Sometimes you just have to take time to say the obvious. There is an unprecedented need for agricultural education, formal and non-formal, as we move toward the twenty-first century. Increased population, greater demand for food, international trade controversies centered on agricultural products, and the obvious deterioration of the environment in many parts of the world, all are clear signals of need for more and better education, including agricultural education. More about that later.

This is a hallmark year for the AIAEE, year 1994. It marks the beginning of this Journal, the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education. Perhaps this Journal may be one of the means whereby we can more effectively communicate with each other, whether we be in different parts of the U.S. or in other parts of the world, or whether we be in non-formal or formal agricultural education.

But what do we mean when we say formal and non-formal agricultural education? There are many different meanings given for "agricultural education." And the meanings are somewhat different today from the meanings given fifty years ago. But we don't need standardized meanings! We do need to be more explicit with the meanings which are intended in our writing and speaking. Agricultural education, as used in this article, is intended to encompass the instruction about plants, animals, soils, their care and management, farm management and agri-business, finance and policy. It may be formal or non-formal; at any level, primary through collegiate; and may be for general knowledge, avocational or vocational purposes. It is not the intention of the author that the use of agricultural education in this article be read by the reader as a reference to only that education at the secondary level and labeled "agricultural education", or only to the collegiate level education for the preparation or in-service of teachers of agriculture.

The Beginning of AIAEE

The year 1984 was another hallmark year. It was the beginning of the Association for International Agricultural Education (AIAE), later renamed as the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE). This, the tenth year for the AIAEE, sees the beginning of the Journal as a complement to the work of the committees and the annual meeting as means for achieving the purposes of the Association. Congratulations to the officers and to the membership for this important step forward.

The AIAEE was, in part, an outgrowth from the efforts by some members of the Association of Agricultural Teacher Educators of America (AATEA). Many of the agricultural teacher educators from departments of agricultural education in the U.S. had served short term and/or long term assignments in developing countries, some starting in the early 1950's. Their assignments were part of the larger
development efforts by U.S. institutions to assist the countries to improve their agricultural programs, mainly for production of food and fiber, sometimes for national consumption but frequently for international markets so as to gain international currency.

At the same time there were many agricultural extension agents and specialists from the U.S. who also served short term and/or long term assignments in agricultural development projects around the world. The 1950's and early 60's saw many agricultural educators, including teacher educators and extension personnel, responding to calls to provide assistance to colleges, universities, and ministries as those countries sought to strengthen their agricultural programs.

During the same years there was a great increase in the number of international graduate students enrolled in degree programs throughout departments of agricultural and extension education. Those students became a very positive influence on both faculty and domestic students for learning about similarities and differences in cultures as well as programs.

**Agricultural and Extension Education in Development**

We have learned much during the past 50 years regarding the complex task of development, especially regarding the changing of technologies and building of institutions for increasing the quantity of food and fiber produced. At the same time we have experienced massive changes in the technology for production, processing and distribution of commodities; almost unbelievable changes in the technology for communications; and the growing worldwide interconnections for marketing and distributing both agricultural and manufactured products.

The urgent and complex tasks for improved food production and improved distribution channels, especially in drought stricken areas, such as in much of Africa, serves to stir us to make greater efforts to achieve food guarantees for everyone. But we are reminded that the solutions are not simple. The indigenous knowledge of local farmers, and their values placed on the land through generations of survival, may be a far better starting place for change than trying to start with an introduced "Western" technology. We need more and better communication with the producers, the tillers of the soil and the livestock raisers, and the agricultural educators (both formal and non-formal) in each country. In addition, we are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of government policies which, intentionally or unintentionally, have adverse effects upon producers.

**Purpose and Target Audience of the Journal**

This **Journal** will provide agricultural and extension educators from around the world, not just those located in the U.S., with an opportunity to report the results of projects, innovative efforts, research, and to discuss theoretical concepts about programs. In other words it is hoped that the **Journal** will become another avenue of communication, to expedite efforts to achieve improved production and distribution of food and fiber, and improved quality of life for people in general.

The target audience for the **Journal** is not limited to the practicing professionals in agricultural and extension education. It is hoped that other professionals from fields such as sociology, agronomy, agricultural economics, animal science, agricultural engineering, foresters, education and others would gain by reading it and would share their experiences and views by contributing articles for publication.

**Some Reflections**

Permit me to reflect on some changes which have been observed in regards to both formal and non-formal agricultural education during the past fifty years here in the U.S. During the 40's...
and early 50’s much of the focus was on improving production through adoption of new technology, record keeping, and management practices. The methods used by high school teachers were classroom instruction focused around the problem solving method, drawing the problems from the projects which students were encouraged to develop on the home farms; through the activities of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), a high school agricultural student organization; laboratory work in agricultural mechanics for farm mechanization and home improvement; and classes for young and adult farmers for solving farm problems of production and marketing. The clientele were mainly the sons of farmers, primarily owners of land.

Agricultural extension programs utilized on-farm demonstrations, organized meetings for farmers, the media (newsletters, newspapers and radio), and 4-H Clubs as primary methods to achieve higher levels of production. Over the years Extension and high school program content have shifted. The instructional program has broadened to include more emphasis on use of available data for planning, relating production to marketing opportunities, leadership development for individual and group action, and most recently, the international dimension for production and marketing.

