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N.Y.S. College of Agriculture. Director of Research Papers, 1956-63.

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P. Milic
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Add. 21/12/828

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             Charles E. Palm - Director; 1 cu. ft.
A Statement of Policy of the Administration of Agricultural Research
in New York State under Cornell University

Since New York State has two Experiment Stations - the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station located at Geneva and the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station at Ithaca - it has been desirable, from the standpoint of efficient administration and to avoid useless duplication, to develop a policy with respect to the research conducted by the two Stations. This policy has evolved over a period of years. Some progress was made even before Cornell University was charged with the administration of both Stations in 1923 by legislative action. The following statement sets forth the policy as presently administered and also provides a brief historical basis for the existing procedures.

Administrators of agricultural research in New York must naturally be concerned about the most efficient, economical and wise use of financial resources that, as a rule, are far from adequate to meet all the demands for additional research from the many groups of farmers, processors and consumers who are vitally interested in the agriculture of the state. Unnecessary duplication of effort would be wasteful when so much remains to be done on so many different problems involved in the production, handling, processing, and utilization of farm products.

During the course of many years, definite administrative steps have been taken to eliminate uneconomic duplication of research at
Geneva and Ithaca. For example, the work in the fields of poultry husbandry, animal husbandry, agronomy (farm crops), milk production and dairy industry which were formerly carried on at Geneva as well as at Ithaca are now confined to Ithaca where the facilities are required for teaching as well as for research. On the other hand, the Experiment Station at Geneva has been developed and enlarged as a horticultural research institution, with "horticulture" interpreted in its widest sense. This expanded program at Geneva has as its objective the further development of familiar lines of activity at the Station, such as fruit breeding of apples, peaches, pears, plums, cherries, grapes, strawberries, and bush fruits, canning crop production, insect pest and disease control of fruits, and of vegetables used for processing, seed investigations, studies on fruit tree stocks, storage of nursery stock, and other nursery problems. The program also envisions a very considerable widening of the whole field of food processing involving chemical and bacteriological research into the many factors affecting keeping quality, flavor, color and above all the nutritive value of fruits and vegetables preserved by quick freezing, canning or other methods of processing.

Those at Cornell who are charged with the administration of the Experiment Station at Geneva and Ithaca are definitely committed to this program of expansion of the work along these well-defined lines. The Geneva station is located in the vicinity of an important horticultural region of the state where the soil and climate are generally
favorable for diversified fruit culture, canning crops production, and growing of nursery stock and in which numerous food processing plants are also established. Well equipped research laboratories, greenhouses, experimental field plantings and a reasonably good reference library are maintained as part of the research facilities of the station. The standard of scholarship for appointment on the staff at Geneva is the same as in other units of Cornell.

The work of the Experiment Station at Geneva is carried on as an intimate part of the entire agricultural research program of the State under Cornell University. Because of this relationship the opportunity exists to integrate the work so as to make the best use of the combined facilities at Ithaca and at Geneva. This means that the work of the Colleges of Agriculture, and Home Economics, the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station as well as that of the School of Nutrition, School of Chemical Engineering and other units of Cornell can be carefully coordinated to avoid unnecessary and costly duplication, and still cover the wide range of problems inherent in the diverse agriculture of the State.

Such desirable cooperation is however not left to develop by chance. The professional staff of the station at Geneva are members of the College of Agriculture faculty and they have representation on an Experiment Stations policy committee of the college. The School of Nutrition also has invited certain members of the Geneva staff to join their faculty. This provides a formal means for consideration of problems of interest to the several staffs.
Frequent meetings between members of these subject matter departments that have a counterpart at Ithaca and at Geneva are held, viz., Pomology, Vegetable Crops, Plant Pathology and Entomology, to go over research projects of mutual concern and to arrive at an understanding as to procedures that avoid useless duplication. Conferences among groups of professional workers at both stations interested in a wide field of research are also arranged, and committees that cross departmental and even college lines are actively engaged in "team work" looking toward the solution of pressing problems that involved different fields of work.

