

Ag economists told to work on edge

ITHACA, N.Y. — Lucinda A. Noble, director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, has challenged agricultural economists involved in extension to work "on the edge" so that they can have the greatest impact as researchers and educators.

"I hope you have the spirit and willingness to work on the edge...for it is at the edges of our professions that new ideas are born," Noble told ag economists taking part in the recent 75th anniversary meeting of the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) at Cornell University.

Noble said that this is a time like no other to take advantage of opportunities to carry out research for the public good, to educate students, and to disseminate research-based knowledge to agricultural and consumer publics.

"Social changes, advancing technology, and the role of agriculture in the national and world economy offer opportunities that have not occurred before in their present magnitude," she said.

More than 1,750 AAEA members met in Ithaca Aug. 5-8 to take part in nearly 100 conference sessions

dealing with a wide range of issues. The meeting was hosted by faculty in the department of agricultural economics in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell. The academic, government, and business economics in AAEA have common interests in the economics of agriculture, natural resources, and rural development.

Noble told the AAEA delegates that Cooperative Extension needs to increase the effectiveness of its delivery system in these times of shrinking resources and outside funding.

"Extension professionals at all levels in the system need to be

more knowledgeable and skillful in using the most effective program delivery strategies, including electronic technology," she said.

To help achieve these goals, Noble suggested that Cooperative Extension increase its collaboration with the private sector, and expand its network of volunteers.

Noble, who has been director of Cornell Cooperative Extension since 1978, served on the 22-member USDA panel that looked into the future of the federal system. The committee's report — "Extension in the 80s" — made recommendations to guide the future mission, scope, priorities,

and policies of the county-state-federal cooperative venture.

Noble added that Cooperative Extension needs both generalists and specialists on its staff to insure that programs developed in the counties that are based on identified needs and carefully selected priorities will continue to be the cornerstone of Extension programs.

"Extension's strength continues to be the involvement of people where they live and work. It is a partnership enterprise in the truest sense of the word," she explained.

In offering her challenge to the agricultural economists, Noble concluded: "It is the people's system and we are the guardians as faculty and program administrators."

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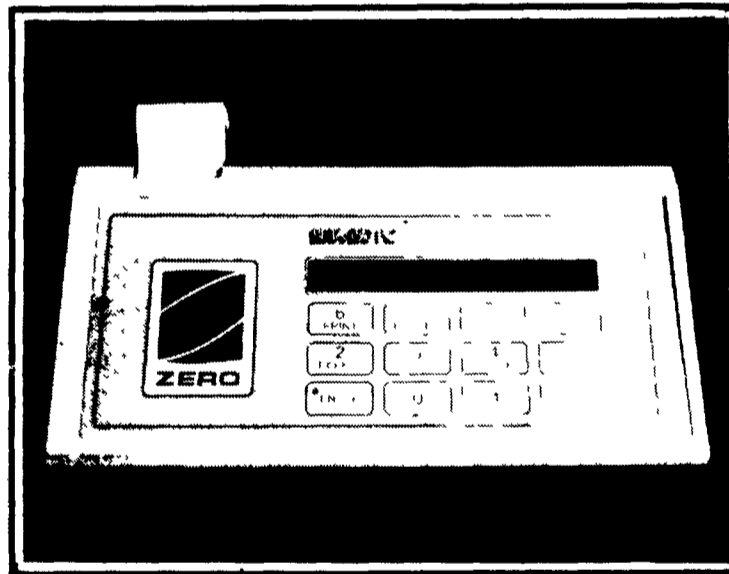
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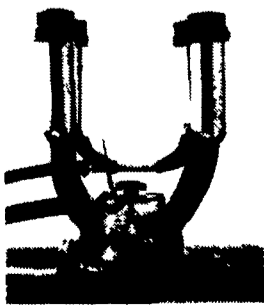
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