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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

Cooperative Extension Service's Mission And Federal Role Need Congressional Clarification

The Cooperative Extension Service has expanded into new and more socially oriented programs from its original focus on agriculture and home economics programs in primarily rural areas. As demands for its services have increased, disagreements have arisen over what its mission should be. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's role in providing overall program leadership and guidance and in evaluating extension activities is also not clear.

Because the Extension Service's resources are limited ($700 million in 1980) and demands for its services are increasing, GAO recommends that appropriate congressional committees examine the Cooperative Extension Service's mission, including the appropriate Federal role.

CED-81-119
AUGUST 21, 1981

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-199623

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This report discusses the activities of the Cooperative Extension Service. The report discusses the Extension Service's mission, the Department of Agriculture's role in administering the program, and the Extension Service's methods of evaluating and accounting for its program activities. The report also discusses the need for a congressional examination of the Extension Service's mission, including the appropriate Federal role.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, and to the Secretary of Agriculture.

John D. Heller

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE'S MISSION AND FEDERAL ROLE NEED CONGRESSIONAL CLARIFICATION

D I G E S T

In contrast to its original focus on agriculture and home economics programs in primarily rural areas, the Cooperative Extension Service has expanded and is now active in rural, urban, and suburban communities and offers programs in social and economic problems and cultural, recreational, and leisure-time activities. Program changes, many of which have come about in the last 20 years, have resulted in differing opinions among the Extension Service's clientele, and even within the Extension Service itself, about the scope of the Extension Service's mission. GAO believes the Cooperative Extension Service's mission needs to be reviewed and clarified, particularly in the current atmosphere of budget tightening. (See p. 9.)

The Cooperative Extension Service, the largest education system of its kind in the world, is made up of a Federal office (the Federal Extension Service) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State extension services located within the land-grant colleges and universities. The Extension Service operates an office in virtually every county in the 50 States, and offices in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. The Federal Government funds about 40 percent of the Extension Service's budget while States fund about 42 percent and 18 percent is provided locally. In fiscal year 1980 total support for Extension Service activities was about $700 million, with the Federal Government contributing about $275 million.

GAO undertook this review to look at the way Extension Service programs were meeting their basic missions, the Federal role in administering the programs, and the Extension Service's methods of evaluating and accounting for its program activities.

The Extension Service was established in 1914 primarily to provide farmers with information from agricultural research and to encourage them to adopt improved farming methods. It has been credited with contributing to the growth in

productivity and efficiency of U.S. agriculture. Recently, its programs have expanded to include instruction in arts and crafts, recreation, creative and performing arts, and mental and emotional health. (See p. 11.) The Extension Service has justified these newer programs as falling within its broad legislative mandate. (See p. 9.)

As more programs vie for the Extension Service's resources, disagreements have occurred over what its mission should be. Some groups feel it is ignoring their needs; others say it is trying to be all things to all people. (See p. 13.)

Because the demands for the Extension Service's programs are great and its resources are limited, its available resources need to be used as efficiently as possible. GAO recognizes the desire for local programing flexibility but believes that it should be tempered with more Federal guidance on the overall parameters within which federally supported extension programs should operate.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S ROLE SHOULD BE CLARIFIED

The role that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Extension Service should play is also not clear. At one extreme are those who say it should only administer Federal funds for State extension programs and help the States do what they want to do. At the other extreme are those who say it should provide specific national program direction. (See p. 25.)

Although the Federal Service must approve State program work plans, it has little involvement in the total extension program development process, including determining national program priorities and interacting with the States in developing work plans. A recent Extension Service study expresses concern, however, that if the extension partnership is to be maintained, the Federal Service must assume a more active leadership role so that a balanced partnership will exist to satisfy national as well as State and local needs. (See p. 26.)

EXTENSION PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION SHOULD BE IMPROVED

Improved performance and impact measurement is needed to determine whether extension programs

are effective. Although the extension community recognizes the need to improve program accountability and evaluation and some States have implemented their own evaluation programs, no comprehensive Service-wide evaluation requirements have been developed. GAO believes the major obstacle to achieving this goal is the absence of a responsible central office to clearly define evaluation standards. (See p. 29.)

GAO believes the U.S. Department of Agriculture is the natural place within the organization from which to provide leadership and direction in evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS

GAO recommends that the appropriate congressional committees examine the Cooperative Extension Service's mission. As part of this process, the committees could:

--Direct the Secretary of Agriculture to prepare, in cooperation with the State Extension Services, an updated statement of the Extension Service's mission. The committees could require that statement to contain explicit mission objectives and priorities and to be submitted to them for their information and review. The committees could also require the Extension Service to provide periodic progress reports on meeting its goals and objectives.

--Hold oversight hearings on the Cooperative Extension Service to review current extension programing and to consider and focus on the mission that the committees want the Extension Service to carry out. The hearings could provide the basis to develop legislation, if necessary, to more clearly define the Cooperative Extension Service's mission. (See p. 21.)

GAO also highlights programing/clientele and funding/organizational issues that it believes the congressional committees should consider. (See p. 21.)

GAO also recommends that the appropriate congressional committees, as part of their examination, consider the role that they want the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Extension Service to play in providing extension program leadership and guidance. (See p. 27.)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture become more involved and assume leadership with the States in developing programs and implementing a uniform accountability and evaluation system for the Cooperative Extension Service. (See pp. 27 and 34.)

AGENCY AND STATE COMMENTS

GAO asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the director of extension of each of the six States in which it made its review--California, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Virginia--to comment on a draft of this report. GAO received comments from the Department and from California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia. These comments indicated general agreement with most of the issues discussed but pointed out some areas which the respondents felt were unclear or misleading. (See apps. III through VII.) GAO made appropriate changes in the report.

The Department pointed out that it and the State extension services had recently undertaken joint studies that deal with several of the issues discussed in this report, including the need to clarify the Extension Service's mission (see ch. 2) and the need to improve extension program evaluation (see ch. 4). Concerning the issue of the appropriate Federal role in extension (see ch. 3), the Department, as well as the States, generally agreed that while the Federal office should provide national program leadership, this should be in the form of guidance and not Federal program direction.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ECOP	Extension Committee on Organization and Policy
GAO	General Accounting Office
SEA	Science and Education Administration
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Cooperative Extension Service, the largest education system of its kind in the world, is made up of a Federal office 1/ in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State extension services located within the land-grant colleges and universities. 2/ The Extension Service operates an office in virtually every county in the 50 States, and offices in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. The Federal Government supplies about 40 percent of the total funding while States supply about 42 percent and 18 percent is provided locally. In fiscal year 1980 total support for extension activities was about $700 million, with the Federal Government contributing about $275 million.

ROOTS OF THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

The Cooperative Extension Service developed from the adult education program for farmers that began almost at the birth of this Nation. By the mid-19th century, agricultural societies had formed in many of the States to encourage short, noncredit courses where farmers could hear about the most advanced agricultural practices. In some States, State boards of agriculture sponsored farmers' institutes; in other States, colleges and universities conducted short sessions for working farmers. In 1875 the first agricultural experiment station was founded at Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government was also actively contributing to the advancement of practical agriculture. The 1862 and 1890 Morrill Acts provided for at least one college in each State "to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts." USDA was created in 1862. In the 1887 Hatch Act (7 U.S.C. 361a et seq.), the Congress established agricultural experiment stations to conduct agricultural research at the land-grant colleges in each State.

1/The Federal office is referred to in this report as the Federal Extension Service or Science and Education Administration (SEA)-Extension.

2/Land-grant colleges were created under the Morrill Act (7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) passed by the Congress in 1862. The act provided for the sale of public lands to support a college in each State that would, among other things, teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts. In 1890 the Congress passed the so-called second Morrill Act (7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.) which established the 1890 land-grant colleges primarily to serve blacks.

County agent work developed as a natural result of the widespread interest in agricultural education. The demonstration method of teaching through agents in the field was introduced by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp of USDA's Bureau of Plant Industry in the early 1900's. Dr. Knapp believed that diversified agriculture and other desirable changes would come only through demonstrations conducted by farmers on their own farms under ordinary conditions. In 1904 Dr. Knapp employed 24 Federal agents to demonstrate improved cotton-growing methods for farmers in the weevil-infested areas of Texas and two adjoining States. Encouraged by this demonstration, Smith County, Texas, became the Nation's first county to hire a full-time county agent in 1906.

The Smith-Lever Act (7 U.S.C. 341 et seq.), passed in 1914, formalized and increased Federal support for a cooperative arrangement among the Federal Government, the land-grant colleges, and county governing boards for agricultural extension work. The act created the Cooperative Extension Service and set forth its mission or major function: "To aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same." The act specified that the Extension Service's clientele would be persons not attending or resident in land-grant colleges and its methodology would consist of "field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise."

The Smith-Lever Act placed extension work on a stable financial basis and provided for Federal-State cooperation and more uniform administration of the States' work. The act directed the land-grant colleges to administer extension programs. However, the work still varied from county to county, depending on the county agent's personality and the local farmers' initiative, and county agents were still chiefly concerned with demonstrating methods and practices on individual farms.

THE EXTENSION SERVICE TODAY

Today the Extension Service is organized at the Federal, State, and county levels to deliver a diverse program of instruction to local communities. Extension work is carried out through cooperative agreements between USDA and the land-grant institutions in each State. The relationship of Federal to State units is not hierarchical but is more like a partnership. State cooperative extension services are integral parts of State land-grant institutions; they work with USDA and they are in touch with both private and public interests at local, State, and national levels. Each State extension service has considerable autonomy in determining policies at State and local levels, yet each participates in multi-State, regional, and national policymaking activities.

Extension Service organization at the State and county levels

The Extension Service's organizational network is complex and differs slightly from State to State. Because extension is an educational system, it may be best understood as a relationship among (1) the land-grant institutions, which generate information, (2) county agents and their helpers, who disseminate information, and (3) community groups, which help determine the types of programs they want, with the aid of local and State leaders.

