J. Z. Miller, now County Agent in Cecil County, came to Kent on October 1st, 1928, and served through September, 1929. He was followed in early 1930 by E. W. King who served until December of 1930. On January 16, 1931 S. B. Sutton, present assistant, received his appointment.

The more than twenty-four years of Extension in Kent show definite periods such as: The World War period, the After War period, The Federal Farm Board, The Drought Emergency of 1930, The Five-year Program of 1931. The Agricultural Adjustment followed by the Conservation period with new agencies in the field, then the period of coordination of activities which effort is still active, and runing concurrently with it is the effort to bring about proper land utilization and definite program planning. Cooperation with other agencies has always characterized Extension effort.

In the early days the effort was to increase food supplies through greater production and through conservation. Then fololwed the period incident to the low prices which followed the termination of the war with production activities still in full force. In order to survive, farmers had to give attention to lowering the cost of production and to improving marketing systems. Extension, therefore, had to assume leadership in programs based upon the dealing with broad economic problems. In an effort to solve the farmers' problems, various legislation was proposed by the Congress such as the "McNary-Haugen" plan and the "Export Debenture" plan, neither of which ever became effective although they were widely approved by farmers.

The coming of the Federal Farm Board in 1929 again caused Extension to enlarge its cooperative marketing activities through teaching the aims and purpose of the act, its provisions, and the local application of ways and means to improve the marketing of Maryland farm products.

The 1930 Drought Period, while short, was drastic in its effects and caused Extension Service to help farm people deal with the provision of feed for livestock, the purchasing of feed stuffs in quantity under reduced freight rates and utilizing home grown products to the greatest extent in supplying food for the family. The leadership assumed by Extension in handling the drought situation was a very practical demonstration of the value of having an organization such as Extension in every County. Similar help was furnished by Extension in connection with the handling of drought stricken cattle from in the Mid-West in the sumer of 1934. Kent had nearly 500 of these animals and they made splendid gains before being slaughtered and the meat used for relief purposes. In 1931 the Extension Serice took the lead in formulating a five- year program and again in 1936 another five-year program with goals to provide for safe farming, live-at-home farming, home production of feed stuffs etc. The changes incident to the Agricultural Conservation Program however interferred somewhat in the attainment of the goals set in the five-year plans but the formulation of the plan was of distinct value in preparing the way for the Agricultural Adjustment Program.

Agricultural Adjustment Period

With the coming of the New Deal and its Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1933 a new era in Extension work began. The Program called for controlled production and the use of benefit payments as a reward thus making sure that those who cooperated in the plan would benefit from their activity and would be in position to benefit further from the general improvement in prices that would help al producers of the given commodity.

Maryland's fully organized Extension Service took over the educational work incidental to introducing the new programs and rendered major assistance in getting the adminstration of the new program under way.

The Wheat Control Plan came first, then the Corn-Hog Adjustment Program which likewise required the application of much information which the Extension force had and could impart to the farmers in connection with the administration of the Program. In addition to acreage control plans, much work was necessary in connection with new sources and methodls of providing credit adapted to the needs of the farmers through Emergency Crop Loans, Production Credit, Rural Resettlement Administration (later known as the Farm Security Administration) The Rurau Electrification Administration, The Soil Conservation Service and i nfact nearly all of the New Deal Agencies depended on the trained experience of Extension workers in dealing with the farm people and their problems.

Without the backing and approval of Extension, the New Deal Porgrams would have been very much slower than was their experience due to the fact that Extension having gained the confidence of the people was able to get a large response quickly which meant greater achievement at less administrative costs than would otherwise have been possible.

After the AAA was declared unconstitutional emphasis was placed on Conservation rather than on production control. This again necessitated Extension taking the lead each year in making clear through educational campaigns the requirements for participation ,benefits to be derived, and the various steps of operation.

Coordination of Activities

When the various New Deal farm programs were being launched and the need for coordinating them with each other and with the established Extension Program, was revealed it became necessary for Extension workers to carry on with their activities of former years and assume also the tremendous tasks and responsibilities associated with the "action" or "operating" Programs. In order to accomplish this, trained paid local leaders came largely into the picture and the utilization of every available resource was necessary which required a higher level of efficiency among Extension workers then had been necessary previously.