Commodity groups, such as the apple growers, cherry growers, peach growers, grape growers, producers of canning crops, nurserymen and food processors, and research committees of many agricultural organizations of the State, such as the N. Y. State Horticultural Society, the N. Y. State Vegetable Growers meet at least once a year with representatives of the staffs of both Geneva and Ithaca Stations to go over research in their special fields. They aim to become familiar with the progress of the investigations under way and give counsel regarding the needs of additional work.

These practical men who are closely in touch with the Experiment Stations have come to appreciate the painstaking and intricate research methods involved in experimental work with variable biological materials and with perishable products. Usually they have many more problems that demand attention than can be solved with the financial means available. If wasteful duplication existed these practical taxpayers would not hesitate to call attention to the possible saving of funds that might be diverted to more useful effort.
Where "duplication" appears to exist— and such appearance is perhaps to be expected in a complex organization— it is usually found, upon closer investigation, to be more apparent than real. So called duplication is frequently an essential part of replication— a technique involved in all sound research with living material— and is by no means wasteful but necessary to establish the real facts. The same line of work must often be carried on under different soil and climate conditions— but in all such cases where different workers are concerned they are in close touch with each other and exchange ideas and information.

Special administrative devices known as the Project Statements and Progress Reports have been developed to aid the research administrators, among other things, in disclosing any tendency toward needless duplication by the individual workers. Experience has shown that such written forms are desirable in an organization involving cooperative effort of highly trained scientists who must exercise initiative and who by the nature of their abilities and training are prone to exercise a high degree of individuality. Varying points of view and different approaches to a problem are characteristic of a research atmosphere, and if scientific work concerning the unknown is to prosper, individual effort must be tolerated within reasonable limits. Team work and cooperative effort however are emphasized, and wasteful duplication cannot be approved.
Special attention is called to the fact that the short title of a research project does not always indicate the full object, but the statement as a whole reveals the specific aims of the investigation and gives an idea of the scope of the work contemplated. Where cooperation is involved this is clearly indicated. The list of active projects carried on by the various subject matter departments and divisions at Ithaca and Geneva is published in the annual reports of the stations together with brief indications of progress in some cases. The formal project statement and progress reports which are kept on file enable the directors to terminate investigations that have attained their object or that are not making satisfactory headway. New lines of work may thus be initiated from time to time within the limits of available appropriations.

The overall policies of the Experiment Stations at Ithaca and at Geneva are controlled by the Trustees of Cornell University. In carrying out these responsibilities a Council for the New York State College of Agriculture and the Agricultural Experiment Stations gives special attention to the problems and policies of these institutions and makes recommendations for official action by the full board. This council is composed of trustee members representing public agricultural interests and of specially chosen farm leaders who are familiar with the needs of agriculture. The New York State Experiment Station at Geneva has a budget distinct from that of the College of Agriculture but the work is administered through the Dean of the College, who also has overall supervision of the work of
teaching, extension and research at Ithaca. The Dean passes, in the first instance on the budget requests for both the College of Agriculture and the Experiment Stations. This avoids any competition for appropriations from the legislature and with the approval of the trustees provides administrative supervision of such funds as are made available.

The Dean approves recommendations for appointments to the staff at Geneva as well as at Ithaca before transmitting them to the President of the University for trustee action. The financial transactions of the station at Geneva are cleared through the common Cornell-State Colleges and Institutions financial office at Ithaca. Extension and teaching activities are handled by the College of Agriculture with cooperation of members of the staff at Geneva whenever circumstances permit. A jointly sponsored quarterly, known as Farm Research, contains well illustrated popular articles based on the technical research of stations at both Ithaca and Geneva. Extension publications with practical information developed through the activities of the two research institutions are published by the College of Agriculture. Technical publications appear largely in professional journals and in special experiment station bulletin series of the Cornell and the Geneva Stations.