As a teacher of agriculture in a small high school in Nebraska during the late 40’s and early 50’s, I helped the students learn to raise broilers through a group project. They were taught to rear and manage broilers for profit; and to market the excess birds through direct marketing methods. And to use part of the broilers for a parent-community banquet to mark the achievements of students and parents through the program. Today such a program would still be a good learning activity for students but it would not reflect many of the key components of today’s vertically integrated, large scale broiler production operations.

For the teachers of agriculture in high schools and the county agricultural Extension agents, the individual farm and the individual farmer were starting points. Entrepreneurship was at the heart of the instruction. Very few programs for either youth or adults were focused on laborers or hired hands. As a consequence there has been neglect of potential, and obviously deserving, clientele groups such as the migrant workers, hired hands, and non-management employees. Those may be some of the most important clientele groups in many of the developing countries.

For the high school programs, the early beginnings under the Smith-Hughes Act found the funding of horticulture programs through the Industrial Education units rather than through the Agricultural Education units. Just another indication of the early narrow focus on farming and farm home related activities.

The agricultural education programs have also grown out of racially divided programs, especially in the Southern states where there were separate agricultural colleges (the 1890 Institutions), separate Cooperative Extension Services, separate high schools, and separate youth programs (4-H and FFA/NFA, the New Farmers of America).

The purpose of these few notes about the history of agricultural and extension education in the U.S. is primarily to make the point that the programs which we have today have emerged from the uniqueness of the U.S. situations. Some authors have reminded us that the strengths of U.S. agriculture may be due to at least five key factors, one of which relates directly to educational institutions such as the public schools, community colleges, and the Land Grant colleges and universities.

Bonnen (1981) has presented one of several convincing arguments for the concept of systems in relation to agricultural development. He argues that five sets of institutions have
supported the agricultural productivity and growth in the U.S.: 1) farm organizations, 2) the land grant colleges of agriculture, 3) the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 4) the private sector markets, and 5) the political institutions including the committees in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures responsible for society's policies for agriculture. To these I would add one more: the public school system including the community/technical colleges. (Or I would simply expand his second point to include the larger educational system which has included agricultural education.)

A current Development Brief, No. 3 (1992, October) from the World Bank focuses on the negative impact on agriculture of government policies which are biased against the producer. The policies, according to the report, have made agriculture the loser. The authors of that brief propose corrective action as shown below.

"To stop taxing agriculture, governments have to do more than dismantle the interventions in agricultural prices—they have, in addition, to eliminate other taxes on agriculture, reducing the protection of industry and getting the exchange rate in line with its long-run equilibrium value."

The highly publicized disagreement between the U.S. and the European Economic Community (EEC) during October-November 1992 regarding the subsidies to agriculture were another example of potential impact of national policies on the producers and on the marketing system. Little was said as to the impact that the settlement between the U.S. and EEC would, or might, have on agriculture in the Third World Countries. Do we as agricultural and extension education professionals have any obligation to try to raise questions about the impacts of such agreements on producers in countries other than our own?

The complexities of international trade and the need for greater understanding are also illustrated in the dialogue from key individuals in our society toward Japan and other countries with large exports to the U.S. As a profession we have been negligent by not educating our leaders and the general public relative to the nature and importance of those countries for the export of U.S. agricultural products. For example, in 1991 (according to Satoru Sashiwagi, Director of the International Liaison Office, International Affairs Department, Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo), during difficult negotiations, some key markets (e.g., beef, fresh oranges, orange juice) in Japan were opened to U.S. products. If the U.S. were to lose the export markets for agricultural products in countries like Japan and Taiwan, it surely would affect the U.S. agricultural situation in particular and the overall economy in general.

It is very evident that agricultural education, not only for professionals in the agricultural sector but for the general public and those in the political arena, is more important in this interdependent, global-market world. This new Journal may help in the exchange of information and technology from country to country. Vitosh (1992, Summer), a crop and soil scientist at Michigan State University, reporting after a three-week trip to Europe in the summer of 1992, has commented "Europeans do a good job of translating information from us to them. It's time we started translating it from them to us."

As we look to the future, it is obvious that education in agriculture is essential for improving production and marketing of agricultural products, for improving farmer income and quality of life, and for reducing poverty. But education in agriculture, though conducted in the most effective and efficient manner, is not enough to achieve the goals of food security for nations, eliminate poverty for the people, and provide a higher quality of life for the farmers.
Agricultural education, both formal and non-formal, is part of two larger systems within all countries: the Educational system and the Agricultural system. Both of which operate in the context of the political and economic systems. Those systems vary from country to country. In the U.S. the formal agricultural education institutions at the primary through community college levels are linked most closely to the state educational systems; the higher education institutions with instruction in agriculture are linked with the state educational systems but in addition nearly always have linkages, financially, with the agricultural systems at both the state and federal levels.

Our Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) has a formidable challenge ahead of it. This new Journal can play an important role for helping to achieve the objectives of improved communication and international linkages. But the reality remains in the hands of the members and the "members-to-be." Let us not hesitate to bring forth new and challenging ideas for discussion and dissemination. Let us not hesitate to discard rivalries between and among groups, but at the same time do not hesitate to form new alliances for effecting stronger programs of agricultural education.

Yes, it is obvious. There is now more need than there ever has been for agricultural education.

References