Formal relationships exist between the Extension Service and the State land-grant institutions. The Extension Service, the major offcampus educational arm of the land-grant institution, disseminates information from the institution to State residents. Extension is usually administered within a university's college of agriculture. In some States, extension is administered by an office outside the college of agriculture that is directly responsible to the university president's office.

Extension's basic unit is the county extension office, which delivers programs. The State office and the county offices work out agreements for conducting extension work in the county. County advisory boards or groups work with the State extension service to determine budgets, provide local funds to finance the program, hire personnel, and carry out plans. The primary function of the county office staff is to bring new knowledge to people, groups, and communities located away from campuses and to transmit the local communities' research and information needs back to the campus-based staff and faculty for use in planning their research and education programs. Much of the information the county staffs distribute comes from the campus-based teaching-research faculties.

Extension methods

Within the counties, extension personnel disseminate information by various methods. These include

--personal contacts, including telephone calls, often related to problem solving;

--contact with 4-H and homemaker clubs;

--sponsoring information meetings;

--speaking at meetings sponsored by other groups;

--using the mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, public notices);

--sending out newsletters, brochures, and pamphlets;

--preparing recorded telephone messages; and

--offering workshops and training sessions.

Program determination

Formal or informal citizens' advisory committees or groups, whose organization and responsibilities can vary from State to State, assist local county extension agents in identifying needs. For example, in Kansas, the State legislature mandates that each county's extension program is the cooperative responsibility of the county agricultural extension council and Kansas State University. Each county extension council is composed of 27 elected members--9 agricultural representatives, 9 home economics representatives, and 9 4-H representatives. The State county extension council law provides that each extension council's duty is to plan the county's education extension programs. On the other hand, California does not use a system of formally established advisory committees. Instead, county personnel form various informal local advisory committees. In yet a third pattern, Nevada has formally established State, regional, and, in some counties, local citizen advisory committees. The county personnel also form local advisory groups. In addition, most counties in both Nevada and California have various formally established 4-H advisory committees. In North Carolina, in addition to a State Advisory Council, each county extension office has a local advisory group.

Federal office

USDA's Federal Extension Service has a staff of about 100 employees. The staff is responsible for approving State Cooperative Extension Service work plans and for determining that Federal funds are used properly to meet congressional intent and USDA requirements. The Federal Extension Service also provides administrative and technical program assistance to the States and serves as a link among the States, other USDA agencies, and other parts of the Federal Government. The Administrator of Extension reports to the Director of Science and Education who in turn reports to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy

The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), a national-level standing committee of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, is a kind of "board of directors" for the Extension Service. ECOP has 14 voting members--3 State directors from each of 4 Extension Service regions, 1 from the 1890 colleges, and the Federal Administrator

of Extension. ECOP, which meets three times a year, serves as a planning and policy development arm of the Extension Service.

EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAMS

Although programs are developed at the local level, they must conform to four broad subject categories delineated by the State and Federal staffs. These four categories are agriculture and natural resources, home economics, 4-H youth, and community and rural development. Nationwide, the percentage of professional Extension Service staff-years planned in each category in fiscal year 1980 was estimated by USDA as follows: agriculture and natural resources--42; home economics--24; 4-H--26; and community and rural development--8. Programs are further categorized into 21 program components. Appendix I shows Extension Service staff-years devoted to each of the program components during fiscal year 1980.

In addition to about 17,500 professional staff, paraprofessionals and volunteers also devote time to program areas. Paraprofessionals are particularly active in the federally funded Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, 1 of the 21 program components. In that program, about 4,400 paraprofessionals are employed to work in the rural communities or urban areas where they live. They work with families primarily on a one-to-one basis, under the supervision and training of an Extension Service professional. 1/

Interaction with other organizations and government agencies

The Extension Service cooperates with other groups and organizations within the community to carry out programs. County agents may refer clients to services outside the Extension Service's scope of activity or may share information or resources with community and private groups. The Extension Service also has cooperative agreements with other USDA agencies and with other Federal departments, such as Energy, Commerce, Transportation, and Health and Human Services. Under these agreements, the Extension Service may agree to serve as an educational outreach arm for programs originating in other departments or to cooperatively finance an interdepartmental project. For example, the Extension Service disseminates transportation educational material for the Department of Transportation.

1/Our assessment of this program was reported in "Areas Needing Improvement in the Adult Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program" (CED-80-138, Sept. 4. 1980).

EXTENSION SERVICE FUNDING

The idea of cooperative funding is an integral part of the cooperative nature of the Extension Service. Funding consists of Federal, State, and local (including private) contributions. Although funding percentages vary by State and year, the Federal Government provides about 40 percent overall; the States, 42 percent; and local sources, 18 percent.

Federal funds

The majority of the Federal funds are allocated to the States by a formula based on sections 3(b) and (c) of the Smith-Lever Act. The majority of formula funds are allocated according to the States' farm and rural populations, as follows:

--4 percent to the Federal Extension Service.

--19.2 percent to the States in equal proportions.

--38.4 percent to the States on the basis of rural population.

--38.4 percent to the States on the basis of farm population.

In addition to formula funding, the Congress makes special appropriations for particular extension projects under section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act. The first such appropriations were made in fiscal year 1965 for a pesticide education program and specific extension work in the Appalachian region. Planned fiscal year 1980 section 3(d) funding accounted for about one-fourth of the Federal funds provided to the States for extension activities. The largest program funded under section 3(d)--about $52 million budgeted for fiscal year 1980--is the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

State and local funds

The sources of funds from within the States further demonstrate the cooperative principle of extension work. States and counties have traditionally furnished over half the funds. State legislative appropriations are in most cases made to the land-grant institutions for cooperative extension work. These funds are handled by the fiscal departments of the land-grant institutions at the direction of the State extension director. Funds appropriated by a county are generally administered by a county cooperating board or the county government. Funds from private organizations and other nontax contributions, which account for about 2 percent of the total funds, are considered to be a part of the State or local extension budget in the same manner as

funds from taxes. The bulk of private funds is used to support local 4-H programs.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our major objective was to review the current range of cooperative extension activities in terms of the Extension Service's overall mission and program priorities. A second objective was to assess the Extension Service's system of evaluating and accounting for its programs. A third objective was to assess the Federal Extension Service's role within the cooperative framework and to determine whether a clearer definition of its responsibilities is necessary.

We made our review at the Federal Extension Service's headquarters in Washington, D.C.; at land-grant institutions in California, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Virginia; and at three selected counties in each of these six States. In those States which had both 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions (Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia), we visited both. We interviewed current and former extension officials at the Federal, State, and county levels to get their perspectives on the proper mission for the Extension Service as well as to determine the current scope of Extension Service activities. We also asked these officials about the Federal Extension Service's role and the adequacy of Extension Service evaluation activities at the various governmental levels.

We chose the above States to get a representative sampling of extension activities in different geographical areas, in States with large and small programs, and in urban and rural counties. We discussed and received input on our State choices from the Federal Administrator of Extension and on our county choices from the respective State directors to assure that the States and counties we visited were representative of geographical areas, programs, and clientele mix.

Likewise, we received input from the Federal Extension Service on which farm and farm-related groups we should talk with to get a sample of opinions on the proper mission of the Cooperative Extension Service. We chose groups that would reflect a variety of interests: large farms, small farms, ranching, rural development, 4-H, and home economics. We also interviewed groups that have not traditionally supported the Cooperative Extension Service to find out which activities they thought the Service should be performing. (App. II contains a list of the various national organizations where we spoke with organization representatives.)

We reviewed reports on the scope of extension programs and evaluation studies prepared by ECOP, the Federal Extension Service, and State extension services. We also reviewed evaluations

of some State programs prepared by State oversight agencies such as Virginia's Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission and Missouri's Extension Study Commission.

CHAPTER 2

THE MISSION OF THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE SHOULD BE BETTER DEFINED

The Cooperative Extension Service's mission needs to be examined and clarified. Originally, the Extension Service focused on agriculture and home economics subjects in primarily rural areas. The range of programs offered and audiences served by the Extension Service has broadened substantially, especially during the past two decades. The Extension Service is now active in rural, urban, and suburban communities and includes programs in social and economic problems and cultural, recreational, and leisure-time activities.

The Extension Service's enabling and supplementing legislation refers to agriculture and home economics and related subjects. Thus, it is general enough to allow for different interpretations of what the Extension Service ought to be doing and for whom. Accordingly, the Extension Service has justified expanded programs as falling within the Service's broad legislative mandate. This mandate, however, when combined with local program initiative, often results in local extension programs that seem to lack either program purpose or target groups to be served. Instead, local programs sometimes appear to resemble a general curriculum of diverse courses, worthy in themselves but perhaps not utilizing the unique extension delivery system in the most prudent ways.

Lack of perceived focus has caused considerable frustration among the Extension Service's clientele, and even within the Extension Service itself. Because the Extension Service's mandate is broad, many groups believe that they are entitled to its services, while Extension Service personnel feel pressured to be all things to all people.

Increased demands for Extension Service resources have increased disagreements about what the Extension Service's mission should be, particularly in the current atmosphere of fiscal constraints. Although some groups believe the Extension Service is ignoring their needs, others feel it is covering too broad an area. Because the demands for Extension Service programs are great and its resources are limited, its available resources should be used as efficiently as possible.

SCOPE AND GROWTH OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE

Originally, the Extension Service focused on agriculture and assistance to farm families. Information was transferred from the land-grant institutions to the farm through a network of trained county agents. The agricultural agent worked with the farmer, the home economics agent worked with the farmer's wife, and the 4-H agent worked with the farmer's children. Individual

instruction and demonstration were heavily emphasized. By encouraging the adoption of new technology and knowledge generated by research, the Extension Service has been credited with an important role in contributing to the growth in productivity and efficiency of U.S. agriculture.