The Dean of the College meets usually once a week, or more frequently, with the Director of Resident Instruction, the Director of Extension, the Director of Research and of the
Cornell Experiment Station, the Director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva and the Director of Finance. Current questions of policy, administrative problems and other similar matters are discussed and clarified at those weekly conferences. The several administrators concerned with different phases of agricultural instructions and research are thus kept informed of each other's plans and general problems, and are kept in line with approved policies of the college as a whole. In addition the directors of the two experiment stations have frequent conferences concerning research activities.

The existence of two agricultural research stations in New York, now under unified administration, has an historical basis that has to be kept in mind in a consideration of the development of the policy of agricultural research in the State. The station at Geneva was organized in 1882 to promote agriculture in all its branches by scientific investigation and experimentation. The Cornell Station having similar aims was first organized in 1879 by a group of professors from the College of Agriculture. It was reorganized in 1887 as a result of a Federal Grant provided by the Hatch Act. Through the years there gradually developed a confidence in research as a basis for solution of agricultural problems in a wide field. The stations both enjoyed an enviable reputation for substantial leadership and worthwhile accomplishments.
Each institution had a separate board of control, but both carried on their work in harmony and without unseemly competition for public support. The total amount of money involved, of course, was comparatively small, and the problems under investigation were few and relatively simple compared to the present day. Then too, the field of research was new and the real practical value of such work had yet to be demonstrated.

As soon as the farmers began to realize the advantages of the station work they naturally began to press for more and more activities along those lines. It soon became evident that if many problems confronting agriculture were to receive the benefits of research more money - much more than was available - would be involved. This presented the problem of each station having to ask the legislature for larger appropriations to keep up with the demands for research, and competition for funds was always a possibility under separate boards of control. Some means of cooperation therefore seemed to be desirable in the interests of agriculture as a whole as well as of the stations themselves. An affiliation with the College of Agriculture at Ithaca first proposed by Director Jordan of the Geneva Station in 1915, was formally approved by the Cornell University trustees early in 1920. This provided for an exchange of professors and for common use of the special facilities of the two separate institutions. Another consideration was the utilization by the station at Geneva of the Extension Service personnel of the College of Agriculture to bring the results of research to the farmer. This was expected to
conserve the energies of the small staff at Geneva so they could devote more time to research activities.

This affiliation was a satisfactory arrangement from the points of view of each staff, and it did give an opportunity for more cooperation in the work under way. But it did not go far enough since no arrangements were made for unified administration. The legislature made it abundantly clear through its committee, that it did not favor appropriation for expensive facilities that might be used by separately administered institutions for unnecessary duplication of work. The staff at Geneva and the Board of Control of that station came to the conclusion, that its program of research would prosper more and serve the agricultural interests of the states better if both the Geneva and the Cornell stations were controlled by a single administration. The officials at the College of Agriculture at Ithaca concurred in this conclusion. A law bringing about unified administration was passed in 1923, and since then the research in agriculture at Geneva and at Ithaca has been under control of Cornell University as an agent of the State.

As a result of this move, the program of work at Geneva has been reoriented as previously indicated by the transfer of several lines of research to Ithaca. The adjustments were made gradually over several years to minimize the disruption of long established fields of work at the Experiment Station at Geneva, and with a view of the best interests of the State. The last of these major adjustments was made about five years ago, when the dairy work at Geneva was discontinued.
This was an inevitable solution of a problem of long standing--"a solution" the late Dean Ladd said "which the administrative officers at Cornell University confidently expect will pave the way for future developments at Geneva." He also wrote that "there has been no thought expressed by anyone in Ithaca or in Albany of any further removal of work or personnel from Geneva to Ithaca. Rather all are agreed that the Experiment Station at Geneva is to be developed and enlarged as a horticultural research institution in its widest sense." The program of expansion at Geneva along these lines is now under way and is recognized as an integral part of the agricultural research policy in New York State.

It should be clear that the policy of the Cornell administration has been to eliminate unnecessary duplication, in the interest of economy and with the object of utilizing the natural and geographical advantages of the Geneva as well as the Cornell Station for special lines of research. Those responsible for the immediate direction of research are deeply conscious of their obligation to carefully scrutinize and follow all projects, to make sure that the money available is used most wisely and not for wasteful duplication.