

Vo-Ag Teachers Convention Reveals

Several thousand enthusiastic vocational agricultural teachers from all over the nation converged in Chicago for the annual National Vocational Agricultural Teachers' Association (NVATA) convention. And if the convention's bustling climate was any indication as to what lies ahead for American agriculture, farming's got a fabulous future in store.

Mention farming to some persons and immediately they conjure up the old stereotyped image of the straw-hatted man bedecked in denim bibbed overalls and a billowing corncob pipe. To be sure, there are still plenty of bibbed overalls in use on this country's some four-million farms, but that hackneyed image is hardly accurate. Today's farmers are modern businessmen backed up by tremendous investments in sophisticated machinery, throngs of scientific agricultural research and latest techniques. Vo-ag teachers - most of whom possess many years of "on-the-farm-- experience — best typify the professionalism that is farming today.

There has been, however a trend following World War II for farm-reared youngsters to cast aside farming when career-decision time came around. The decade of the sixties, for example, saw the United States farm population plummet from 8.7 percent of total to 4.8 percent. Although a farm population rise has not yet been indicated, latest statistics released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggest that a leveling off point has been attained.

Credit for this halt in the attrition rate is due in good measure to the innovative and creative educational programs developed by the vocational agriculture teaching profession. The NVATA cites encouraging young people to seek agricultural careers as its main purpose and its success is evidenced by the performance of many of its members

Career Orientation Awards

At the convention, the NVATA honored six of its members for the imagination they have used and results achieved in the creation and implementation of vocational agriculture programs. The six educators received the NVATA Career Orientation Award, top honor in a national competition sponsored by Sperry New Holland, the farm equipment division of Sperry Rand Corporation.

Sperry New Holland initiated the Career Orientation Award program in 1966 when it became evident that the farm youth exodus had reached epidemic proportions. The program has proven successful by challenging vocational agriculture teachers to better existing educational techniques and to develop methods yet untried.

Wide Span

Roy E. Reno, award winner from Riverton, Wyoming, created what he terms a "vertical involvement program in career education." Starting with kindergarten students, Reno's three-phase program initially introduces agriculture and agricultural techniques to these children through to the sixth grade. For grades seven to nine,

an exploratory program is offered. From grade 10 to graduation, students are involved in a program leading them to a specific occupation.

Reno appraises his program stating "The greatest utilization of time and effort is accomplished when a program encompasses and relates to a group of students with a wide grade and educational span"

In Eaton, Colorado, a need was felt for a program designed to meet the requirements of agricultural students not planning to return to the farm. Bobby H. Viertel implemented an Agricultural Cooperative Education (ACE) program that was complimented by an organized career orientation program conducted in grades kindergarten through 12 by various methods.

Believing that career orientation should be concentrated in the lower grades, Viertel's program includes pre-career activities planned to provide early students with observation experience, mid grades with exploratory challenges, and the upper grades with an opportunity to make decisions through on-the-job training. Goals are attained through participation in school career days, FFA sponsored field trips, vo-ag class field trips to agricultural colleges and placement with cooperating agri-business firms.

Comprehensive Program

Reaching nearly one-half of the Hamburg (Iowa) High School students, Allen G. Blezek prepared a comprehensive agricultural career orientation program. Blezek developed his program as a result of a local survey that revealed less than 20 percent of his school's vo-ag students were returning to agriculture following graduation.

In implementing his career program, Blezek enlisted the cooperation of school authorities, students, parents and the local community. Primarily classroom oriented, the program includes outside speakers, field trips and FFA participation.

Blezek, who has since left Hamburg High School to pursue his doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, cites the success of the program by writing that more than 80 percent of its graduates have elected to further their agricultural education or have

Farmers Warned on Feeding Newspapers to Dairy Cows

A year ago many writers were having a field day with stories that old newspapers were being recycled as feed for farm animals. There was lots on interest and some humor in dairy cows digesting last week's funny papers.

But it's not funny anymore, says James Stere, a researcher at Sperry New Holland, manufacturer of farm machinery including hay balers and other hay equipment.

"Research at Cornell University indicates the presence

of PCBs and heavy metals, including boron, lead, barium and antimony in newspapers, magazines and other waste papers," Stere said.

As a result of this finding, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued a warning that caution should be used in feeding waste paper to animals. And, according to the researchers, "funny" papers are more serious as a culprit because of the quantity of heavy metals carried on the colored inks of the comics.