During the 1920's the Extension Service's emphasis was to help farmers produce efficiently and profitably. The Extension Service's emphasis changed during the farm depression from production to economic efficiency in farm operations and improving the quality of rural life. By World War II, the Extension Service had become the single Federal agency having a direct educational link with rural America. Because of this relationship, the Extension Service was able to play a special role in the war effort. It investigated requests for draft deferments, helped with price control and rationing programs, managed the emergency farm labor program, and promoted increased food and fiber production and conservation.

Since the 1950's the range of programs offered and audiences served by the Extension Service has broadened substantially. In 1953 the Smith-Lever Act was amended to define extension work as "the giving of instructions and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics and subjects relating thereto." The phrase "and subjects relating thereto" has been used to justify expansion into new program areas. Other authorizing or appropriations legislation, especially during the 1960's and 1970's, has also expanded program areas. For example, in 1968 the Congress created an Extension Service-managed nutrition education program--the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program--for low-income families. This program brought the Extension Service into a number of urban areas for the first time. Other programs emphasized aid to disadvantaged farm families, pesticide education, rural community development, urban 4-H, urban gardening, community resource development, farm safety, pesticide impact assessment, natural resources, and agricultural energy conservation.

The Extension Service is now active in urban and suburban communities, as well as rural areas, and offers a wide variety of informational programs. Whereas programs once focused almost exclusively on the practical application of new research results, program topics now include cultural, recreational, and leisure-time activities. Program changes have largely mirrored national trends or have reflected changes in the demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the population. The Extension Service has attempted to satisfy a wide range of new demands in recent years without losing touch with agriculture and rural communities. While agriculture remains a major part of the Extension Service's programing, many programs are now directed at developing individual leadership and self-confidence, inducing behavioral changes, and increasing awareness of and ability to cope with social problems.

A look at some of the programs the Extension Service has offered will help in understanding the crossroads of programing

and mission definition at which the Extension Service now finds itself.

EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAMING

Examples of some of the traditional agriculture and home economics programs follow.

--Agriculture programs: These include pesticide application training, tractor safety training, information on new varieties of soybeans, lamb and wool school (discusses recent research and managing predator losses), pest management training, financial planning for farmers, direct marketing, feminine farrowing school (a course designed to teach farm wives to assist with operations related to the birth of pigs), and special small-farm programs. For example, small-farm programs operate in 33 of Missouri's 114 counties. These programs use paraprofessionals to help farm families with gross incomes below $20,000 to reduce their costs, increase their incomes, and improve productivity and management of their resources. Although 21 States had special small-farm programs in 1980, the programs served only a small portion of the estimated 1 million small farmers in the United States.

--Home economics programs: These include homemaker clubs, nutrition workshops, food preservation newsletters, and sewing and tailoring presentations.

--4-H programs: These include livestock projects, leadership training sessions, cooking projects, and summer recreational programs.

The following examples illustrate extension activities that have been expanded. The list is not exhaustive, and the appropriateness of individual examples might be debatable; it is merely intended to highlight kinds of activities.

--Instructions in arts and crafts: The rationale generally given for arts and crafts instruction is to help homemakers save money through developing self-help skills. However, in many cases the instruction appears to be primarily oriented to hobby or leisure-time activities. Program examples include photography, dried flower arranging, oil painting, antique renovation, rock gardens, book binding, silversmithing, macrame, crochet, and pine cone crafts. For example, a program on photography teaches participants about cameras and films for home photography, elements of a good photograph, and decorating with photos.

--Recreational and creative and performing arts: Offerings include programs in the creative arts. For example, a program called "Art of Clowning" deals with makeup, costumes, clowning history, and pantomine/skit development.

--Mental health and emotional health: Includes programs on depression and seminars on death and dying. For example, a program on death, "How to Live with Dying," deals with the need for death education, coping with grief, explaining death to children, funeral arrangements and costs, the need for financial planning, business and legal matters, and the church's role at the time of death. The course includes tours of funeral homes; group discussions; and panels of ministers, funeral directors, and lawyers. A course on depression, "Down in the Dumps--Depression and You," provides information on the prevalence and impact of depression, theories about its causes, a list of statements to help participants describe their feelings and review their lives, instructions for keeping a running account of experiences over a period of time, brief case studies, and a list of techniques for combating distorted thinking.

--Health and rehabilitation: Extension Service agents serve as outreach for public health department clinics or sponsor basic health-related programs. Program examples include "Stop Smoking" classes, "The Proper Use of Make-up," "Self-Help for the Physically Limited," "Weight Control and Behavior Modification," "Heart-Related Illnesses," and "Alcoholism and Drug Addiction."

--Child care and development: Extension Service agents and faculty instruct day care center staffs on child nutrition and child care practices. Other programs include counseling for abusive parents and courses on the art of parenting and family communication, including parent/child interaction.

--Home management information: Programs are offered on such topics as income tax, estate planning, consumer rights, planning for retirement, and energy conservation.

--Home lawn and garden care: Advice on caring for lawns and gardens and landscaping assistance is one of the Extension Service's most rapidly growing areas of public demand, particularly in urban areas.

--Community awareness activities: The Extension Service has sponsored activities such as rural leaders' development training; energy information centers; and seminars on land use issues and problems, bond referendums, and community beautification projects, including assisting in preparing grant proposals.

--Development of industry and tourism: Training programs, slide presentations, and other materials have been developed to help local officials promote industrial development and tourism.

--Business assistance: The Extension Service has helped develop management training programs for industry and government.

SELF-APPRAISALS ON ROLE OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE

A series of self-appraisals, which called for expanding the Extension Service's program focus, have contributed to the confusion about the Extension Service's mission.

In 1945 a cross sectional group of Federal Extension staff members prepared the "Kepner Report," which noted that the basic Smith-Lever legislation emphasized the vocational aspects of the Extension Service's education functions. In the early days of cooperative extension work, education efforts were directed largely at specific farm and home operational problems. The Kepner committee believed that the Extension Service's educational responsibilities should be expanded to emphasize development of clientele to enable them to recognize problems and do something about them.

The 1958 "Scope Report," prepared by the Subcommittee on Scope and Responsibility of ECOP, called for programing in several areas: efficiency in agricultural production; marketing, distribution, and utilization of farm products; conservation and development of natural resources; farm and home management; family living; youth development; leadership development; community improvement and resource development; and public affairs.

In 1968 "A People and a Spirit," a report of the Joint USDA-National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges Extension Study Committee, updated the "Scope Report" and supported the importance of work on social and economic problems.

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3301) directed the Secretary of Agriculture to provide "an evaluation of the economic and social consequences of the programs of the Extension Service and the cooperative extension services * * *." The evaluation was begun during 1978 as a joint effort of USDA and the State cooperative extension services, the latter through ECOP. The evaluation report, published in January 1980, raised but did not attempt to resolve a number of issues of concern to the Extension Service. Issues highlighted dealt with policy direction and funding, program and clientele determination, linkages with research, program delivery methods, and the Federal role in the partnership.

DIFFERING OPINIONS ABOUT SCOPE OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE'S MISSION

Various persons and groups both inside and outside the extension system have increasingly expressed differing views about the mission or direction the Extension Service should be taking. Various positions on the Extension Service's mission are discussed in the following sections.

Views of the former Federal Administrator of Extension

The previous Federal Administrator of Extension, who served in that position from July 1977 to December 1979, before becoming a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture for Consumer Affairs, commented on the need to redefine or articulate the Extension Service's mission from a policy perspective. In an April 1980 response to an Office of Technology Assessment draft report on "Technology in Local Development," he commented on the objectives and clientele of the Extension Service:

> "Extension is in a transition. While some feel that it is ignoring their needs, others say it is trying to be all things to all people. We see more and more authorizing legislation for Extension--the Rural Development Act, the 2-year Direct Farmer-to-Consumer Marketing Act of 1976, the Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978, and so on. More and more agencies are discovering Extension. Those that don't want to, or can't set up a duplicate delivery system naturally want Extension to help them. Yet, important questions go unanswered, such as What is the Federal role in Extension? Should it be doing more or less in urban areas? and Whom should it serve?
>
> "One reason for this situation is that Extension's basic authorizing legislation is very general * * *. Thus, there is a lot of room for different interpretations of what Extension ought to be doing, and for whom."

The former Administrator concluded that a new policy dialog was needed on the future of the Extension Service. He pointed out that the recent evaluation study (see p. 13) was designed to answer evaluation questions, not policy questions, and the next logical step would be to explore policy alternatives and consequences. He said that a dialog should come about naturally as a sequel to the January 1980 national evaluation report.

Views of the current Federal Administrator of Extension

According to the current Administrator, the extension system has changed over time to respond to changing national, State, and local concerns. She said that one of the system's strengths is that it can change. Change has involved extending both programs and clientele served, and these changes have caused some frustration over the past several years.

The Administrator agreed that the direction the Extension Service should be taking needs to be defined. She said that about every 10 years the Extension Service has come out with a statement of future direction. The last one was done in 1968 with the publication of the report "A People and a Spirit."

The Administrator believes it is time to look again at what the Extension Service is and where it should be going. She said that issues to consider include the proper mix of Extension Service's programing; the proper mix of funding, especially the issue of formula versus earmarked funds; and the proper mix of Extension Service staffing.

Views of various interest groups

We obtained the views of various interest groups (see app. II) on what they thought the proper mission of the Extension Service should be. Although some organizational and national leaders have called on the Extension Service to broaden its programs, various traditional support groups and clientele have criticized it for doing exactly that. Even organizations that seem to represent similar interests sometimes disagree on the proper mission for the Extension Service.

Among the organizations we talked with that represent farmers and cattlemen, the general consensus was that the Extension Service was straying too far from its traditional role as "teacher to the countryside." These groups think that the Extension Service should disseminate information on food, fiber, and agriculture.

Beyond this, little agreement existed among farm groups. The more traditional thought that the Extension Service should be technologically and production oriented, disseminating the latest information from the research stations. Other farm organizations believed that it should be serving the small farmer, acting primarily as farm management consultants and market organizers. These groups said that the large farmer has many other avenues of information--such as farm implement manufacturers, fertilizer and seed processors, and the research station itself. They believe that the Extension Service should be helping marginal farmers get organized and improve their position in the marketplace.

