

# Farmers Must Study Consumers

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whims of consumers to dictate what products and/or services they desire. The consumer may be a housewife, a retailer, a wholesaler or an American farmer.

A research and development orientation approach has been outdated. It has been defined as being basically production oriented. Some may define it as being pure research. Product development begins with research and development with little or no guidance by consumers.

This approach serves its purpose in that new products are created, but how successful will they be once they are manufactured and enter the marketing channel? Hopefully, they will be successful, but based on past occurrences, only a minutely small percentage will ever survive a test market.

As the farm is identified with the market orientation concept, the next step is to understand consumer behaviour, determine what products consumers purchase, what motivates consumers to buy these products and how consumers will use the products they buy.

If agriculture will use this approach, successful product lines can be developed and this new line of products will help minimize the possibility of failure once a product is introduced into the market.

A quote from an unknown author exemplified this approach: "It's the taste of the fish and not the fisherman that determines the bait."

We can modify this statement to read as follows: "It is the taste of the consumer, not the manufacturer, that determines what products are offered." The ultimate success of any product depends upon consumer acceptance.

For the 70's dynamic changes in food markets will necessitate a market-oriented approach. Let's briefly review what changes might occur in the 70's.

Development of: Mini-Housewife — increased income, more housewives working than the 28,000,000 now; dudgey of housework alleviated by technology; convenience foods including boil-in-bag main dishes, prepared menus (airlines prepare 9,000

meal/day), and processed meat items.

More leisure time — 30 hours week and home away from home (for the needy rich).

Increased mobility — more away-from-home food consumption.

Automated supermarkets — dial at-home service for groceries and automated check out service.

Farmers — larger and more specialized operations, more knowledgeable managers; farm-

stead will resemble a small factory, small farmers will become welfare problems.

Putting a man on the moon will not solve the problems of crowded cities, and air and water pollution, resolve international problems, or slow the population explosion. Then, why the great interest and support?

Simple, it captures the imagination of the people. The day our nation placed a man on the moon every American sang the praises of this great scientific

achievement. Every eye was glued to the TV set, every street corner conversation was devoted to it, and nothing could take its place in the newspaper headlines.

I am not trying to degrade our achievements in space. I am attempting to direct attention to the needs in the dairy industry of tools for transition of a new agriculture era — an urban consumer controlled era. The dairy industry needs something to capture the minds of people.

It appears that in every effort to increase the net income of farmers the "cheap food" complex has become a serious problem. The American consumers are not seriously concerned about the prices of non-food items.

It is important that we recognize the receding position today of farmers with respect to our total population. Today, we are close to five per cent of the total United States population.

I am inclined to think that the (Continued on Page 21)

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