

Tie between researcher and farmer questioned

UNIVERSITY PARK — The future effectiveness and scope of the American agricultural technology delivery system hinges on how well publicly-funded research reaches the public, according to a Penn State study.

"The American system of publicly-funded agricultural research and cooperative extension has contributed significantly to long-term increases in agricultural productivity and has yielded high social rates of return," the national three-year study states.

However, the scientific vitality of the system has, in the last fifteen years, been questioned, says Dr. Irwin Feller, professor of economics and director of Penn State's Institute for Policy Research and Evaluation.

As the agricultural research system has moved to strengthen its basic research orientation, the linkages that connect the research lab and the farm are being strained, says Feller.

He and a team of Penn State researchers learned that the linkages connecting the technology delivery system are being weakened because the agricultural research system is trying to achieve expertise in "two dissimilar directions—basic research and technology transfer."

"Similarly, the land-grant system is trying to maintain articulation between experiment station and cooperative extension programs as each organization seeks to respond to multiple and at times divergent pressures," the study states.

The future of public sector research and extension organizations, Feller maintains, is

going to suffer unless strong links are maintained between the two components.

The study also describes changes under way in several land-grant universities and within USDA—Science and Education that are designed to foster closer linkages between research and extension programs.

Feller directed the national three-year study, awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Science and Education Administration to Penn State. It was "designed to answer congressional questions on the organization of agricultural research and technology transfer by the USDA, land-grant universities, state experiment stations and cooperative extension services," he says.

The study was also designed to provide a foundation for guiding future food and agricultural technology policies, including intergovernmental policies.

"We looked at how the historic partnerships of the USDA and the land-grant universities in

agricultural research and cooperative extension are responding to new developments in science," he said.

The study also addressed how these organizations relate to private industry as it increases its activity in agricultural research and technology transfer. It also focused on the relationship of these groups to other research organizations.

Feller, along with Dr. J. Patrick Madden, professor of agricultural economics; Dr. Dan Moore, associate professor of rural sociology extension; Dr. Laura Sims, associate professor of nutrition in public health; and D. Lynne Kaltreider, research assistant for the institute, comprised the interdisciplinary team.

The institute's research team interviewed federal officials, representatives of colleges of agriculture, state agricultural research experiment stations and cooperative extension service personnel at 1862 and 1890 land-grant universities in nine states. They also interviewed represen-

tatives of related public and private organizations in the course of the study.

The study cites human nutrition as one area where organizational

patterns hamper the linkages. Human nutrition research directions may be weakening the ties between the research priorities and those involved in developing programs based on new research findings.

Grubb hearings

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expected to be confirmed. He added that he did not think the nomination was a personal attack, but rather reflected PFA's commitment to its own guidelines for a secretary of agriculture.

He has looked on the confirmation process, he said, "as someone else's job. My job is to run the department, and that's what I've been doing," he said.

Most observers expected the acting secretary to be confirmed, barring introduction of any damaging testimony or revelations at Monday's hearings.

"While PFA is highly respected, most Senators seem to support a governor's right to pick his own cabinet," a Senate source said.

Richard Newpher, secretary-treasurer of PFA, said his organization's opposition was based on criteria that have been a part of the PFA's bylaws for more than a decade. The three points of opposition, he noted, paraphrase those provisions.

He noted that PFA had suggested several other possible nominees, including several within the department as well as a few experienced legislators.

"He must be a very good person," Newpher said of Grubb, "especially considering the responsible position he held at Penn State."

However, he noted, considering the size and complexity of the

department and the issues facing agriculture today, "It's very difficult to walk in there from the outside and have everybody pulling together."

Newpher added that reports of recent dissension and staff unrest within the department are confirmation of PFA's misgivings about Grubb. He said he thought it would take a year for an "outsider" like Grubb to become familiar with the ways of Harrisburg.

"We need a strong Department of Agriculture," he said, "and I'm not sure a newcomer can keep things going without missing a step."

Grubb, a former vice president and professor at Penn State University, has been the acting secretary since June 10. He replaced Penrose Hollowell, who resigned this spring after serving in Thornburgh's cabinet for six years.

The Senate has 25 legislative days to act on the nomination, or it will be considered approved. Because of the summer recess, that time period will not expire until Oct. 8, committee sources said.

Individuals or groups who would like to offer testimony relevant to the nomination are asked to notify the Senate Ag Committee by 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, and deliver 20 copies of written testimony by 4 p.m. Friday.

Dauphin farmer appeals

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only to determine classifications of particular lands as to their soils, but also must adopt a methodology which considers evidence demonstrating the productivity of the land devoted to a particular use.

"This methodology was used in establishing the initial use values in 1976 when the program was instituted in Dauphin County. It was clearly not used in the 1985 reassessment."

Cassel noted in his appeal that

use values have not risen in agriculture since 1976, and, in fact, net farm income has dropped by 57 percent, according to the Pennsylvania Dairy Farm Business Analysis Yearly Financial Summaries.

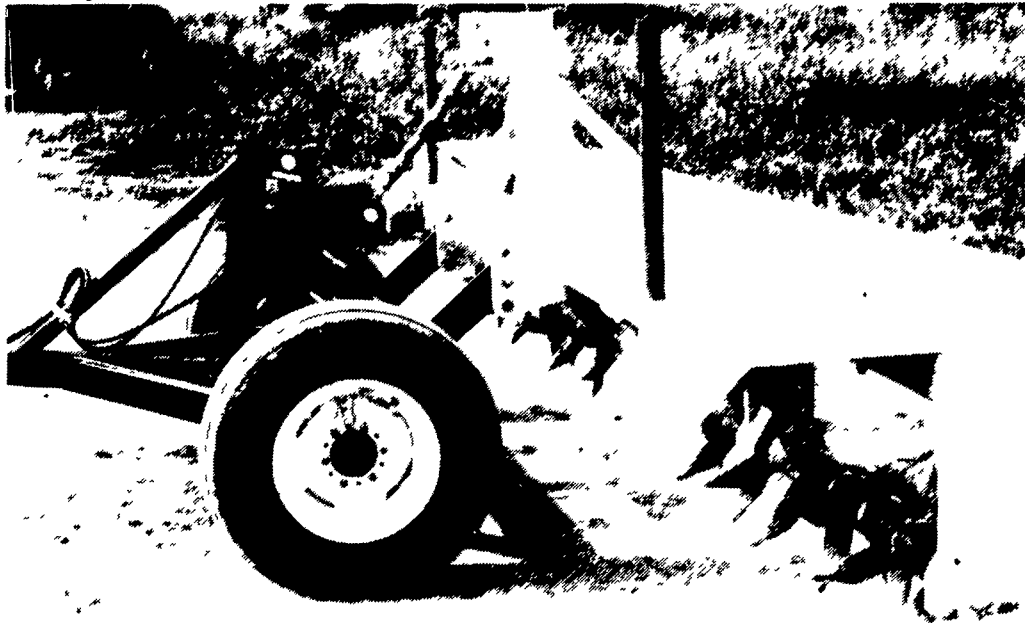
He also provided information on expenses for farm operations, with additional data on farm prices.

The Dauphin County Board of Assessment Appeals is expected to act on Cassel's appeal by the end of October.

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