

\* \* \* \* \*

**A SURVEY OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND  
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES HAVING IMPLICATIONS  
FOR PROGRAMS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE<sup>1</sup>**

**Alfred J. Mannebach  
Associate Professor**

**Agricultural Education  
The University of Connecticut**

**Introduction**

This article is a report of a two phase project, Phase I which extended from November, 1973, to June, 1974, and Phase II which is scheduled to be completed by the end of January, 1975.

The study was designed to determine the employment opportunities for persons who have knowledge and skills in agricultural subjects and to determine the community resources available to programs of Vocational Agriculture in Connecticut. It was also designed to enumerate job possibilities, to determine where job openings in agriculture are located, to inform farmers and agribusinessmen of the program of Vocational Agriculture, and to determine what resources in the community could be tapped to enrich the program of Vocational Agriculture offered in the State.

In Connecticut; with the demand for Vocational Agriculture increasing, as evidenced by increasing enrollments; it was essential to have up-dated, documented data regarding farm and non-farm employment opportunities in agriculture, at both State and regional levels. At the State level, such information was needed to assist in planning and in making decisions regarding programs to be developed, curricula to be offered, facilities to be erected or expanded, equipment to be installed, teachers to be prepared and towns and persons to be served.

At the regional level, information was needed so that teachers of Vocational Agriculture could prepare students for existing employment opportunities in agriculture and so that they could keep abreast of the changing knowledge and skills required by workers employed in agricultural occupations. Regional data regarding the number and kinds of job opportunities available in agriculture would help the teachers fulfill the training, supervised occupational experience program, and

---

placement functions of their jobs. In addition, information regarding community resources available within agribusinesses could provide a base for strengthening the practical and experiential aspects of the education of Vocational Agriculture students.

#### Objectives

The objectives of Phase I of the project were to compile a comprehensive review of literature related to farm and non-farm employment opportunities and community resources in agriculture, to compile a master list of the names and addresses of farmers and non-farm agricultural firms in Connecticut, to randomly sample from the population a representative number of farmers and non-farm agricultural firm operators to be interviewed, to develop an interview schedule, and to develop the interviewing and survey research skills of the teachers of Vocational Agriculture in Connecticut.

The major objective of Phase II of the project was to have teachers of Vocational Agriculture collect in their own regions data which could be compiled and reported on statewide as well as regional basis. Other objectives were to disseminate information about the Vocational Agriculture program to farmers and agribusinessmen and to promote interaction between the teacher and the members of the agricultural community.

#### Method

One of the first tasks was to identify the population of farmers in the State. Several State agencies and private associations contributed to the compilation of lists of farm operators. With their assistance a population of farmers was obtained from which to draw regional samples.

For the non-farm businesses the first step was to determine the category listings which would be considered agriculturally related. Categories selected from the yellow pages of telephone directory listings were submitted to the Project Advisory Committee and to the Vocational Agriculture teachers for their review and modification.

The personal interview was deemed to be the best method of gathering data. The Vocational Agriculture teachers in the State agreed to conduct the interviews during the months of July and August, the beginning of Phase II of the project. It was felt that any biasing effects resulting from the teacher's conducting the interviews would be more than offset by the benefits obtained from the face-to-face interaction of the teacher and the farmer or agri-businessman.

Based on the number of interviewers (Vocational Agriculture teachers) in each region, a random sample was drawn. Farm and non-farm samples were drawn separately according to the ratio of farms to firms in the region. Each teacher was requested to complete twenty

interviews. In areas of heavy concentration, project research assistants were assigned to assist the teachers in the collection of data.

Much technical assistance was used in planning and developing the study. The State Vocational Agriculture Consulting Committee was instrumental in identifying the need for a study and in recommending that it be undertaken. A Project Advisory Committee composed of educational research and agriculture specialists provided guidance in interview schedule design, non-farm category listings, and general project structure. Consultants engaged on a per diem basis for their knowledge and expertise on the areas of research agriculture contributed to the definition of terms, methods of identifying farm and non-farm agricultural firms, systems of coding, population identifying procedures, interview schedule development and interviewing techniques. The Connecticut teachers of Vocational Agriculture helped establish objectives, assisted in the revision of the interview schedule and offered suggestions on sources of population listings. Since the data collected would have the greatest implications for the teachers of Vocational Agriculture, they were involved in the project from its inception.