Land Use And Program Planning

Under the stress of circumstances, the operating agencies created in an emergency lacked machinery and experience in carrying those programs to the people. Naturally the various programs lacked correlation an dtherefore were apt to duplicate effort or work at cross purposes with other agencies. The need for planned Land Use to eliminate these factors became important for two reasons: First, that the programs accomplish their purpose with the least possible amount of friction, and second, the need for farmers to have a definite part in formulating the programs which were aimed to benefit the people on the farms. As a result, County Land Use and Program Planning Committees are being organized in every agircultural county so that the men, women, and the older youth may all have an active part in planning the program for their respective counties. This is a step in the right direction and eventually will be most valuable. This type of program however, requires time as it is a distinct change in application to farm programs meaning that farmers will have to grow into the idea of active planning of their own program since they lack the training to go immediately into the planning business.

Maryland Extension Service has from the very beginning encouraged organizations of farmers and rural people an dis cooperating with all the agencies with constructive programs for the benefit of agriculture and rural life. This team work with the farmers' organizations has meant much to both parties. The cooperation has been extended to educational egencies as well as to business organizations dealing with the production or the marketing of crops, breeding of livestock, poultry industry, cannig industry, fruit growing, vegetable production etc. Effort has been to include the whole family in the programs. Theerfore the Extension agencies have engaged in constantly broadening cultural and educational programs which in turn means that the Extension Program has broadened very materially to meet the desire of rural people in social, recreational, and economic fields.

Naturally many changes in the agriculture of Kent County has occurred in the twenty-four year period since the first County Agent became active. Dairying has advanced from a side line to become the leading source of income in the County. Sheep and hog numbers have declined in recent years. Horses have declined in numbers but there have been periods of activity in breeding. Now, there is increased interest in thoroughbreds, trotting horses, and draft stock. Better sires are in use.

One large registered Percheron Breeding Farm has been established. Interest in beef cattle has increased both in number of breeding herds and in the number of steers fed for the markets. Both are on a decidedly upward trend.

The purchase of water-front farms by out-of-State people who come to the County and operate large tracts with paid managers has resulted in some striking chages in the agriculture in their sections of the County. Some 60 water-front farms have been purchased and usually are operated somewhat in contrast to the methods used by the farmers native to the County.

Extension has done much to introduce hardy varieties of crops which are better yielders or more immune to the attacks of diseases etc. Alfalfa has made big gains in acreage and in the number of farmers raising it. The same is true of barley. It is gaining rapidly in favor as a cow feed. It is easier and less expensively produced than is corn. Lespedezas have become very widely used in the County usually as a supplement to other seeds since lespedeza alone does not provide early spring or late fall grazing due to the fact that its foilage dies with the first heavy killing frost and there is no new growth until the warm weather of the following summer. It is used mainly for pasture but some use Korean for hay along with Timothy.

Source Of Seed Wheat

In rceent years Kent County has established a reputation as a source of seed wheat. Considerable interest in certified seed has developed. A major asset in the production of good seed in addition to approved varieties of wheat is the cooperation of 2 cleaning and treating outfits. They are able to remove corn cockle almost 100% and do a fine job of removing wild garlic if such seeds are present. As a means of insuring against "burnt" or Stinking Smut, both operators treat the seed with Mercury Dist at no increase in cost per bushel. This practice means such as everyone is agreeable to protected seed if at no extra cost. For several years 40,000 to 50,000 bu. of seed wheat have been cleaned and treated—almost enough for all the seed needed for Kent—not all is used in Kent however.

Hybrid corn is being widely tested. Each year notes an increase in acreage devoted to hybrids. There is no discounting the merits of the hybrid corn provided a strain adapted to the soil type and productivity of the land is obtained. Many are testing several hybrids as a means of finding out inexpensively which strain is the one they should grow in future years. The most striking characteristic thus far has been the greater standability of the hybrid corns. Yields tend to be greater with the hybrids—but not all hybrid strains do so. The testing will continue.

A very decided decrease in the acreage devoted to fruit trees has been noted during the last ten years. Apparently fruit is on the way out in Kent County. Changes in Land Use ncident to the New Deal Agencies are noticeably reducing the acreage devoted to wheat and to tomatoes. Corn will doubtless decrease as barley proves its greater economy as a source of feed for livestock. Permanent pastures will afford best land use for thousands of acres now being tilled.

Kent has one-third of the asparagus acreage of the State. The acreage appears to be on the increase. An occassional grower of considerable acreage breaks up his planting and the loss of the large acreages offsets the increases made by a number of smaller acreages being established for commercial production.

