

National Study Supports Changes For Education

"Most Americans know very little about agriculture, its social and economic significance in the United States, and particularly, its links to human health and environmental quality," according to the recently published study of agricultural education in secondary schools by the National Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences.

To achieve a "vision of what agricultural education is and should become at the secondary level if a competitive agricultural industry is to survive in this country," the national study of agricultural education outlined a set of recommendations for vocational agriculture and the FFA that builds "on the programs and approaches of the past but goes beyond them in scope and content." The challenge given to the FFA and vocational agriculture is being met with innovative and aggressive initiatives in agriscience, marketing, and international agriculture.

The stakes are considerable. According to government figures cited by the study, "U.S. industries that serve agriculture by producing, processing, marketing, and preparing food and fiber products for consumers account for about \$700 billion in economic activity each year, which is about 16.5 percent of the gross national product." Some 20 percent of the nation's workforce is engaged in occupations directly related to agriculture.

After documenting "disturbing trends," the study committee advocated a national goal of achieving "agricultural literacy," a task which would extend the teaching of agricultural concepts to all levels of public education and broaden the scope of vocational agriculture and FFA programs.

"This study represents a landmark in the evolution of agricultural education in the United States," said Dr. Larry D. Case, national FFA advisor, "because it makes three important statements: agriculture is important to our nation; education in and about agriculture is vital for all Americans; and vocational agriculture and the FFA have made — and are continuing to make — major contributions to both the industry and the cause of agricultural literacy."

The current model of vocational agriculture, developed over the past 60 years, combines the three elements of classroom and laboratory instruction, a supervised occupational experience program for each student, and participation in the FFA, the organization for students of vocational agriculture. Its success has implications for all of education. "Vocational agriculture characteristically includes many of the activities and approaches currently recommended for the improvement of secondary education in general: training for leadership and entrepreneurship, longer periods of time devoted daily to education to learning, high quality teachers, and greater cooperation with the private sector," said Stuart Rosenfeld, Deputy Director of the Southern Growth Policies Board and a member of the Academy study panel.

The study, commenced almost four years ago, made specific recommendations that vocational agriculture programs and the FFA should continue to broaden their activities and programs of instruc-

tion and go well beyond providing education in production agriculture alone. A number of innovative programs, including Walter Biddle Saul High School in Philadelphia and The Chicago High School for the Agricultural Sciences, were cited as "successful, high-quality, agriculture education programs that have combined strengths of the traditional vocational program model with new approaches and broadened curricula." The two programs have the first and third largest FFA chapters in the nation, respectively.

"One of the most exciting aspects of the study is that it draws public attention to the successes of the vocational agriculture model and highlights the changes already taking place in FFA and many of the instructional programs," said Case, the senior program specialist for Agriculture, Agribusiness and Natural Resources, USDE. "The National FFA Organization is already well on its way along the course recommended by the study panel."

According to Case, the National FFA Organization has been conducting a comprehensive review of current contest and award pro-

grams, and is developing new ones to address and support education in agriscience, marketing, computers and agricultural technology. "Over the last three to five years we have looked at our twenty-nine proficiency awards and twelve national contest programs and restructured them to emphasize elements of business management and competencies in the agricultural sciences," said Coleman Harris, national FFA executive secretary. "The FFA Computers In Agriculture award and seminar programs are encouraging our students to study and apply computer technology in agriculture," Harris explained. "In 1987, FFA instituted a national award program which recognizes teachers for excellence in their instruction of agriscience. It is the first program FFA has developed to recognize teachers. This year, the organization is initiating the first recognition program for students in agriscience. Plans have just been finalized for several agricultural commodities and marketing competitions this coming year."

The study panel hailed the development by the FFA of the Ag Ed Network, a computer based

information and educational resource which provides to the nation's vocational agriculture departments real-world information and data for instruction in agricultural marketing and business management. The four-year-old network was created through an agreement between AgriData Resources, Inc., the National FFA Organization, and the National FFA Foundation.

In addition to its contest and award programs, the FFA has identified major initiatives for education in international agriculture. The organization currently operates a number of exchange programs which enable American vocational agriculture students to work or study agriculture abroad and which bring foreign agriculture students to the United States in association with FFA chapters. FFA proficiency award winners receive an international experience tour of agricultural production, processing and marketing facilities. In addition, the six national FFA officers spend two weeks early in their term on an agricultural experience tour of the Orient.

Specific recommendations

were made by the panel for the FFA to consider modifying its image, name, symbols and rituals to more accurately reflect the contemporary curriculum and to embrace a wider range of students. The 404,900-member organization is already conducting an inward look. "The FFA is quite sensitive to the issues of image and public perception," said Kelli Evans, 21-year-old national FFA president from Hayes Center, Nebr. "That is why the student leadership of our state associations has encouraged debate of these issues in our conferences and at our national convention." Evans indicated that some action may be forthcoming soon. "Several months ago, our Board of Directors received the report of a committee which examined our constitution and bylaws for the past two years," she said. "As a result, the delegates to the national FFA convention this November will consider a number of proposed amendments that affect our image and the terminology associated with the educational program. We are ready for change and we are proceeding appropriately."

Guard Against Corn Harvesting Accidents

BY ROBERT E. LEIBY,
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A number of Pennsylvania farmers lose fingers, hands, arms and even feet in corn harvesting equipment each year. Some lose their lives. Nearly all of the accidents are preventable, but risk-taking, carelessness, or lack of knowledge allow them to happen. Such tragedies can be prevented, however, especially if farm workers understand the hazards these machines present and practice the safety precautions needed to avoid them.

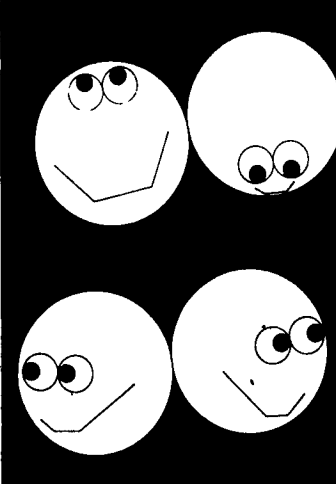
Cornpickers are usually involved in most severe corn harvesting accidents, mainly because of their easily clogging gathering mechanisms. Characteristically, cornpicking accidents occur when the snapping rolls become plugged and the operator tries to remove debris or cornstalks while the machine is still running.

As he tugs at a plugged stalk or weed, the snapping rolls suddenly free up and begin to roll, yanking stalks or weeds forward at nearly ten feet per second. Before the operator can release his grip, his hand and arm have traveled about three and a half feet and into the machine. To make matters worse, once he is entangled in the machine it is often a very difficult and time consuming task to get him out. Fortunately, avoiding accidents like this is easy. Simply

turn off the power to your cornpicker before servicing it in any way!

The gathering mechanisms on corn combines do not become plugged as easily as those on cornpickers. Nevertheless, corn combine operators also run the risk of losing hands, arms, or feet if they try to unplug the rolls without first turning the machine off. Most combine injuries occur when clothing, fingers, hands, or legs are caught in the many exposed belts

and gears. These accidents usually result in burns and severe cuts although amputations also occur. As with the cornpicker, shut your combine completely off to avoid injury whenever you leave the operator's platform to make adjustments. If some tasks must be carried out with the machine running, wear clothing that is comfortable but close-fitting. Be especially careful to avoid wearing floppy overalls and loose sleeves and cuffs.



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