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PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM
ON
THE FUTURE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS
and the
AAEA IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION



Sponsored by the

Committee on Economic Education
American Agricultural Economics Association

AAEA Organized Symposium Held August 10, 1992

Baltimore, Maryland

December 1992

WATE MEMORIAL BOOK COLLECTION
DEPT. OF AG. AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
1994 BUFORD AVE. - 232 COB
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
ST. PAUL, MN 55108 U.S.A.

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FOREWORD

The AAEA Committee on Economic Education seeks to enhance the understanding of agricultural economics, broadly defined, among the young citizens of America at pre-college levels. In the 1991-1992 academic year, the Committee carried out the charge of AAEA President Bruce Beattie and the AAEA Executive Board with a variety of activities, including an Organized Symposium at the annual AAEA meetings in Baltimore in August of 1992.

Some of the issues addressed at the Symposium included the following:

- What are the appropriate audiences to target with economic education activities, i.e., K through grade 8, grade 9 through grade 12, and/or 4-H and other non-school-based youth activities?
- Should individual agricultural economists have a higher profile in economic education work? Should the AAEA have a higher involvement and profile? What are the associated costs and benefits of higher involvement?

In addition to the Symposium, another major thrust of the AAEA Committee on Economic Education has been the creation of a mini-grant program to encourage additional involvement of professional agricultural economists with economic education of our youth. A sub-committee headed by Professor Marc Johnson and including Robert Usry and Leo Polopolus, submitted a grant proposal, "Delivering Agricultural Economic Education to America's Youth", to several potential funding sources. The purpose of this program is to establish a competitive grant contest to support up to three agricultural economists in the development and delivery of pilot economic education programs to youth under the age of 18. A wide variety of audiences could be targeted, such as either 4-H, Council of Economic Education, FFA, Vocational

Agriculture, Ag in the Classroom, or other youth organizations. Based upon some positive response to this proposal, it is anticipated that this program will be inaugurated in 1993.

Copies of this Proceedings issue are available until all supplies are exhausted from Leo Polopolus, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

AAEA Economic Education Committee, 1991-1992

Leo Polopolus, Chair

Bruce Godfrey

Marc Johnson

Robert Usry

Lonnie Vandever

Kimberly Reda-Wilson

Brady Deaton, AAEA Board Representative

INTRODUCTION

Leo Polopolus, Professor
Food and Resource Economics Department
University of Florida

This 1992 Symposium, " The Future Role of Agricultural Economists and the AAEA in Economic Education", is designed to provide a forum for a thorough discussion and evaluation of the topic. Special attention has been given to such subject areas as the relative efficiency of youth education versus adult extension education, the comparative advantages of agricultural economists in economic education, urban versus traditional agricultural emphasis, and the delivery mechanisms appropriate for youth oriented materials.

The first presentation by Robert Usry is intended to raise some basic questions regarding the relative efficiency in targeting youth audiences versus adult audiences. How do we optimize the delivery of economic education materials. Adult audiences provide better chances for immediate results from economic education. On the other hand, delivery of economic education to youth audiences may require a longer time horizon for payoff, but the payoff may be more significant.

The second presentation by Bruce Godfrey is designed to focus upon the subject matter. What special skills do agricultural economists have in developing the economics education curriculum? In addition to our traditional role in farm business management and marketing, do we have a comparative advantage with natural resource economics, community and rural development, and international trade and development? Also, how can agricultural economists cooperate with other agricultural science disciplines in developing more meaningful curricula that are appealing to students inside, as well as outside, agricultural programs?

The third presentation by Walter Armbruster relies upon the Farm Foundation's prior experience and involvement with economic and policy education for youth. Some of the issues raised in this paper include the following: what is the role of public policy education for America's youth; how does one improve the level of cooperation among the leading agricultural youth organizations (4-H, FFA, Ag in the Classroom, and AIC) with economics education; and how can the exposure of agricultural economics and related subject areas be expanded with the urban youth of America?

Finally, this forum seeks to explore/debate the incentives needed by professional agricultural economists to modify their extension, research, and/or teaching programs to include economics education for youth. Is the reward structure of tenure and promotion fully or equitably applied in academia for individuals committed to economics education programs? Would a mini-grant program of \$5,000 or more provide sufficient incentives to lure agricultural economists into economics education programs for youth?

Hopefully, the content of this Symposium will assist the profession and the Association in charting future directions regarding economic education programs for America's youth.