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Extension Work in **Consumer Food Marketing Education**



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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK is a form of education in which the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant colleges and universities, and the county extension services all have a part. It develops a pattern of better living, both in its long-time work with rural people and in its newer programs for urban citizens.

The aim of the Extension Service in marketing is to make available readily understandable information about the marketing of agricultural products, as well as to help in the practical use of this kind of information.

In providing educational material for producers, processors, handlers, and consumers, Extension's purposes are to encourage the use of better marketing practices, to assist in developing adequate and efficient marketing facilities, and to bring about a better understanding of marketing processes and the types and costs of services performed.

It is also Extension's aim to provide consumers with basic facts to help them choose those products that will best meet their needs and desires.

In marketing, as in production, the job of the Extension Service is to conduct educational and demonstrational work that will help people learn by doing and enable them to put into practice improvements in marketing that are economically sound.

M. L. Wilson

Director of Extension Work.

Extension Work in

CONSUMER FOOD MARKETING EDUCATION

By Loa Davis, Division of Agricultural Economics, Extension Service, and Charles E. Eshbach, director of New England Extension Services' Information Program

Cooperative extension work in consumer food-marketing education is designed to serve millions of food shoppers. Those consumers spend a quarter of the family income for food and have to make countless choices and decisions in order to feed their families well.

It is an educational program that provides information for food shoppers to help them purchase the family food most effectively. But it does more than provide information. The program also helps consumers understand marketing. It develops better food-buying practices and more efficient care and use of food in the home.

In doing these things, it benefits not only the people who purchase food. In great measure, it also helps the farmers who produce the Nation's crops, and the handlers who distribute the country's food supply.

Extension workers have always done some teaching in this field. But this newer work represents a development of the Extension Service educational program. It requires the adaptation of extension teaching methods to reach many more people, especially in the urban areas.

Passage by Congress of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946

provided the means for developing this consumer education program in the marketing of agricultural products. Like other phases of extension work, it is being done through the cooperative efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant colleges and universities, and the county extension services.

This educational program is one that the Extension Service cannot carry on alone. The cooperation of all people, agencies, and organizations is necessary to bring together and use all available information for the benefit of the food shopper, the food producer, and the food handler. So the program is being developed with the advice and assistance of many public and private organizations and agencies.

As is characteristic of extension work, the program takes various forms. It is being developed in different parts of the country on a regional basis, on a State basis, and on a city basis. But the general aims are the same—assistance to the Nation's food shoppers, so that they may purchase the family food wisely, with the most possible return in food value and dollar value. Such purchasing benefits the consumer, the producer, and the handler of food.

The Food Shopper's Problem

Purchasing the family food supply is a perplexing task for many of the Nation's millions of consumers.

The food shopper's choices and decisions, when in front of the store counter, involve an important share of the family finances. On the average, food takes about a quarter of the income.

The health and future well-being of all members of the family depend to a great extent on wise selection of the food supply.

The job of the family food shopper is sometimes compared with that of the purchasing agent of industry. But food shoppers cannot base pur-

chases on specifications as exact as industry requires.

The nature of many of the foods on the shopping list makes exactness of specification difficult or impossible. Many food shoppers, also, do not have the necessary current information and knowledge to make food choices most efficiently.

Market conditions, supplies, prices, and quality are all constantly changing; and a wise choice today may be a poor one tomorrow.

As a result, many of the Nation's food shoppers have been asking for educational help. They want both the necessary facts, and an understanding of those facts, in order to choose food wisely and well at the store counter.



In the store the food shopper must often make choices and decisions that affect the family health and family finance.

A Logical Development in Extension Education

Work with urban people is not new to the Cooperative Extension Service. It has been done on a small scale for a number of years. During the war it played an important part in helping consumers solve food problems. But the development of an educational program to meet the needs of millions of urban residents has presented Extension with a big task and a challenge.

Yet, the expansion of extension work in marketing is a logical development in extension education. It represents a broadening of the Extension Service program to reach more people. In doing that, it not only benefits these additional people, but also gives added assistance to the producers and other rural residents with whom Extension has worked for some 35 years.

The Research and Marketing Act of 1946 Provided the Means

Passage by Congress of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 provided a means of speeding this development in extension education. That legislation made it possible for Extension to institute a program of marketing education that would meet the needs expressed by the many millions of people who previously had not been reached by Cooperative Extension Service work.

The Research and Marketing Act declares it—

“To be the policy of Congress to promote through research, study, experimentation, and through cooperation among Federal and State agencies, farm organizations, and private industry, a scientific approach to the problems of marketing, transportation, and distribution of agricultural products similar to the scientific methods which have been used so successfully during the past eighty-four years in connection with the production of agricultural products, so that such products capable of being produced in abundance may be marketed in an orderly manner and efficiently distributed.”