Other groups representing rural development believed that the Extension Service's network of land-grant institutions, research stations, and county agents could be effective in helping to alleviate economic and social problems in rural communities. They said that many rural communities are currently overburdened by new regulations covering the environment, highways, and air and water pollution. Furthermore, many urban residents are moving to townships, expecting levels of service that rural communities traditionally may not have delivered. Elected officials in these townships often do not have the expertise to deal with new demands. The rural development groups said that in these cases the extension agency could act as a base of sound information by helping the community formulate rational goals and then serving as a link between the community and "expert" outsiders who might resolve specific problems.

These groups said that they would like to see more funding for the Extension Service under title V of the Rural Development

Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 2661 et seq.) and more of a formal emphasis on rural development from the Extension Service itself. They are hoping that the Extension Service will focus more on its rural development mission, including hiring staff experienced in the rural development field.

Many of the newer, more socially oriented extension programs are in the home economics field. The home economics field has changed from the traditional activities of sewing, canning, and quilting to family planning, psychological counseling, and home management subjects. In September 1980 a national steering committee on home economics made up of representatives from the land-grant system, other institutions, and a professional society published "A Comprehensive National Plan for New Initiatives in Home Economics Research, Extension and Higher Education." The publication lists the following as four main thrusts of home economics--family economic stability and security; energy and environment; food, nutrition, and health; and family strengths and social environment.

Groups that want the Extension Service to continue to serve a farm constituency do not believe that it should be involved in social programs because such programs come under the province of social workers. Other groups question some of the home economics subjects because they may duplicate courses given by other local educational or governmental agencies. Some home economics programs, such as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, are focused on urban areas. Likewise, 4-H club activities have recently expanded into nontraditional urban areas. These urban programs have caused conflict with more traditional rural clientele, particularly if they are viewed as taking funds from agricultural programs.

Spokespersons for home economics agents expressed concern for their own role in extension. They said that land-grant institutions do not fully support home economics because it is consumer, rather than production, oriented. They are hopeful that the Extension Service will place equal emphasis on both producing and consuming food.

Views of National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board

The Congress established the National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board under section 1408 of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3123) to provide independent advisory opinions on the food and agricultural sciences. The Board is made up of 21 members representing diverse food and agricultural views and producer and consumer interests. In its first report to the Secretary of Agriculture in October 1979, the Board commented on concerns regarding new and traditional expectations of the extension system. The Board pointed out that historically the research and extension systems focused chiefly on agriculture and rural constituents and rural needs. According to the Board,

that situation had changed substantially. It said that research and extension systems were much more involved with urban and suburban constituents and their needs. The Board concluded that the result is that the research and extension systems were facing a more widely varied range of expectations than in the past. It added that the extension system had increasingly found itself dealing with issues that many other organizations are also addressing.

The Board expanded on this theme in its second annual report to the Secretary of Agriculture in October 1980:

> "It is our opinion that USDA and its cooperating partners should recognize that extension work is now being performed effectively by an increasingly pluralistic set of performers, public and private, in order to serve the increasingly plural audiences involved. We support this growing tendency of a plurality of performers to match plurality of need and audience.
>
> "Acknowledging the growing plurality of extension audiences and performers, we recommend that the concept of one extension service serving all needs, as currently practiced, be abandoned. The decentralized county office system clearly has continuing utility. However, certain needs must be given priority and improved recipient (user) linkage (for two-way information flow) is necessary in many research areas. Also extension programs, to serve their purpose, must have a direct linkage to ongoing research units. We suggest serious consideration of a reorganization of the cooperative extension system. We believe an alternative network of smaller, multiple, highly specialized extension programs might better serve modern needs than a single 'jack-of-all-trades' system."

Views of National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education

The Congress authorized the National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education under title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-329) to report to the President, the Congress, and the Secretary of Education on the administration and effectiveness of federally funded extension and continuing education programs. The Council is made up of 12 public members knowledgeable and experienced in the field of continuing education and 9 representatives from Federal agencies (including 1 from USDA) having postsecondary continuing education and training responsibilities. In a January 1980 statement to the Secretary of Agriculture, the Council commented on issues of common interest to it and the Extension Service. The Council said that it believed the Extension Service should broaden its

constituency by identifying those groups that might particularly benefit from the unique resources of the agency, including urban residents, the poor, the disadvantaged, and minorities.

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Clearly, substantial disagreement exists among interested groups on the Extension Service's mission. In fact, the only issue that all the groups seem to agree on is the validity of the extension idea; that is, the county agency's serving as a personal link between the university and the individual citizen.

The type of agent needed to do extension work is also in dispute. According to farm organizations, if agents are to serve the larger farmer, then they will presumably have to specialize in the latest agricultural technology. On the other hand, if agents are to be more involved in rural development, then a background in such subjects as sociology, communications, and public affairs might be more appropriate.

The differences among these groups point up the need to clarify the Extension Service's mission. If extension programs are clearly defined and priorities are established, training of existing personnel and hiring of new personnel can be geared to meet program needs and priorities and expectations about the kinds of services the Extension Service provides could become more realistic.

STATE MISSION REVIEWS

Within the past few years, independent mission reviews of extension programs were introduced by the Governor of Missouri and Virginia's State Legislature.

Missouri

In July 1977 the Governor of Missouri established an extension study commission to "review and recommend changes that may be necessary in the scope, organization, management and funding of extension activities." In a March 1978 report, the commission said that while the public strongly supported many of the extension programs, the University of Missouri and all other colleges and universities must be continually aware of the State's limited resources and every effort must be made to provide high-quality programs efficiently. The commission recommended that the several State universities operating extension programs should have quality as their primary goal and should be involved only in programs for which they are best equipped.

The commission made some specific suggestions for several programs. For example, it suggested that community development programs be limited to areas where local government officials have no access to similar services. It said that unnecessary duplication of services exists in this area, with similar services being provided by other State and local agencies, including

the Division of Commerce and Industrial Development, the Division of Community Development, the association of counties, and local governmental departments in large cities and counties. The commission also pointed out that spending tax funds to assist in recreational activities and "quality of life" programs, while commendable, becomes difficult to justify when the funds are badly needed in other areas. It suggested requiring full self-support for general interest and leisure noncredit courses.

In response to the commission's report, a comprehensive review team for extension was appointed to review extension programs. In an April 1979 report, the review team, while not recommending elimination of program areas, called for adjustments and modifications to be made to reflect more adequately the needs of all the people of Missouri. As a result, some program adjustments have been made.

Virginia

Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission initiated a program review of Virginia's extension program in 1978 at the request of a Virginia General Assembly member. The commission published a report on September 10, 1979, which, among other things, deals with the need to clarify the mission of the Virginia Extension Service. The commission pointed out that both the Government and public have been concerned about the proper mission of the Virginia Extension Service. It said that although most of the Service's resources continued to be focused on the more traditional areas of agriculture, home economics, and 4-H, the scope of its programs had broadened substantially in recent years to include cultural, recreational, and leisure-time activities in urban and suburban as well as rural communities. The commission cited examples of extension activities that had been expanded.

The commission concluded that review of the Virginia Extension Service's mission was needed to establish workable guidelines within the context of State and local government programs. It recommended that the Service in conjunction with State education agencies prepare an updated statement of its role and mission, with explicit objectives for growth and priority setting, and submit it to the Virginia General Assembly for review and approval.

In response to the commission's report, the Virginia Extension Service drafted a new mission statement, which articulates its primary mission and establishes specific program priorities. The statement says that extension programs will emphasize primarily agriculture and rural areas but also continue to give strong emphasis to 4-H and home economics programs. The statement calls for increases in agricultural management, economics, and marketing programs; decreases in leisure and cultural education; and increases in family life, child development, and human relations programs.

PROPOSED USDA/ECOP MISSION STUDY

USDA and ECOP have developed plans to study the role, mission, scope, and priorities for the Extension Service in the 1980's. The study will deal with the Extension Service's current programing and the role it may be expected to play in the decade ahead. The study will also review relationships (the partnership among USDA, State land-grant institutions, and counties) and project future scope, direction, and redirection of the Extension Service's program so that it will make a maximum contribution to local, State, and national goals.

Federal Extension Service officials said that a land-grant college president and the Secretary of Agriculture or his designee (at a minimum, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture) should co-chair the policy committee to lead and direct this study. In December 1980 Federal Extension Service officials told us that the outgoing administration had agreed to such a study and that the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture would co-chair it. However, the project was deferred pending approval by the new administration. In May 1981 Federal Extension Service officials advised us that the project, to be cochaired by a land-grant college president and an Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, had been approved.

CONCLUSIONS

The Extension Service's mission, including program parameters and clientele, needs to be examined and clarified. The Extension Service has expanded into new and more socially oriented program areas from its original focus on agriculture and home economics programs in primarily rural areas. As the Extension Service's programing has changed and demands for its services have increased, disagreements have arisen about what its mission should be. Disagreements have become especially acute in the current atmosphere of fiscal constraints.

The Extension Service's enabling and supplementing legislation refers to agriculture and home economics and related subjects. Thus, it is general enough to allow for different interpretations of what the Extension Service ought to be doing and for whom. Accordingly, the Extension Service has justified expanded programs as falling within its broad legislative mandate. This broad legislative mandate, however, when combined with local program initiative, often results in local extension programs that seem to lack focus in terms of either program purpose or target groups to be served. Instead, local programs appear to resemble a general curriculum of diverse courses, worthy in themselves, but perhaps not utilizing the extension delivery system in the most prudent ways.

The resources available for extension programs should be used as efficiently as possible. Although we recognize the desire for local programing flexibility, flexibility should

be tempered with more Federal guidance on the overall parameters within which federally supported extension programs should operate.