Stere, an advocate of proper feeding for dairy and beef animals, feels that the revelations about newsprint substitutes for hay point up once again his contention that farmers who are short cutting their animals' hay intake are short-changing themselves.

"A lot of research has been conducted to find out just what the unknown growth factor (UGF) is that alfalfa supplies. We still don't know, but none of the more highly touted roughage substitutes that we've been hearing about in the past few years have that UGF," Stere added.

He pointed out that dairy cows need long fiber hay to act as a stimulant for the rumen which is part of the cow's milk-producing mechanism. Lack of this stimulation has resulted in many animal problems according to reports by veterinarians.

Stere says that articles by respected veterinarians in many farm publications have indicated an increased incidence of ketosis, displaced abomasums and breeding problems in dairy cows. Proper feeding of adequate amounts of hay have helped head off these problems.

taken agriculturally related employment.

Designing a program for students desiring to work in agri-business occupations but lacking necessary knowledge and skill to make a well-considered selection, Gary E. Moore of Veverly, Ohio, aimed his methods at senior vocational agriculture students.

Under Moore's program, students are given names of cooperating agri-business firms of which they are asked to select five offering experiences similar to their career choices. The business aspects of the individual firms are discussed in class after which each student is placed with one firm for two weeks of observation and work experience. Each student rotates among the five firms and then prepares a report citing job competencies required for employment. In addition, each employer completes a student evaluation, Moore states that his program acquaints each student with first-hand knowledge and provides "hands on" experiences which help in determining the students' vocational career.

Relevancy

Garland Woody, Hot Springs, North Carolina, devised a program which would also familiarize vo-ag students with specific agricultural occupations. His program, which emphasizes relevancy, pays special attention to the increasing need for skilled workers in agri-business, the wide variety of new careers and the expanding opportunities available for post-high school training in agricultural careers. Media used to accomplish the

goals of his program include the use of community resources via field trips, guest speakers in occupations selected by students, plus traditional instructional materials.

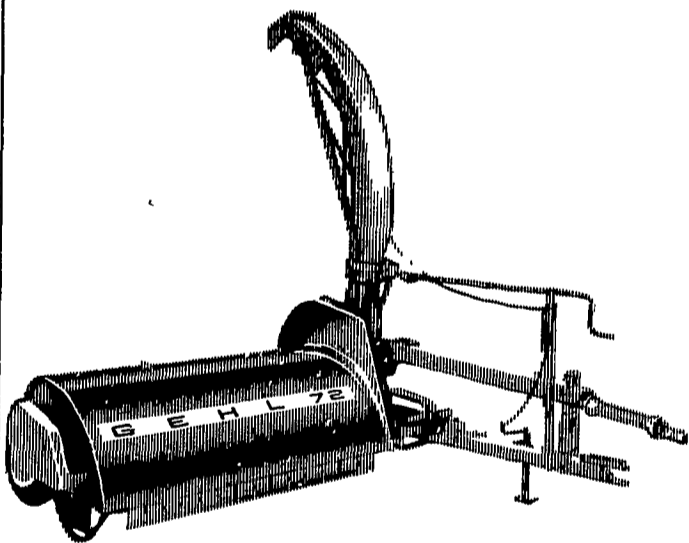
"A high percentage of these students who identify themselves as 'agricultural students,'" comments Woody on the success of the program, "have continued their education in agri-business or have taken jobs in a phase of the agricultural industry."

Thomas D. Burgess teaches 163 students of whom 145 are in eighth grade and only 20 per cent have agricultural backgrounds. Burgess, of Danville, Virginia, developed his career orientation program after a local survey indicated a critical need for workers trained in agri-business occupations.

The total program consists of four distinct phases taught during one seven-week period. Phase one is devoted to the development of agricultural occupations in general. Agricultural career opportunities from ag specialties to professional occupations are covered in the next phase. Phase three includes a counseling and guidance program to develop a course of study for training in post-secondary institutions. The final weeks - phase four - provide an opportunity for the student to do research and further study on a chosen occupation. The program is supplemented with speakers, field trips, visits to post-secondary institutions and a local public relations program.

Burgess summarizes the program by indicating "Over 60 percent of the students enrolled in the school's vo-ag program are planning to re-enroll. Fifty percent are making definite plans for a career in some phase of agriculture."

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