The act also states that—

“It is the intent of Congress to provide for . . . an integrated administration of all laws enacted by Congress to aid the distribution of agricultural products through research, market aids and services, and regulatory activities, to the end that marketing methods and facilities may be improved, that distribution costs may be reduced and the price spread between the producer and consumer may be narrowed, that dietary and nutritional standards may be improved, that new and wider markets for American agricultural products may be developed, both in the United States and in other countries, with a view to making it possible for full production of American farms to be disposed of usefully, economically, profitably, and in an orderly manner.”

Under title II of the act, funds are made available—

“To conduct and cooperate in consumer education for the more effective utilization and greater consumption of agricultural products.”

The legislation also directs that—

“To the maximum extent practicable . . . marketing educational and demonstrational work done hereunder (under Title II) in cooperation with the States shall be done in cooperation with the State agricultural Extension Service . . .”

The Program Requires the Cooperation of Many

The consumer food-marketing education program requires the cooperation of many people and many groups, both in providing necessary information and subject matter, and in operating the program.

Much of the informational material originates with extension specialists, county extension agents, the colleges, and experiment stations. But many of the facts come from other agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture, and from many additional organizations, both public and private. State departments of agriculture, crop-reporting services, commodity groups, food distributors, home economists, marketing specialists, and many others contribute the subject matter of the program.

Extension personnel engaged in food-marketing education work closely with other State specialists, the resident faculty, and the experiment-station workers, as well as with the county extension agents. They also work with people from other agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture, especially those concerned with market reporting, crop estimating, and grading of agricultural products.

They work in close cooperation with State department of agriculture people, farm groups, consumer groups, women's organizations, school groups, the radio and press, labor organizations, health agencies, and all people who are working for or with groups of consumers.

In many areas, representatives of these other agencies, organizations, and groups are on the committees that advise and guide the extension program.

Research Is Essential

The program takes to food shoppers the latest findings in research on nutrition, marketing, quality and variety improvements, marketing margins, and the use and storage of food. It interprets these findings in terms of the family's food problems.

The program offers information and help on such things as basic meal planning, nutritional values of food, guides to quality, ways to get the most in dollar value, and the uses, care, and preparation of food. It includes information on marketing services and what they offer, as well as on market organization, marketing seasons, and supplies and prices of food.

How Extension Does the Job

Many and varied are the ways in which the Cooperative Extension Service carries on this program of consumer food-marketing education. All of the methods Extension has used so effectively in its years of work with farm people have a place in the program. Some newer methods have been added. There has also been considerable adaptation of Extension methods and techniques to fit the job of reaching additional millions of people.

Demonstrations are an important feature of the program in all parts of the country. In Seattle, Wash., extension personnel use a market-basket demonstration to aid food shoppers in making their food selections. This demonstration shows

food selections for two different family income levels, based on current supplies and prices, that provide the complete nutritional needs. In New England, a demonstration is used by extension workers to show the dilemma many consumers face when before the produce counter. It uses an actual produce counter of fruits and vegetables to emphasize the many choices and decisions that food shoppers must make in buying the family food, and the need for more knowledge of the things that make possible choices in which the most in food value and the most in dollar value are obtained. The demonstration also provides information and suggestions for wise purchasing. In Connecticut a demonstration is utilized at meetings of women's groups to teach the use of quality guides in buying fresh fruits and vegetables.



Demonstrations are an effective way of teaching food planning and food buying. Here two 4-H girls are demonstrating meal planning for better health and efficient buying.



Market specialists, producers, food handlers, and consumers participate in radio programs which help acquaint the consumer with food-marketing problems.

The press has a vital part in this extension program, where the need for reaching the vast urban population is so important. Information on good food buys, and feature stories on good buymanship and marketing, are regularly supplied to newspapers in many of the States. In the large metropolitan centers, such as New York City and Boston, leading newspapers make much use of extension food-marketing information in articles prepared by the newspaper writers. City and country papers, dailies and weeklies, use extension news stories, food columns, and special food marketing features for consumers.

Magazines are another effective means used by extension people in this educational program. For example, consumer education specialists in Louisiana write regularly for publications that reach many of the parents and teachers and restaurant managers of the State. In this way they advise many people in the purchase and use of foods that are

seasonally plentiful.

Radio is another widely used means of getting marketing information to consumers; and extension workers are using local, regional, and national radio facilities as part of the educational program. The regional extension marketing information offices at Kansas City and Boston provide guidance in family food buying to listeners in several States. Other States, including Delaware, New Mexico, and Maryland, have regular food broadcast schedules on radio stations in the larger shopping cities.

Television is one of the newer methods being used to acquaint people with the food market situation. It enables extension agents not only to tell, but also to show, homemakers what are good food buys and how to select them for the most food value and dollar value. Weekly television programs in Minneapolis and Boston are examples of the way this new educational tool is being used in the extension program.



Television reaches many people who do not attend meetings. It is a "natural" in demonstrating the selection of foods that offer the most in nutrition and economy.

New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts use market tours to acquaint extension people, teachers, and others with food-marketing processes, and as training courses for those doing consumer food-marketing educational work. In some Massachusetts counties, the home demonstration agents use market tours to train the women who lead local extension groups in food-marketing projects.

