

HISTORY OF FARM MANAGEMENT ,AGRICULTURAL FINANCE AND PRODUCTION ECONOMICS AT MSU

Efforts in Farm Management at MSU started in the office of the Dean of Agriculture at Michigan Agricultural college in 1906 with the teaching of a business methods course by Professor Clinton B. Smith, Director of Special Courses and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

In 1912 field studies were started by Charles Reed, State supervisor of Farm Management Studies.

In 1914 The first official course, Agriculture 2, was taught for Agriculture students

In 1917 The first official extension activities were started by Charles Gray presumably as a result of the Smith Lever act which funded extension at the federal level.

In 1917 Robert S. Shaw (who later became President of MAC) taught the first Farm Management course for Short Course students.

In 1921 The Department of Farm Management was started in the Agriculture college. After 28 months the Department was abolished and chair, Howard Elliot, and all but one of his 10 member staff were fired by the College President, David Friday, a former Economist.

IN 1928 the Farm Management Department was formed in the college of Agriculture with E.B. Hill as chair. He was an assistant to the Dean and Director of Agriculture. The first staff were Herb Berg and Karl Wright. In the prior year the first farmers were enrolled in Ingham county in a farm records project. Extension activities revolved around the project in which farm account books were collected in winter meetings, summarized and returned in time for the farmers to file their tax returns. In order to manage the work load the visits started in the Southern counties and progressed Northwards requiring the upper Michigan and UP farmers to establish fiscal years for tax reporting. Spring business analysis visits were then a major part of the activity. Farming Today reports of the record data were first reported by county and later by type of farm. Farm Management courses were taught to regular and Short Course students.

In 1949 The Farm Management Department and the Agriculture Economists in the Department of Economics formed The Department of Agricultural Economics in the College of Agriculture with Tom Cowden as chair. Dr. Cowden was a graduate of Purdue and was employed by the American Farm Bureau.

1949-1969

Production economics introduced in course schedule and research schedule with hiring of Glenn Johnson

Warren Vincent experimented with IBM punch cards to summarize data and began mail-in account records with farmers in 1955 as a special research project in data collection.

In 1964 a Kellogg foundation grant funded Telfarm (Today's electronic farm records for management) The Grant provided for 8 district farm management agents to be supervised under John Doneth, Farm management project leader, and farmer participation rose to 1552 farmers in 1968.

State Farm Management tours were begun. These were a one day visit to 3 or more farms in a single county in mid-summer.

Farm Management had a major input into farmers week, a mid-winter educational fair, with a Thursday evening banquet with a major speaker and awards to farmers participating in The farm records project.

The Kellogg Farmers study program began in 1966 with major funding from the Kellogg Foundation. The program was expanded from the first three planned groups to 5 and then shifted funding and nomenclature to the Michigan Agricultural Leadership program. The concept was copied by numerous other states.

A staff member participated on the agriculture committee of the Michigan Bankers Association and a one day farm credit conference was established to bring together all of the agricultural lenders in the state.

1970-89

Computer work on farms was begun with TELPLAN (Today's Electronic planning) . Initially a phone line voice response unit with programs on a U of M computer was followed with hand held calculators with programs read into the calculator from magnetic strips. Then a group of Radio Shack first generation computers were used by Sherrill Nott in group lessons with farmers and extension agents. Finally a number of problem solving programs were developed for use by the district farm management agents and extension field staff.

A series of 2 day farm income tax schools were initiated with the University of Illinois preparing materials and IRS personnel teaching with the objective of upgrading income tax preparers on farm tax issues. The program expanded to over 20 sessions in various outstate locations.

In response to the farm financial crisis in the 80's a Business Analysis project was initiated using TELPLAN ,the district farm management agents and specialists to help farmers work through their problems.

1990-

The farm record project continues to evolve with most farmers maintaining their records on their own computer and sending their data in via the internet.