If the Extension Service is to be a socially oriented organization with broad educational and behavior modification objectives, then changes may have to be made to its basic funding formulas and organizational structure. On the other hand, if its mission is to be limited to more traditional focuses, then the scope of its programing may have to be reduced.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CONGRESS

We recommend that the appropriate congressional committees examine the Cooperative Extension Service's mission. As part of this process, the committees could:

--Direct the Secretary of Agriculture to prepare, in cooperation with ECOP, an updated statement of the Extension Service's mission. The committees could require that statement to contain explicit mission objectives and priorities and to be submitted to them for their information and review. The committees could also require the Extension Service to provide periodic progress reports on meeting its goals and objectives. 1/

--Hold oversight hearings on the Cooperative Extension Service to review current extension programing and to consider and focus on the mission that the committees want the Extension Service to carry out. The hearings could provide the basis to develop legislation, if necessary, to more clearly define the Cooperative Extension Service's mission.

The congressional examination should address, but not be limited to, the following issues.

Program/clientele issues

--Should the Extension Service concentrate on traditional agricultural, home economics, and community development programs in primarily rural areas?

--Should the Extension Service concentrate on traditional agricultural and home economics programs but strive to serve urban and suburban, as well as rural, clientele?

--Should the Extension Service stay with what it now has in terms of programing and target audiences?

1/Ch. 4 discusses the need for the Extension Service to improve program accountability and evaluation.

should the Extension Service expand both its programing and target audiences? To what extent?

Funding/organizational issues

--Should the basic funding formula and/or organizational structure be modified if the Extension Service is to continue with and/or expand its broad program emphasis?

--Should a larger proportion of the Federal funds be earmarked (section 3(d)) for specific programs?

--What are available ways to assure that extension programs do not duplicate other Federal, State, or local agency programs?

--Should Federal funds be spent on extension programs that involve mainly cultural and recreational activities?

--Should user fees be implemented to partially or fully cover the costs of certain extension programs?

USDA AND STATE COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

USDA and the States generally agreed with our recommendation concerning the need to clarify the Cooperative Extension Service's mission. (See apps. III through VII.)

USDA said that the undergirding recommendation in the report that "Extension's role and mission should be clarified" is one with which there is already work underway. It pointed out that the USDA/ECOP mission study (see p. 20), which is currently underway, will help satisfy this recommendation because it will assist in articulating the Extension Service's appropriate goals and clientele. USDA said that the study will receive input from the Federal, State, and local levels and will also request input from appropriate congressional committees. USDA suggested that, pending completion of this study, congressional oversight hearings should be deferred.

We specifically refer to the USDA/ECOP study, which began in May 1981, in our report and agree that the study should be beneficial to the congressional committees in examining and clarifying the Extension Service's mission. We are pleased that in supporting the study, USDA and ECOP recognize the need to clarify the Extension Service's mission. The study, however, is only one of several factors the congressional committees may wish to consider during their examination. If the committees wish to hold oversight hearings as part of that examination, it is up to the committees to decide when they should be held.

USDA also pointed out that extension programs have expanded in part because of new congressional mandates and directives explicit in Smith-Lever section 3(d) funding that has broadened

the role of extension, especially in urban areas. UDSA suggested that our report refer to these legislative mandates. USDA also requested a review of the words "it is important that available resources be used prudently."

We specifically point out in our report that extension programs have expanded through authorizing or funding legislation, especially during the 1960's and 1970's, and we refer to the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program as bringing the Extension Service into a number of urban areas for the first time. (See p. 10.) We also point out in the report that section 3(d) funding now accounts for about one-fourth of Federal funding for extension activities. (See p. 6.) In calling for prudent use of extension resources, we are merely pointing out that because the demands for the Extension Service's resources are great and its resources are limited, it is important that available resources be used wisely and efficiently. The various legislative initiatives that have expanded extension programing have also fostered greater demands for extension services and disagreements about what the Extension Service's mission should be, thus further highlighting the need for the congressional committees to examine the mission they want the Extension Service to fulfill.

CHAPTER 3

THE FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE'S ROLE SHOULD BE CLARIFIED

The role that USDA's Federal Extension Service should play in providing extension program leadership and guidance is not clear. Although the Federal Extension Service must approve State program work plans, it has little involvement in plan development and seldom influences program and clientele priorities. A recent extension study expressed concern, however, that if the extension partnership is to be maintained, the Federal Extension Service must assume a leadership role in determining national program priorities and provide a certain degree of national program direction so that a balanced partnership will exist to satisfy national, as well as State and local, needs.

FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

Before Federal funds for extension activities are made available to the States, the Secretary of Agriculture or his designee is required by law to approve the States' annual work plans for extension activities. The Secretary also must approve each State Extension Director. Disagreement exists within the Extension Service, however, as to whether the Federal Extension Service is simply to administer Federal funds for State extension programs and check to see that the States' programs fit within the broad extension parameters or whether it should articulate and advocate national programs and needs and encourage specific uses of extension funds through its plan approval process.

A memorandum of understanding between each land-grant institution and the Secretary of Agriculture is the principal basis on which extension work has been conducted since passage of the Smith-Lever Act. According to the agreements, USDA is to maintain a Federal Extension Service that will administer the Smith-Lever Act and other acts relating to cooperative extension work. The land-grant institutions are to organize and maintain a distinct administrative division for conducting extension work and administering extension funds. The agreements call for joint program planning for the use of Federal Extension Service funds between the State extension services and USDA and for annual State work plans to be approved by the Federal office. State and county extension personnel are joint representatives of the land-grant institutions and USDA.

In actuality, the Federal Extension Service has little involvement in developing State extension program plans. The Deputy Administrator for Program Development, Coordination, and Evaluation said that even though agreements with the States call for joint program planning for the use of Federal extension funds, the Federal Extension Service usually accepts the program plans the States submit. He said that under existing policies, the definition of specific extension programs and target clientele

is left mainly to the States and counties. He stated that although the Federal Extension Service could influence program and clientele priorities through the planning process, it seldom does. Instead, the Federal Extension Service has generally been content to play a passive role in the Federal/State/county partnership.

VIEWS ON THE FEDERAL ROLE

Views differ on the Federal Extension Service's role. At one extreme are those who say its role is only to administer Federal funds for State extension programs and essentially should be one of helping the States do what they want. At the other extreme are those who say the Federal Extension Service's role is to provide specific extension program direction.

The former Administrator of Extension told us that within the Federal Extension Service itself, the ambiguity of the Federal Extension Service's mandate has left personnel unclear about their own duties. They do not know whether they represent the Secretary of Agriculture's views within the extension system or whether they are spokespersons for the State extension services within USDA. He said that this problem becomes particularly acute at times when Federal policymakers push for new orientations within USDA and expect Federal Extension Service personnel to incorporate these changes in State extension programs. According to him, State extension personnel see their role as educational rather than promotional and have, at times, viewed pressure from Federal Extension Service officials as an infringement on their educational mission. He said that because the Federal role is ambiguous, Federal Extension Service officials are able to satisfy neither the Secretary of Agriculture nor the people active in State extension organizations.

State views

The extension service directors in California and Nevada said that they would welcome a more aggressive Federal role in providing broad, overall, long-term extension goals or priorities. The California Extension Director said that he would like to see long-term goals and priorities established and more specific program direction, guidance, and priorities promulgated as opposed to restricted or earmarked funds. The Nevada Director believes a more active Federal role is needed to establish broad, long-term goals, needs, and priorities.

The Virginia Director said that the Federal role should be to identify national priorities and communicate them to the States, where they would be incorporated with State and local needs. The North Carolina Director said that the Federal office could contribute to a more definitive extension mission statement. The North Carolina Director also said that the Federal contribution should be in the form of guidance and leadership rather than direction. The Kansas and Missouri State Extension Directors saw no need for changes to the current Federal role.

STUDY OF THE FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE'S ROLE

Because of increasing questions about the Federal Extension Service's role in the Federal-State partnership, the Federal Service sponsored a study to address the issues. The study was made for USDA by the Director of the New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service during April and May 1980. The study concluded that the Federal role needs to be strengthened within the context of a balanced partnership. The study said that a basic assumption is that the Federal, State, and county extension partnership must be preserved and strengthened because it represents a unique relationship that helps assure that publicly supported education programs respond to local, as well as State and national, needs. The study also pointed out, however, that a balanced partnership must exist if the extension system is to satisfy needs at all three levels.

The study stated:

> "The ever increasing emphasis on earmarked funding suggests that Congress, as well as the Department, would like to see more Extension programs being systematically carried out nationwide. In order to respond to this trend, Extension across the country may have to shift to more collective decisions and action in response to certain national efforts."

The study concluded:

> "It is evident that if the Federal/State/County partnership is to prosper in the future, there is going to need to be more evidence of the part that SEA-Extension staff plays, not only in supporting the State Cooperative Extension Services, but in providing a certain degree of national program direction.
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> "The SEA-Extension staff must respond to Federal interests as well as State interests, and must assume a leadership role in the process of determining any national priorities that might result in national thrusts for Extension. It appears that the SEA-Extension staff could do much with other agencies in the Department, with the Office of the Secretary, with ECOP, with ECOP subcommittees to help assure that joint decisions are made and that all partners can clearly support joint efforts when appropriate."

The report recommended that the Federal Extension Service become more involved with the States in the total program development process. This includes development and review of work plans as well as assistance in establishing certain national priorities to be given attention on an annual basis.

CONCLUSIONS

The role that the Federal Extension Service should play in providing extension program leadership and guidance is not clear. Although the Federal Extension Service is responsible for approving State program work plans, it has little involvement in plan development and seldom influences program and clientele priorities. This is the case even though agreements with the State extension services call for joint program planning for the use of Federal extension funds. A recent Federal Extension Service study pointed out the need for greater Federal Extension Service involvement with the States in the total program development process including establishing national program priorities, so that a balanced partnership will exist to satisfy national, as well as State and local, needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS AND THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

We recommend that the appropriate congressional committees, as part of their examination recommended in chapter 2, consider the role that they want USDA's Federal Extension Service to play in providing extension program leadership and guidance. We recommend that in the interim the Secretary of Agriculture direct the Administrator of the Federal Extension Service to become more involved with the States in the total extension program development process. This includes

--determining, in cooperation with ECOP, national extension program priorities and goals;

--providing leadership in getting States to implement extension programs which address national extension priorities; and

--interacting with the States in developing as well as reviewing work plans.