Louisville, Ky., provides an example of how extension and retail store people cooperate closely in this work. The extension consumer marketing education specialist in that city has the help of retailers in getting complete information on food supplies and prices. At the same time, the stores of those retailers offer a way to reach consumers and to put in their hands suggestions on the selection, quality, care, and use of seasonal and plentiful foods.

Exhibits are another method which extension uses for food marketing

education at agricultural fairs and meetings of organizations. Alabama extension workers teach, through exhibits, how to buy groceries with proper consideration for both food value and the limitations of the family budget. In New York, the selection, care, nutritive value, and use of fresh vegetables are emphasized in a combined exhibit and demonstration.

Several kinds of short courses are being used by extension personnel in consumer food-marketing education. In Puerto Rico, courses for food retailers are a part of an educational program to improve the organization and sanitation of food stores; and courses for consumers emphasize wise buying, the importance of food regulations, and the value of checking labels and grades. In New York City, schools that teach brides how to buy and use food effectively have an important place in the consumer education program.

Meetings of various types are widely used by extension people doing



Tours are a means of acquainting leaders and educators with food-marketing processes.

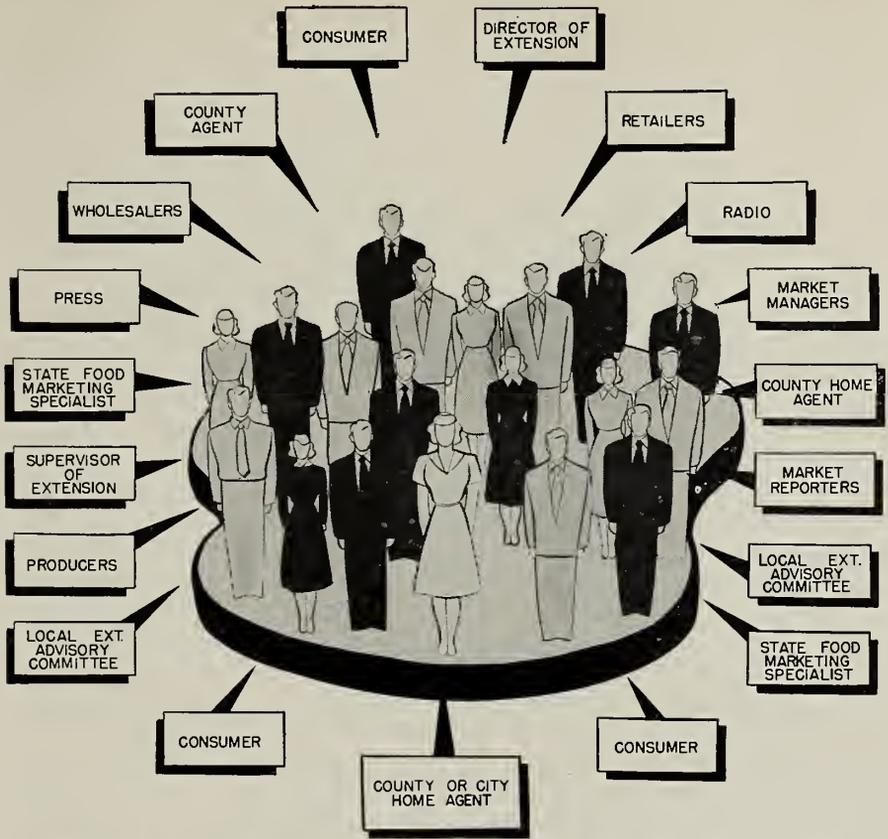
this food-marketing educational work. In Michigan, producer-grocer clinics bring together the people who produce food and those who distribute it. In Buffalo, N. Y., and in several counties of New Jersey, food forums bring together consumers and producers. Training meetings in Michigan, Oklahoma, and Utah are developing leaders to teach better food buymanship to local home demonstration groups.

Food-marketing bulletins, food news letters, leaflets, and similar materials are prepared and made available by extension consumer food-marketing offices in many parts of the country. These materials contain information on food market situations, crop progress, food supplies, prices, marketing seasons, sources, selection, care, and uses that is accurate, current, easily

understood, and readily adapted to local conditions. This information goes to press, radio, magazines, television, public health agencies, labor organizations, hospitals, welfare agencies, civic groups, and marketing organizations. It goes also to home economists, nutritionists, teachers, other Extension Service workers, and dietitians, as well as to many other people and organizations working with and for consumers.

In the larger cities, on a State basis, and in a regional way where market situations require it, the Co-operative Extension Service is using the methods and techniques best adapted to the local needs to do this job of helping consumers in the food-marketing field, for the benefit of the consumer, the producer, and the handler of food.

EXTENSION SERVICE ORGANIZATION FOR A CITY FOOD-MARKETING PROGRAM



Representatives of many agencies, groups, and organizations meet to plan the local program. From this group an advisory committee is chosen to guide the extension program.

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