4-H Club Work

In the early days of Extension in Kent intensive work with a few boys on a very limited number of 4-H projects prevailed. Splendid results were obtained by the few boys reached. As the years passed—the 4-H work was extended in several directions—both boys and girls joined the clubs. Membership was spread throughout the County and the wider range of projects was noteworthy. In 4-H as in other Extension the work did not remain along strictly economic lines but grew to include arts and crafts, social and recreational projects as well. As the number of clubs increased and the range of activities widened—unpaid local leaders had to be secured to supervise the work in their respective clubs and projects.

The Kent 4-H Club Council, organized in 1938, offers membership to young people above the age of 16 as senior members and includes all active 4-H members as Junior members. Junior members are represented in the Council by the presidents of the several clubs. A boys council was organized in 1932 which functioned until 1938 when the present council, including both boys and girls, work, was organized.

Kent Farmers Cooperate

The records reveal that Kent farmers have cooperated in a highly satisfactory manner. In fact, a higher percentage of Kent farmers have participated in the New Deal Programs than has been true of any other county of the State. Although Kent is a small County with only 2.9% of the farm land of the State, it has established numerous records, some of which, are as follows:

Kent established a farm numbering system in 1933 which has proved most valuable as a time saver and as a means of furnishing absolute identification for each farm in the County.

Each farmer is definitely contacted at least twice each year in connection with A. C. P. Three-fourths of the farmers call at County Agents' Office.

Kent has made the highest percentage of participation each year in wheat production control, corn-hog control, and in the Conservation Program. Kent has not only the highest percentage of farmer participation in the Federal Wheat Crop Insurance, but has more policies and a greater coverage than any other County in Maryland. Administrative expenses have been the lowest in the State.

Kent pioneered (1936) in the use of the Aerial Survey in the East. It pioneered likewise in the use of blue line prints for recording ACP and farm managements records. Conducted very successfully one of eight experimnetal AAA Programs in 1937. Set stricter standards for Soil Building Practices for 1938 and 1939. Formed the First Soil Conservation District in Maryland in 1938. Was the Maryland County selected to prepare a correlated and integrated land use program in 1939 for 1940 use. Has a tenancy problem but which is not as serious as percentages would indicate in that 25% of its tenants have an average tenure of 18 years on the same farm and only 10% of its tenants change farms annually. In fact, many tenants appear to have the advantage over their landlords and prefer to retain their status as tenants as being more desirable than to be land owners with the greater responsibilities for taxes, interest, and up-keep.

County Agent Duties Change

In addition to his educational duties, the County Agent is becoming less a demonstrator and more of an advisor, consultant and source of impartial information, an organizer and an interpreter. In place of the purely voluntary leaders of former years, multiple duty paid committeemen are active in administaring the coordinated programs of the operating agencies. Multiple purpose meetings replace single purpose meetings as multiple programs prelude time or opoprtunity for single phase meetings. This is essential if full integration and coordination are to result. The many Committees are interlocked to quite an extent for the same reason.

BRIEF ITEMS OF AGRICULTURAL INTEREST

More than $10,000,000 has been paid by the Federal Government to farmers in Maryland in the last six years for their cooperation in the national farm programs.

Whatever may be the outcome of the war in Europe, conservation of our resources cannot be considered in any other way than as an effective method of strengthening the position of this country, and the agricultural industry of this country.

Approximately 72 percent of the farm land in Maryland is represented by the 23,249 farmers who are participating in the AAA program this year.

That Maryland farmers are giving greater attention to conserving their soils is shown by the increased use of soil-building practices. In 1936, new seedings of leagues and grasses were made on 306,858 acres, compared with 562,002 acres in 1938; green manure crops were grown on 32,738 acres in 1936 and on 101,155 acres in 1938; applications of lime amounted to 72,177 tons in 1936 and 160,095 tons in 1938; 1,654 tons of superphosphate were applied in 1936 and 10,895 tons in 1938.

Farm people can have good diets at a low cost if they will short-circuit distribution costs of producing and processing their own foods. But for the greatest affectiveness, this should be done—especially the planning of preduction—with an understanding of nutrition and food values.

Boiling Point

Water in an open vessel begins to boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

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The African slave trade was begun by the Portuguese in 1481 and by 1777 over 9,000,000 Negroes had been carried to other continents.

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