

Goal Setting



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LAST MONTH I promised to begin explaining how the Agricultural Experiment Station works to achieve its goals. As an introduction, I would like to talk about the process of setting these goals. Setting goals is basic to the business of planning and allocating resources, to staying on target, and to measuring our progress and accomplishments.

Because agricultural research and extension are interdependent, it is essential that Division goals encompass both programs. However, because our research and extension activities together represent 2,670 individual projects (or project-like activities), it is necessary to group them into categories so that the details will not overwhelm our understanding of the Division's activities.

For this reason, and to conform to a national reporting system, all of our work can be grouped into one of nine general categories—sometimes wrongly referred to as goals. These categories are:

1. Resource conservation and management
2. Environmental enhancement
3. Production capacity and efficiency
4. Product improvement and marketing
5. Protection of plants and animals
6. Family and consumer welfare
7. Community and economic development
8. Disciplinary research
9. Youth development (4-H)

The number of dollars, staff members, or man-years of effort devoted to each category tells us how we are using our resources now. Goal setting takes place when we estimate the distribution of resources among these nine categories five or ten years hence. Before that can be done, however, a number of questions need to be answered—and some assumptions made.

First we assume that the Experiment Station is an organization to solve problems, and that the Extension Service is an organization to teach or show others how to solve problems. That may be an oversimplification of our role, but it helps to identify the purpose and goals. We

next must assume that our organization will continue to be an integral part of a national network of agricultural research and extension organizations located in the United States. We also assume that the Division will continue to be an important part of the University of California.

We must then ask some questions. Whose problems are we to solve? Whom do we teach to solve their own problems? Simple questions to ask, but difficult ones to answer because defining our "publics" provokes a variety of opinions. Depending on what group discusses the issue, they can include: (1) the producers of food, fiber, and plants which enhance our environment; (2) the processors, packagers, transporters and sellers of these products; (3) the people involved in this chain of production, processing, and marketing; (4) the consumers and users of these products; (5) the fellow scientists and specialists in our own and in other institutions throughout the world; and (6) perhaps the most important group of all, the students who will be the producers, handlers, consumers, and professionals of tomorrow.

We who have the responsibility for this complex Division of Agricultural Sciences are administering a public trust. Our goal setting must result in a blending of many individual or group goals, perhaps not wholly satisfying to any one of our various "publics." The process requires seemingly endless consultations and discussions with all groups of people involved.

Ultimately decisions must be made, and hopefully these decisions will result in greatest benefits for the greatest number. The process must be continuous, because circumstances and problems change—and we must keep our goals attainable and directed toward the critical needs of our "publics." With increasing demands on our inflation-eroded funds, we need to know where we are going so that we may realize the maximum from our investment in research and extension programs.