

# THE MINNESOTA COOPERATIVE PROJECT IN ADULT EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE

## PURPOSE

The history of adult education generally, and in agriculture particularly, is threaded through and through with efforts to improve the economic understanding and well-being of mature citizens. Since the passage of the Smith-Lever Act (1914) and the Smith-Hughes Act (1917) the Land Grant Colleges and the public high schools with departments of vocational agriculture have assumed a measure of responsibility for adult education in agriculture. The Smith-Hughes Act specifically states that this program is for "those who have entered upon or who are about to enter upon the vocation of farming."

After almost four decades of experience it is possible to conclude that these programs have contributed much; it is also obvious that much more needs to be done.

A major weakness in adult education programs in agriculture has been the lack of effective coordination between the programs of the public schools and the agricultural extension service. Both have worthy objectives, but each has sought its goal more or less independently of the other. The lack of more effective use of resources is one of the motivating forces in the development of the Minnesota cooperative project in adult education in agriculture.

22

Included in the project are the following groups:

1. The University of Minnesota
  - a. Department of Agricultural Education
  - b. Division of Agricultural Economics
  - c. Agricultural Extension Service
2. The State Department of Education
  - a. Agricultural Education Office
3. The Minnesota Vocational Agriculture Instructors Association.

This project was approved by the cooperating members on July 1, 1952 after six years of preliminary planning and experimentation. Its purposes are well established; it is conceived as a research and teaching venture in adult education. It is the first bold attempt to develop a straightforward adult education program in agriculture with the combined resources of all the key groups working together toward a common objective. It means a program that keeps data flowing in to the research personnel in agricultural economics and education and materials of instruction flowing out from the department of agricultural education and the extension service to the agriculture teachers in the various communities in Minnesota.

A basic purpose of the Minnesota cooperative project in adult education in agriculture is to pool all available resources in a common program for maximum benefit to farm people. More specifically this means an educational program for farm people that will enable them to more completely

understand the economic system in which they live and work. It is intended to help farm people live better because they not only farm better, but have a more complete appreciation of the interdependencies of our economic life. ] End of 1/1

The measure of success achieved by this project will depend on the leadership provided. In recognition of this an effort will be made to secure and provide such leadership.

To summarize, the purposes of this cooperative project in adult education may be stated as follows:

1. To coordinate the financial and personnel resources of those working in adult education in agriculture in Minnesota.
2. To develop more effective techniques and procedures in adult education in agriculture with special reference to communication between the local communities and the University of Minnesota.
3. To provide a program of adult education that will develop more complete understanding and appreciation of the economic forces affecting rural and farm life.
4. To develop this program into a self-sustaining and self-perpetuating system of adult education in agriculture.
5. To utilize the present established pattern of adult education as a point of departure for experimentation in new methods and mediums of instruction.
6. To increase the efficiency of farm operation and raise the level of living.

7. To implement the community school philosophy by providing more adequate educational opportunities for farm operators and their families.

### NEED

2 The community school philosophy insists that public schools serving a community must provide educational opportunities for all the people in the patronage area. This includes those that will remain in the community as well as those that will emigrate; adults as well as youth; farm people as well as townspeople. It means that the school must enter into the mainstream of community life rather than assume a position of isolation serving only those who are "regularly enrolled" and preparing for further education in an institution of higher learning. The cooperators in this project subscribe to this philosophy and feel that the need for improving adult education in agriculture is so obvious as to require no further justification. In Minnesota a community school cannot easily be found that does not have a responsibility of adult education in agriculture.

The increasing mechanization and electrification of agriculture have brought with them problems of adjustment that cannot wait for solution upon the education of youth. An adult education program is essential if the lag is to be overcome. In spite of the fact that there are fewer farmers today than ten years ago, the economic stake of the nation in agriculture has steadily risen.

Government has entered into the business of farming in one way or another on every farm in Minnesota. Government programs affecting agriculture are developed as part of a complete policy of international relations. It is essential that farm people understand the role they play and the implications of governmental programs. Farm people need to be able to make decisions more intelligently and on the basis of more complete information than is now the case. If self-government is to be a reality the ability to make decisions on the basis of enlightened self-interest is a necessity.

Prices of farm products react more quickly and violently to changes in the economic condition of the world than do most other prices. Farm people need to understand not only what happens and why, but also what adjustments can be made to temper the effects of rapid and violent price changes. This too has become a matter of government concern as well as individual decision and it is desirable for farm people to arrive at conclusions with full knowledge of the implications of action either individually or through government policy.

3 | The economic need and the need for a more enlightened citizenry are not easily separated. Both are involved in this project.