#### Outcomes

Outcomes of Phase I included a Summary Review of Literature related to farm and non-farm agricultural employment, regional listings of farms and non-farm agricultural firms, an interview schedule, an interview manual of methods and procedures to be followed, introductory letters, a summary of interview form, a brochure describing the program of vocational agriculture, and teachers of agriculture who were prepared to collect data through personal interviews. Objective data regarding employment opportunities and community resources will be made available at the end of Phase II of the study.

#### Subjective Results and Implications

Although the objective data regarding employment opportunities and community resources will not be available until the completion of Phase II of the project, certain subjective data were obtained from teacher-interviewers who were enrolled in a graduate course at the University of Connecticut during the fall semester, 1974. Teachers were asked to answer four questions regarding the survey. Their responses are based upon personal interviews with farmers and agribusinessmen and should serve as subjective indicators of changes needed and the future direction to be taken by the program of Vocational Agriculture in Connecticut. Following are the questions and sample responses from the teachers regarding their observations based upon their participation in the survey:

1. What areas of the Vocational Agriculture program should be added or re-emphasized? There should be more courses or units on small animal care; more units on human relationships; more realistic guidance and job orientation for students; more instruction on agri-

---

business management, customer relations, salesmanship, promotion, and product knowledge; more adult courses on agribusiness management; more instruction in all areas of ornamental horticulture; more use of production records and records of all kinds; more emphasis on private ownership of small agribusiness; more emphasis on basic agricultural mechanics and small engine repair; more units on dog care, breeding and management; more instruction on chemical application, laws, and restrictions; more units on horse management and care; and more instruction on career opportunities.

2. What areas of the Vocational Agriculture program should be phased out or de-emphasized? The consensus of the respondents was that no areas should be phased out. It was agreed that certain areas should be de-emphasized or the emphasis should be shifted. Suggested changes were to de-emphasize instruction in areas in which few job opportunities are available and shift emphasis to agribusiness skills; continue to offer a broad program and focus on skills, concepts and content that can be generalized to many areas of agriculture; de-emphasize traditional production agriculture and emphasize instruction in agricultural service and related occupations; increase emphasis in the care, repair and maintenance of agricultural equipment; place more emphasis on enterprises which provide services for urban and suburban people; and shift emphasis to serving adults in all areas of horticulture and ornamental horticulture.

3. What community resources were identified whereby the program of Vocational Agriculture could be enriched? The Vocational Agriculture teachers found that many farmers and agribusiness persons were willing to serve as resource speakers in the classroom or for groups or individuals at their place of business; provide observation experiences; employ high school students for supervised occupational experience programs; hire Vocational Agriculture graduates; offer facilities for FFA activities or class instruction; provide a field trip site; give demonstrations at their place of business or in the school, and lend equipment for instructional purposes. They also found that many qualified people were willing to serve as members of the advisory committee, farmers and agribusiness persons were very cooperative, many untapped resources existed in the community, farmers and agribusiness persons are interested in the program of Vocational Agriculture, and many farmers and agribusiness persons are potential contributors to the FFA Foundation.

4. What services would the farmers and agribusinessmen like the Vocational Agriculture centers to provide for them? The Vocational Agriculture program could serve farmers and agribusiness persons by offering adult courses, preparing qualified Vocational Agriculture graduates, making available selected school resources, providing information about the Vocational Agriculture program, and sponsoring workshops and seminars on agricultural issues.

Although empirical data on employment opportunities and community resources are not available at this time, it can be concluded that the survey has made and will continue to make a significant impact

on the program of Vocational Agriculture in Connecticut. As a result of the person-to-person interviews conducted on a systematic basis, the teachers of Vocational Agriculture have a more realistic understanding of the needs of farmers and agribusiness persons, the qualifications required by agricultural workers, and the resources available to the program of Vocational Agriculture. Farmers and agribusiness persons have a better understanding of what the program of Vocational Agriculture can do for them and what they can do for it. The survey, at both the State and regional level, will have many implications for the further development of Vocational Agriculture in Connecticut.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A study supported by the Connecticut State Department of Education, Division of Vocational Education, through Part C, Research Funds, Public Law 90-576, Vocational Amendments of 1968.

\* \* \* \* \*