

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

EXTENSION DIVISION

R. J. Baldwin, Director

East Lansing, Mich.

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A STATEMENT OF POLICY TOWARD
AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

During the past decade this nation has given considerable attention to the problems of the market and of cooperation in agriculture, as a means of bringing about some relief.

Farmers have been working diligently at this job of getting cooperative enterprises established. They have been new in this field and, as a general rule, inexperienced in business. In their desire to develop organization rapidly and their feeling of inability to cope with the problem alone, they have sought some agency to assist them. They naturally turned to their agricultural colleges and governmental departments. Since everyone was pioneering in this field, very little information was available and few knew the best procedure to follow. The call made upon the public agencies was met as occasion required or expediency demanded.

Public agencies had no fundamental policies about cooperation. There was in many quarters a distrust of the possibilities or the advisability of this type of agricultural organization. No definite stand was taken one way or the other. The functions of the college or other public agency in this field were not known. A definite policy was not adopted. To overcome this defect in the State of Michigan, a group of agricultural leaders were called together at the College in the spring of 1925. At this meeting, the whole problem of agricultural cooperation and other economic problems of agriculture were discussed. It was thought advisable for the College as a public institution to adopt a policy toward agricultural cooperation. Such a policy was submitted to those assembled and approved by them. This policy also had the approval of the State Board of Agriculture. The policy is as follows:

A Statement of Policy Toward Agriculture Cooperation

The Michigan State College believes that it should tell the farmers and public of the state what opinions it holds toward agricultural cooperation, what attitude it proposes to take toward farmers' organizations, and what activities it intends to exercise in this field.

We believe that cooperation in agriculture should be encouraged and that there are certain advantages which come from it. These advantages are:

1. It awakens farmers to the necessity of understanding marketing problems as an essential step toward their improvement.

2. It gives farmers information about market processes and enables them to keep in touch with market conditions so that production may be more nearly kept in harmony with the market demand.

3. It aids in the dissemination of crop and market news, in the establishment of grades, and in better packing and handling practices which have resulted in benefits to the consumer as well as to the farmer.

4. It gives the farmer a knowledge of the conditions of supply and demand, and therefore places him more nearly on a parity with those who are buying his product.

5. It gives the farmer a greater bargaining power in the market.

6. It permits the farmer to perform marketing services for himself in instances where privately owned agencies are not doing this adequately.

7. It gives the farmer a marketing agency which holds his interests paramount.

8. It permits the farmer to get the benefits of wholesale buying.

9. It aids in bringing about cheaper and better production.

10. It offers the most helpful approach to the problem of reducing marketing costs.

We hold the following opinions about agriculture and marketing:

1. That everything possible should be done to make rural life more wholesome, increase the standard of living in the country, eliminate as many of the business risks of agriculture as possible, increase the return to farmers for the use of their capital and for their labor, keep at a minimum the cost of taking produce to the consumer, and hold an energetic, industrious and moral citizenship in the country.

2. That sound cooperation in agriculture is beneficial and should be encouraged wherever the conditions of citizenship and business make it possible for it to succeed.

3. That in those communities where the training or temper of the people is averse to cooperative action, there should be education to overcome these defects.

4. That the marketing agencies operating under our present commercial and industrial system are essential and are performing a valuable service.

5. That it is possible through scientific research and action, to develop a stronger and more efficient system of handling agricultural products.

6. That more can be accomplished by evolutionary than revolutionary methods in market improvement, and that improvement will come only after thorough scientific research.

7. That there should be closer cooperation between the agricultural and the industrial, commercial, and financial interests of the state.

8. That farmers should turn their attention to cooperation in production and buying supplies as well as in marketing.

9. That in adopting a program for agricultural business improvement the interests of consumers as well as those of farmers should be considered.

10. That the success of cooperation is dependent upon the action of farmers themselves. It is essential that the farmer feels that the organization was formed by him and not for him.

11. That farmers should be permitted to direct their organizations without any governmental, institutional, or legislative interference.

We believe that in relation to agricultural organization, a state college has the following distinct functions:

1. To do scientific research to discover the truth about market conditions and the fundamental economic principles underlying marketing.

2. To teach students within the class-room the economics of agriculture and marketing.

3. To carry the information obtained through research to the people of the state through the extension division.

4. To make surveys upon request to determine the underlying economic and social conditions of communities for the guidance of farmers desiring to organize cooperatively.

5. To advise with farmers about cooperative and other business matters.

6. To give farmers assistance on technical problems of business and organization.

It is hoped that this Statement of Policy will make clear to everyone just what steps the college proposes to take in furtherance of organization among farmers, and to what extent agricultural leaders of the state are expecting the College to participate in these activities.