USDA AND STATE COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

While not disagreeing about the need for Federal role clarification, USDA and the States commented on the strengths of the three-way approach to extension program determination and cautioned that the national office's role should be one of guidance and not specific subject matter determination or program direction. (See apps. III through VII.)

We agree with the three-way approach to specific program determination. In calling for the Federal office to become a partner with the States in the overall extension program development process, we are not advocating Federal direction of extension programs. Rather, we are calling on the Federal

office to assume an active leadership role in interacting with the States in the total program development process, including establishing national program priorities.

CHAPTER 4

NEED TO IMPROVE PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

The current piecemeal approach to extension program accountability and evaluation is inadequate. Improved performance and impact measurements are needed to determine whether extension programs are having their desired effect. Although the extension community recognizes the need to improve program accountability and evaluation and some States have implemented their own evaluation programs, no comprehensive Service-wide evaluation requirements have been developed.

The Extension Service suffers from an organizational problem that hinders it from establishing a uniform and effective evaluation system. The major obstacle to achieving this goal is the relative autonomy of the organizations making up the extension system; no member organization is responsible for clearly defining evaluation standards throughout the system. USDA is the natural place within the organization from which leadership and direction in evaluation could be given. However, USDA is not specifically charged with performing this function and is not now providing leadership and direction.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION IS INADEQUATE

The need for improved program accountability and evaluation, including improved performance and impact measurements, is especially important in view of the expanded scope of extension programing. It is impossible to determine whether extension programs are meeting their objectives unless program purposes and objectives are meaningful and clearly defined, meaningful evaluation criteria are designed for individual activities, activities are monitored, and objective overall program effectiveness reviews occur periodically. Several factors, including the nature of extension programs and lack of well-defined program purposes and objectives, contribute to the comparative underdevelopment of extension evaluation. We believe the major obstacle, however, is the absence of any member organization being specifically charged to provide program accountability and evaluation leadership.

Evaluating extension programs is difficult

We recognize that the consequences of extension programs are often difficult to assess for several reasons. The diversity of extension programs among various units makes standardizing evaluation criteria difficult. The difficulty in separating the impact of extension programs from other factors influencing client decisions also impedes evaluation, especially for social programs where behavioral change is the objective. These difficulties make it all the more important that Extension Service decisionmakers make the best use of their evaluation resources by working together to develop, agree upon, and implement

Service-wide accountability and evaluation requirements. This would include establishing meaningful program objectives and evaluation criteria as well as identifying programs which do not lend themselves to evaluation.

Meaningful program objectives and evaluation criteria are necessary

Clearly stated and meaningful program objectives and evaluation criteria are essential for extension programs before evaluation can realistically take place. For example, if the stated objective of an extension program on nutrition is merely to inform a certain number of clients about good nutritional practices, then a participant count may be all that is needed to measure program results. On the other hand, if the purpose is to change the participants' behavior so that they employ better nutritional practices in their daily lives, then an indepth evaluation of behavioral changes attributed to the program will be needed to measure program effectiveness. 1/

The difficulties in establishing meaningful objectives and evaluation criteria, including lack of consistency between specified objectives and evaluation criteria, were visible in some of the State and county work plans we reviewed. For example:

--The primary objective of a program on aging was to help family and community members understand the aging process. One evaluation criterion was to be an estimate of the number of individuals participating. The objective relates to a behavioral change while the evaluation criterion related to a participant count. While a second evaluation goal was to "survey impact in selected areas," no specific criteria for measuring impact were stated.

--The objective of a health program was for 200 individuals to improve their mental and physical health through application of the knowledge gained. Although no evaluation criteria were given, one can see that a carefully designed long-term evaluation study would be necessary to show whether the program accomplished this objective.

1/We discussed the need for improvements in evaluation of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program in our Sept. 4, 1980, report to the Secretary of Agriculture. (See footnote on p. 5.)

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEM--
NO OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVALUATION

The cooperative extension system suffers from an organizational problem which hinders establishing a uniform and effective program accountability and evaluation system. We believe the major obstacle to achieving this goal is the absence of a responsible central office to clearly define accountability and evaluation standards throughout the extension system.

USDA

Although the Secretary of Agriculture is charged with approving State extension work plans and assuring that Federal funds are used to carry out approved extension work, he is not specifically charged with, and is not now, providing leadership and direction in program accountability and evaluation. We believe USDA is, however, the natural place within the organization from which leadership and direction could be provided. In view of his plan approval and oversight responsibilities, the Secretary of Agriculture should be involved in assuring that adequate program evaluations are carried out to determine that extension programs are meeting their objectives. This can include assuming a leadership role in working with the States to develop and implement a uniform and effective evaluation system.

State extension services

According to USDA data, 33, or about 60 percent, of the 54 State extension services do not assign specific evaluation responsibilities to any particular staff. The other 21 have staff positions that include some evaluation responsibility, but only 5 have established separate evaluation units.

Virginia established a separate evaluation unit at the university level in 1980. At the time of our review, the unit, consisting of an associate dean and two staff members, was reviewing extension program goals and attempting to establish meaningful, measurable program goals. According to the staff, establishing quantifiable, attainable goals is the first step in program evaluation. The staff had also begun training district staffs and county agents in evaluation techniques. Virginia State extension officials said that USDA could provide valuable assistance in improving extension program evaluation by developing criteria to use in judging program effectiveness and coordinating State efforts.

North Carolina conducts two types of evaluation activities. The first type, called comprehensive program review, is designed to assess a county extension unit's effectiveness in implementing the extension programs. The second, implemented within the past 2 years, is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of programs rather than units. This evaluation is designed to let individual extension agents select individual programs for assessment

and decide on criteria to be used for judging the programs' effectiveness. North Carolina extension officials said that this program is still in its early stage and results are not yet known. They believe, however, that it is a good start toward assessing program effectiveness. North Carolina officials said that USDA could be very helpful in establishing a credible evaluation system by providing leadership in establishing evaluation criteria, identifying programs which do not lend themselves to evaluation, and coordinating efforts within the extension system to avoid duplication.

California and Nevada had not established systematic procedures to evaluate program effectiveness. Instead, programs have occasionally been evaluated informally. This includes professional judgment (or self-evaluation), opinions obtained from the public/clientele, and general feedback from the public. We believe these evaluations tend to measure the extension process or public opinion and not the actual results of extension efforts. Extension officials in both California and Nevada said that better ways are needed to evaluate program effectiveness. They said that the need to identify, and then eliminate or modify, the less effective programs is becoming especially critical in the current period of budget cutbacks.

Missouri's primary means of evaluating programs had been to have the State specialists work with the area agents and observe them and their programs. The area agents also are required to write impact statements discussing the objectives and accomplishments of two of the programs they were involved in during the year.

The Kansas Extension Director said that Kansas had no formal system for evaluating the effectiveness of extension programs but that efforts were being made to develop one. He said that county agents had prepared annual reports of their activities, but those reports do not address program impacts.

ACTIONS TAKEN TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

The lack of sufficient data and an evaluation framework to adequately measure consequences of extension programs became apparent to the extension community during its evaluation study in 1978 and 1979. (See p. 13.) The study report, issued in January 1980, states:

> "A major outcome of the national evaluation of social and economic consequences of Cooperative Extension Service programs is increased sensitivity among Extension leadership and professional staff about the importance of evaluating program impacts. The current comprehensive look at program impacts from a national approach has raised an understanding within Extension about the limited systematic

impact information that is available and the need to evaluate more completely and effectively the impacts of all Extension programs."

In August 1979 ECOP established a task force to study information reporting and evaluation needs jointly with the Federal Extension Service. The task force presented a preliminary report to ECOP in February 1981, which outlined a concept for an extension accountability and evaluation system to supply information/data to meet national accountability needs. The concept also would allow the States to supplement the system to meet additional needs at the State and county levels. The task force's proposal calls for developing a three-level approach to program accountability and evaluation. Level I would include planned and systematic national, national/State, or State/local indepth evaluation studies of selected high-priority extension programs. Level II would include planned systematic collection of program accountability and management information on selected program accomplishments and critical concerns. Level III would include information on participants--race, sex, resource inputs, and other data. Level I evaluation studies would consist of both national studies to answer questions about the national impacts of identified extension programs and State studies of the impacts of specific local and State extension programs.

The task force's preliminary report proposed, among other things, that the Federal Extension Service provide national leadership in (1) identifying programs to be evaluated and specifying data to be collected, (2) working with the State extension services to design and implement evaluation programs throughout the extension system, and (3) developing a process to integrate and convert program accountability and evaluation data into timely, usable reports. In addition, the task force suggested that the Federal Extension Service and the State extension services jointly establish a national accountability and evaluation policy team to identify evaluation goals, policies, and plans.

The task force plans to present its final national report to ECOP. However, as of July 1981 the preliminary report was still undergoing review and the Federal Extension Service was considering what role it should play in overall program accountability and evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

The Cooperative Extension Service needs to improve performance accountability and evaluation. The efforts of the ECOP/Federal Extension Service Task Force on Extension Accountability and Evaluation could lay the groundwork for establishing a uniform and effective Extension Service accountability and evaluation system to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness. For this to happen, however, some group or organization in the extension system will have to assume or be assigned the leadership role for developing and implementing the system.