This history of adult education in agriculture reveals separatism rather than cooperation. This has bred confusion and produced misunderstandings. New and more effective

techniques have not been developed and vague objectives have been the rule rather than the exception. This is a need that can be met through this project, not only for Minnesota but wherever adult education is conducted.

### THE PROGRAM

Adult education in agriculture as conducted in Minnesota is rooted in the economics of farm management. The instructional program is continuous and utilizes a variety of procedures and techniques. In terms of the cooperative project the program has its origin on the farms of members of adult classes in the various high schools throughout the state. The major problem of farming is one of adjustment to changing conditions, most of them economic. It follows then, that the program of instruction should be based on management problems which are current and real to the farm family.

Each participating farmer will keep a set of farm accounts and make available certain of the data for research and teaching purposes and for comparison.

The teacher of agriculture will conduct group meetings and classes and will provide individual instruction on the farms of class members. He will provide technical assistance in keeping the farm accounts and assist in the analysis. The entire instructional program will have application on the farms and in the homes of class members.

The division of agricultural economics will conduct research into farm management problems of class members and provide such analyses as are necessary to maintain an effective

teaching program. The division of agricultural economics will also provide technical instruction to teachers of agriculture relative to the keeping of farm accounts, periodic summaries, and complete yearly analysis.

The agricultural extension service will work with the department of agricultural education in providing materials of instruction based on current data and the farm accounts of class members. This includes the development of new mediums of instruction and the improvement of present methods. Audio-visual aids, including educational films and television are to be tried as means of more effective learning. The University radio and television personnel are anxious to cooperate and preliminary plans are already drawn for three films. This will depend on the financial support given the program.

The state department of education will assist teachers in selecting cooperating farmers and developing local administrative approval for the program. The state supervisor of agricultural education will aid in securing proper local facilities and in providing approval for the program as a part of the recognized instructional program. Administrative approval for partial reimbursement of teachers' salaries and travel expenses will be given by the state department of education for participation in this project.

A project coordinator will be needed to give immediate direction and supervision to the entire project. It will be his responsibility to coordinate the efforts and resources

of all parties concerned with the project; to keep data flowing in and the materials of instruction flowing out; to develop and test techniques and procedures; and to work closely with the teachers in the communities. About half of the time of the coordinator will be spent out in the communities and half on the campus of the University. The department of agricultural education will provide office space and some of the necessary facilities.

Financial support for the coordinator has not yet been obtained although the project has been under way since July 1, 1952. It is hoped that a coordinator can be added to the project by January 1, 1953, or soon thereafter.\*

It is apparent that the coordinator is the key person in the entire project if it is to be of maximum value. Without such an individual those values other than the immediate contributions to the class members will be largely lost. Through the coordinator results can be channeled to the Adult Education Association of the United States, the American Associations of School Administrators, and many other significant groups.

#### ORGANIZATION

Operational responsibility for the project will rest with the coordinator. The division of agricultural economics will be responsible for the research in farm management while the department of agricultural education will be charged with responsibility for research in methods and

\* A grant of funds has been received from the Hill Family Foundation covering a three year period and Lauren Granger was employed as project coordinator on April 1, 1953.



techniques of instruction and evaluation of outcomes. The agricultural extension service will assist in the development of materials of instruction and the planning of monthly aids to teachers.

Since it is felt that this project offers new opportunities for the advancement of adult education, the Adult Education Association of the United States has been invited to utilize the results. It appears that this invitation will be accepted. This has special significance for the development and trial of new techniques in adult education and the dissemination of outcomes. It is the result of six years of discussion, planning and preliminary exploration. It has the combined support of people who have major responsibility for adult education as their daily work. It offers opportunities for the improvement of adult education not only in agriculture, but in any population. It provides for the development of new techniques and procedures within a framework of an established educational program. It contributes to the development of community participation in the community schools. It is in harmony with the concept of more enlightened economic citizenship.

## OUTCOMES

The outcomes must be evaluated in terms of the objectives previously determined. There will be two kinds of outcomes from this project--those that pertain to the adult class members and their farms, and those that bear on techniques and procedures in adult education in general.

A statement of some of the outcomes hoped for would include the following:

1. More efficient operation of the farms involved.
2. Higher levels of living in the farming communities.
3. Improved service by the University to the high schools and the communities they serve.
4. A clearer understanding by farm people of our economic system and the implications locally, and on a state, national and international basis.
5. The development of new mediums of instruction in adult education.
6. A clarification of objectives for adult education.
7. The development of a more vigorous adult education program on a self-sustaining basis.
8. The establishment of ways and means for permanently coordinating resources at the state level on a professional and mutually satisfactory basis.
9. A stronger program of teacher training in agriculture with special reference to adult education.
10. The professional upgrading of teachers now conducting adult education programs in agriculture.