Although not specifically charged with providing leadership and direction in extension program evaluation, the Secretary of Agriculture is charged with approving the States' extension work plans and assuring that Federal funds are used to carry out approved extension programs. In view of his plan approval and oversight responsibilities, the Secretary should be involved in assuring that adequate program evaluations are carried out to determine that extension programs are meeting their objectives. The Secretary could assume a leadership role in working with the States to develop and implement a uniform and effective evaluation system.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

We recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture assume leadership, in cooperation with ECOP, for developing and implementing a uniform accountability and evaluation system for the Cooperative Extension Service. The system should include provisions for planning and coordinating accountability and evaluation activities throughout the Extension Service.

USDA AND STATE COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

USDA and the States generally agreed that improved program evaluation is needed and pointed out various activities that are already underway to improve evaluation. (See apps. III through VII.) In particular, USDA commented that a major study in evaluation, under the direction of ECOP and federally administered, is now underway. USDA and Missouri and Virginia cautioned that establishing a centralized national system of evaluation is difficult when program objectives must be established at the local level, where specificity is required if the program is to serve local needs.

We agree that the USDA/ECOP task force study can provide the basis for establishing an effective extension evaluation system, and we discuss the task force's efforts in some detail. (See pp. 32 and 33.) Our discussion notes the task force's preliminary report, which proposes that the Federal Extension Service provide national leadership in extension program evaluation. This is in harmony with our recommendation that USDA assume leadership, in cooperation with ECOP, for developing and implementing an evaluation system for the Extension Service. We are not advocating that evaluation activities be centralized within USDA, but rather that USDA provide the necessary leadership, in cooperation with ECOP, for planning and coordinating evaluation activities throughout the Extension Service.

EXTENSION SERVICE STAFF-YEARS DEVOTED TO EACH PROGRAM COMPONENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1980

	Total professional staff-years (note a)
Crop production	3,548
Livestock production	2,059
Organization development and maintenance	1,563
Leadership development	1,435
Family life	1,142
Business management and economics	940
Food and nutrition	913
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program	830
Natural resources and environment	821
Housing and home environment	766
Personal and family resource management	625
Agricultural marketing and farm supplies	544
Textiles and clothing	496
Leisure and cultural education	343
Community services and facilities	285
Safety	252
Mechanical science, technology, and engineering	247
Economic development, manpower, and careers	243
Human health	239
Comprehensive community planning	219
Government operations and finance	133
Total	17,643

a/In addition to professional staff-years, paraprofessional years were devoted as follows.

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program	4,367
All other programs	2,192
Total	6,559

APPENDIX II

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS VISITED

We discussed the Cooperative Extension Service's mission with representatives of the following organizations.

American Association of Retired Persons
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Home Economics Association
American Institute of Cooperation
Future Farmers of America
National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education
National Association of Counties
National Association of Towns and Townships
National Cattlemen's Association
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National 4-H Council
National Governors' Association
National Grange
National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board
National Rural Center
National Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association

APPENDIX III

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250

July 7, 1981

Mr. Henry Eschwege
Director, Community and
Economic Development Division
General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

Attached are Science and Education's comments on your proposed draft report entitled, "The Cooperative Extension Service Needs Better Mission Definition and Federal Guidance."

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed draft.

Sincerely,

ANSON R. BERTRAND
Director
Science and Education

Attachment

Comments on GAO Draft Report Entitled
"The Cooperative Extension Service Needs Better
Mission Definition and Federal Guidance"

The Department of Agriculture is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the GAO Draft Report in the subject heading. We generally concur that there is always a need to review program efforts to assure their efficiency and effectiveness. We are also appreciative of the spirit of cooperation exhibited by GAO staff as they made the review not only here in the agency but throughout the six States.

We concur with GAO findings that:

- "Extension has generally been credited with an important role in contributing to the growth in productivity and efficiency of U.S. agriculture."
- "Agriculture remains a significant part of Extension's programming."

Even though there is no general disagreement with the substance of the report, we have noted, in conferences with State directors in the six States reviewed, that there are questions concerning the style and format of the manuscript. The negative hypothesis approach to titling the report and the chapter headings (Chapters 2, 3, 4) engenders some concern among those who value apparent objectivity in report writing.

[GAO COMMENT: We also value objectivity in report writing. Our objective is to provide reports that are fair and not misleading and that, at the same time, place primary emphasis on matters needing attention. In preparing titles we try to be as specific and informative as possible, conveying the most significant feature of our review or the constructive result to be achieved through appropriate action on our findings. We believe that a title should do more than merely identify the type of program or activity dealt with in the report or in a report chapter. The report title has been refocused to state that congressional clarification is needed of the Extension Service's mission and the Federal role in extension.]

The Extension Service influences the lives of most Americans and many people in other countries. As societal needs have changed, so have the types of programs offered by the Extension Service through its tripartite approach to programming at both the Federal, State, and local levels. The report calls for a more active Federal role in program determination and there is some feeling among our State cooperators that this may be inconsistent with

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GAO note: The page numbers referred to in USDA's comments have been changed to reflect those in the final report.

the Federal government's contribution of less than 40 percent of the resources. With a Federal government contribution of $275 million toward a total expenditure of $700 million, there is some feeling, the Department is advised, that State legislative bodies may question the need for further Federal direction although not questioning that now provided.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on p. 27.]

The report also notes that "Extension has expanded beyond its original focus on agriculture and home economics" and contrasts this with the original 1914 Smith-Lever Act. The report might appropriately be revised to reference in greater detail other Congressional mandates, including the language incorporated in Title XIV of the 1977 Farm Bill and the directives explicit in Smith-Lever 3d funding that has served, through Congressional fiscal directive, to broaden the base of Extension. The latter has been particularly true of Extension program efforts in the urban areas.

[GAO COMMENT: Various legislative mandates and Smith-Lever 3(d) funding are discussed in the report. See pp. 6 and 10. Also, see our evaluation on p. 22.]

Given the directives explicit in these mandates, the Department respectfully requests a review of the words, "it is important that available resources be used prudently" (p. ii). There is little hard data in the report supporting the conclusions reached (other than a reference to conferences with selected individuals). However, given the lack of evidence to the contrary, we would question that resources are not used "prudently."

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on p. 23.]

The report states that "clearly stated and meaningful program objectives and evaluation criteria are essential for Extension programs before evaluation can realistically take place" (p. 30). The Department and the Agency do not disagree with this concept. However, it is very difficult to establish a centralized national system of evaluation when program objectives must, by necessity, be established at the local level where specificity is required if the program is to serve local needs. A major study in evaluation, under the direction of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and federally administered is now underway. Results of that study will be made public when it is complete. It is scheduled for completion in 1981.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on p. 34.]

Even though Extension programs have expanded in areas other than agriculture (as noted on p. 10) the statement is made that "emphasis and growth has been in the other program areas." Several of our cooperators have pointed out that significant growth has occurred in agriculture program areas and/or in other program units (4-H for example) that conduct agriculturally-related programs. The attached chart showing redirection of Extension efforts from 1971 to 1980 demonstrates that the traditional agricultural activities have been major growth areas.

In many States the percent of funds for agricultural programs is higher than in the past and has continued to grow.

APPENDIX III

[GAO COMMENT: Revised sentence on p. 10.]

The undergirding recommendation inherent in the report, that "Extension's role and mission should be clarified," is one with which there is already work underway. The study mandated by ECOP and currently underway will, it is believed, help satisfy this recommendation. This fourth comprehensive study of the role and priorities of the Extension Service will assist in the articulation of appropriate goals and clientele. The Department will request input from the appropriate committees of Congress. In addition to this comprehensive study that will reach into the Federal, State, and local levels of the partnership, a manuscript was published in the Spring of 1981 that clarifies the role of the Extension Service at the Federal level. It should also be noted that a Congressionally-mandated study to provide "an evaluation of the economic and social consequences of Extension..." was prepared through a joint effort of USDA and the State Cooperative Extension Services and published in January 1980. This evaluation was mandated by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977.

Given the very comprehensive study of Extension now underway and co-chaired by a member of the Secretary's immediate staff, we respectfully suggest that Congressional oversight hearings be deferred. We further request that conclusions related to a centralized evaluation system be delayed until that particular study, previously referred to in this response, is completed.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on pp. 22 and 34.]

Again, the Department is pleased to have an opportunity to respond to this report.

APPENDIX IV

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

2200 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

July 1, 1981

Mr. Oliver W. Krueger
Senior Group Director
Community and Economic
Development Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Krueger:

Re: Draft Sections of Proposed Report,
"The Cooperative Extension Service
Needs Better Mission Definition &
Federal Guidance" (6/3/81)

As my Executive Assistant, Doris Smith, discussed with you by telephone we appreciate the opportunity to review the above-referenced draft. We are generally supportive of efforts to clarify the mission of Cooperative Extension and the role of the federal Extension staff.

We have no objections to the draft sections submitted for our review.

Sincerely,

Jerome B. Siebert
Assistant Vice President
and Director

cc: Mary Nell Greenwood
James M. Meyers
Doris S. Smith

APPENDIX V

Missouri Cooperative Extension Service

University of Missouri & Lincoln University

July 2, 1981

Mr. Henry Eschwege
Director, Community and Economic Development
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

With regard to your draft of the proposed report entitled "The Cooperative Extension Service Needs Better Mission Definition and Federal Guidance", several comments are in order from the perspective of Missouri Cooperative Extension. First of all, in Missouri's view the amount of federal program direction is adequate and ample. The partnership which your report describes has worked and continues to work because none of the parties has attempted to "control" the system. The fact that each of the parties contributes so significantly to the financial support of the system is a clear indication that on the whole each party feels sufficient input and control to make the application of public funds worthwhile.

In Missouri's view, the role of the national office includes liaison with other agencies, coordination and communication among states, and serving as an interpreter of national level policy. The national level office role is not subject matter determination or program direction, as it would be impossible to determine at the national level what programs should be carried out in any one of the 3600 counties in a given year. The Cooperative Extension network was established by the Smith-Lever Act "to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information" and not the dissemination of USDA policy directives.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on p. 27.]

With regard to evaluation and accountability, there currently are significant efforts under way in Missouri, and I believe throughout the country, to identify the objectives of extension programs and evaluate progress toward those objectives. This is not a straight forward process as virtually all professional educators would agree, since we strive for changes in people's knowledge, attitudes, skills and abilities, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the quality of life. If it is determined that the most important objectives are identified at the national level and progress toward those objectives is what really matters, then the Cooperative Extension system will experience significant problems. In Missouri objectives are highly localized and meeting those objectives is a daily staff concern. While dealing with concerns on a county or community basis may appear disjointed, surely these concerns in the aggregate become national concerns.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluation on p. 34.]

As your report indicates, Cooperative Extension has a long and, I believe, distinguished history indicating that the system does work. And while any partnership involving three semiautonomous partners can stand some fine tuning, there appears to be little evidence of the need for significant change.

contd..

APPENDIX V

I would hope you would consider changing the title of your report to something more positive as the title will likely receive more publicity than any of the details.

[GAO COMMENT: See response on p. 38 to similar comment by USDA.]

Missouri Cooperative Extension appreciated the opportunity to participate in your study and the professional manner in which Mr. Don Ficklin of your Kansas City office carried out his work in Missouri.

Very truly yours,

Leonard C. Douglas

Leonard C. Douglas
Director, Cooperative
Extension

LCD/jm

cc: Dr. Mary Nell Greenwood
Mr. James H. Ollar

APPENDIX VI

AGRICULTURAL
EXTENSION
SERVICE

North Carolina State University
School of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Agricultural Extension Service
Office of the Director
Box 5437
Raleigh, N. C. 27650

June 25, 1981

Mr. Henry S. Eschwege, Director
Community and Economic Development Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

I appreciate an opportunity to comment on the draft of a proposed report "The Cooperative Extension Service Needs Better Mission Definition and Federal Guidance" which is based on some visits to our staff in North Carolina.

I believe the report is well done and I commend your staff for the manner in which the revue was carried out and the draft document. I do have a few minor points that I would like to raise with you for consideration as you prepare the final report.

It seems to me the title might be changed somewhat since it has a tendency to create a "mind set" in the reader. I don't believe this is the intention and certainly the way the report is written would not imply that was your prearranged conclusion.

[GAO COMMENT: See response on p. 38 to similar comment by USDA.]

On page four of the report there is no reflection of the type of Extension Advisory Leadership system that we have in North Carolina or even an acknowledgement that we have one. As a matter of fact, we believe we have one of the most effective ones in the entire United States. Each of our local County Extension Offices has a lay advisory group with the official appointment coming from my office upon the recommendation of our local staff. These individuals serve in a programmatic advisory capacity to our staff. We have by actual head-count from names and addresses over 12,000 individuals serving on these local advisory groups. In addition, we have a State Extension Advisory Council consisting of ten public citizens who perform the same function for us at the state level.

GAO note: Page numbers in the University's comments have been changed to reflect those in the final report.

APPENDIX VI

Mr. Henry S. Eschwege June 25, 1981

This is a formally recognized group and we are allowed to use state appropriated funds to cover their per diem cost. The membership is appointed by my office but they elect their own officers.

[GAO COMMENT: Reference to North Carolina Advisory Groups added, see p. 4.]

On page five of the report I believe there needs to be acknowledgement that while the Expended Foods and Nutrition Education Program does work primarily on a one to one basis, there is also some group educational work carried out by the Nutrition Aides. This is an avenue we are attempting to increase, but recognize that because of the educational level of the clientele the majority of the contacts will have to continue to be on a one to one basis.

[GAO COMMENT: Added "primarily" to sentence.]

On page six acknowledgement should be made of the fact that there are also non-tax funds available at the state level to support Extension programs.

[GAO COMMENT: Reference to availability of non-tax funds to States added on p. 6.]

On page twelve the report references the expansion of home lawn and garden care as an example of areas in which Extension has expanded. This is certainly true. At the same time I believe there is a need to point out the fact that this expansion has occurred primarily as the result of demands from clientele rather than from promotion of expansion by the organization itself. The fact that there is no other institution or agency available to provide this type of leadership other than Extension I feel needs to be acknowledged in the report.

[GAO COMMENT: Paragraph revised to reflect that this service has expanded as a result of public demand.]

Other than these relatively minor points, I have no serious concerns with the draft copy. I commend your staff for its objectivity and we were pleased to be able to cooperate with you in this study.

Sincerely yours,

T. C. Blalock
Associate Dean and Director

cc: Dr. Mary Nell Greenwood

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA STATE

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

[illegible] 1987

Mr. Henry Eschwege, Director
U. S. General Accounting Office
Community and Economic Development Division
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

We at Virginia Tech appreciate the opportunity to review the draft of a proposed report to the Congress entitled "The Cooperative Extension Service Needs Better Mission Definition and Federal Guidance." We found the report to be an accurate statement of the Cooperative Extension Service both in Virginia and nationwide and commend the audit team for their thorough review.

In general, I agree with the three major recommendations of the report. In my estimation it would be helpful to review and clarify the role and mission of Extension at the national level. Of major importance would be the involvement of state representatives to ensure that local and state roles are considered during the process. In terms of the role of the federal extension service, I would reinforce and reemphasize my comments to the audit team that the federal role should be one of leadership. And lastly, I would suggest one caution related to standardizing program accountability and evaluation. To be effective any standard form of evaluation prescribed by USDA will have to recognize the inherent differences of the states and localities.

[GAO COMMENT: See our evaluations on pp. 22, 27, and 34.]

In addition to these general comments, I have the following comments related to specific sections of the report.

1. The title of the report seems to be the major recommendation of the report rather than a statement of the purpose of the study. If the title is not a style preferred by GAO, we suggest changing the title to: The Role, Mission, and Impact of the Cooperative Extension Service.

[GAO COMMENT: See response on p. 38 to similar comment by USDA.]

[illegible] Equal opportunity programs and employment are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or any other non-merit factor. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

An [illegible] Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating

GAO notes: Page numbers in Virginia Tech's comments have been changed to reflect those in the final report.

2. The Digest section may be strengthened if the recommendations of the study are identified in an initial paragraph and followed with a discussion of the findings that led to the recommendations.

[GAO COMMENT: No change considered necessary.]

3. We feel the background information in Chapter 1 is a concise and accurate description of Cooperative Extension.

4. In Chapter 2 we recommend changing the title to: The Mission of the Cooperative Extension Service. The first paragraph in Chapter 2 (page 1) could begin by summarizing briefly the findings related to mission and end with the recommendation that "The role and mission of the Cooperative Extension Service needs to be reviewed and clarified." The remainder of the chapter provides a more detailed discussion of the findings.

[GAO COMMENT: See response on p. 38 to similar comment by USDA.]

5. We have strong concerns regarding misconceptions related to home economics programs that may arise from the report. On page 16 of Chapter 2 the statement is made that the home economics field has changed from "traditional activities" to "sophisticated" subjects. As changes have occurred in society, the field of home economics has changed to meet the technological, social, economic, and environmental needs of the people. Therefore, "sophisticated" is not an appropriate term to describe current activities in home economics. For example, home management as a content area has been a part of the total home economics field since the early 1900's.

[GAO COMMENT: Paragraph revised. See p. 16.]

6. Also related to the home economics concern, we questioned on page 11 of Chapter 2 the statement that "land-grant institutions are hostile to home economics because it is consumer, rather than production, oriented." We in Virginia have not had that experience and from our knowledge of programs in other states we do not think this is an accurate portrayal of the national situation. The attitude may be isolated and, in our estimation, is not typical. The family has moved from a producing unit to a consuming unit, therefore one would expect Extension programs to shift accordingly. Also, it is somewhat misleading to mention only the foods area in respect to the concern because foods is only one of several content areas in home economics.

[GAO COMMENT: Paragraph revised. See p. 16.]

7. Although the statements from the JLARC program review in Virginia (page 19) are accurate, the following additional comments may be helpful to put the statements in perspective. First, the greatest concern about the proper mission of Virginia Extension was expressed by members of the legislative and executive branches of state government, not the public at large. Secondly, although the scope of Extension programs in Virginia broadened beyond agriculture and home economics, the JLARC report made it clear that the "traditional" areas had not been neglected.

[GAO COMMENT: We attribute statements on p. 19 to JLARC.]

8. To be consistent with an earlier recommendation, we would change the titles of Chapters 3 and 4 to "The Federal Extension Service's Role" and "Program Accountability and Evaluation," respectfully.

[GAO COMMENT: See response on p. 38 to similar comment by USDA.]

9. Within Chapter 3 it would be helpful if the individuals quoted were named. For example, several statements (page 25) are attributed to the former Administrator of Extension, but that individual is not named.

[GAO COMMENT: We normally refer to agency officials by title. However, dates of service (July 1977 to Dec. 1979) of the former Administrator are cited on p. 14.]

10. The reference to the Virginia evaluation unit in Chapter 4 (page 31) contains two inaccuracies. One, an associate dean, not assistant dean, gives leadership to the unit. Two, the unit has begun training of county agents and district staffs, not program managers.

[GAO COMMENT: Corrections made.]

11. The first paragraph starting on page 33 would be easier to follow if all references to Level 1 were placed together.

[GAO COMMENT: No change considered necessary.]

APPENDIX VII

As documented in the GAO report, Extension is a complex system because the principle of extending the resources of the state's land-grant institutions has been applied differently in the various states and regions of the country. Therefore, even though six states representing different regions were reviewed, the conclusions may not be applicable to all states. I feel it is my responsibility as a state director of Extension to again reiterate a caution related to drawing general conclusions from specific instances. An example is the conclusion that land-grant institutions are "hostile" toward home economic programs.

[GAO COMMENT: Deleted "hostile" on p. 16.]

I hope that my comments will be of value as you prepare the final report. If clarification or amplification is needed, call. Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the report.

Sincerely,

W. R. Van Dresser, Dean

mh

cc: Dr. Mary Nell Greenwood

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