

# The History of Future Farmer Organizations Around the World

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*The establishment of the Future Farmers of America in 1928 and its subsequent growth in size and scope was noticed around the world. Agricultural education professionals from dozens of other countries wanted to know about the organization and how it helped motivate young rural boys to study vocational agriculture and choose agriculture as a career field. Over the course of several decades, many countries started their own “future farmer” organizations. The most successful was the Future Farmers of Japan, which is a large and vibrant organization to this day. As the FFA grew, so did its involvement in international activities. The FFA has worked with many other countries to offer exchange programs, study tours, and travel seminars for state FFA officers, award winners, and national FFA officer teams. The FFA has also offered Work Experience Abroad, World Experience in Agriculture, and the World AgriScience Studies Programs. This historical research study investigated future farmers’ organizations in other countries, the history of FFA international activities, and study tours and travel seminars for award winners and FFA officers.*

Keywords: Future Farmers of America, International, History

The Future Farmers of America organization has been involved in international activities since it was established in 1928 (Tenney, 1977). Even before the FFA was founded, American agricultural education professionals were traveling to remote corners of the world to offer advice and recommendations on agricultural education and youth development to other countries (Allen, 1939; Dickinson, 1947). As the Future Farmers of America grew in size and scope, agricultural educators from around the world took notice of the impact the organization was having with rural agricultural youth in the United States.

Government officials, agricultural educators, and international development organizations began contacting the Future Farmers of America to find out details about FFA programs, activities, and events. So many countries were contacting the FFA that the organization developed a brochure titled “The Future Farmers of America: What it is, What it does” (Future Farmers of America, n.d.) that was printed in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. Educators around the world were realizing how future farmers’ clubs could be used to organize

and motivate youth to study agricultural education and enter the field of agriculture.

Over the period of several decades, numerous other countries established “Future Farmer” organizations for their youth. In many countries the name “Future Farmers of...” was used. In other countries, different names were used for youth agricultural education clubs. Regardless of the final name chosen, similar symbols, rituals, skill development events, and leadership development activities were included in these organizations. This study investigated the Future Farmers of America’s long history in international agricultural education activities, including the establishment of Future Farmers’ clubs in other countries around the world.

## Theoretical Framework

Agricultural education professionals from the United States have been working in other countries for decades. Sherman Dickinson was the Chief of Party in the Brazil Cooperative Agricultural Program in the late 1940s. Writing in *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, Dickinson (1947) stated,

Our program in agricultural education is attempting to cooperate with the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture in developing plans whereby the agricultural situation may be improved. It has been agreed that this may be best accomplished by means of increased educational opportunities for rural peoples, emphasizing training in practical agriculture (p. 237).

The Future Farmers of America wasn't the only organization of interest for other countries. The 4-H youth clubs were also involved internationally since their development in the early 1900s. Smith and Kirkpatrick (1990) reported that "Long before the International Farm Youth Exchange (IFYE) program was initiated in 1948, the 4-H movement in America had won the interest and respect of several foreign nations" (p. 150). The authors also reported that, "As early as the 1920s and 1930s, Canada, England and a few other countries set out to develop similar youth groups" (p. 150). Over the next decades, 4-H clubs were established around the world. Smith and Kirkpatrick wrote that,

By the late 1940s, South Korea had established a 4-H type program with some 3,729 clubs and 142,500 members. And in 1949, Austria launched a program similar to 4-H as part of the Marshall Plan. By 1953, 23 countries in Asia, Europe and Latin America had 4-H type clubs. (p. 150).

Reck (1951) described the beginning of 4-H clubs in Denmark by stating, "Denmark had been working with rural young people since 1913, when agricultural societies organized farm boys into groups to receive technical instruction" (p. 221). Denmark made arrangements to host a USDA extension specialist to assist in establishing 4-H clubs. Meetings were held throughout 1923-24 and "club work actively started in the spring of 1924" (p. 221). Reck (1951) reported that, "They adopted the four-leaf clover and the four H's, the letters in this case standing for *Hoved*, *Hjerte*, *Haand*, and *Helbred*, the Danish words for head, heart, hand and health" (p. 221).

The issue of educating rural youth in developing countries is one that is not new in

international development. Finley and Price (1994) wrote that "rural young people is another group that had received too little attention in agricultural extension programs. Millions of young people living in rural areas are a significant and untapped resource" (p. 238). The authors went on to write that, "Rural youth has a widespread need for practical training in agriculture...special efforts are needed in agricultural education, extension education, and training to include a higher proportion of rural young women" (p. 238).

When the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic State of Lithuania in 1940, they closed the long established Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture and its affiliate Lithuanian Young Farmers Circles Union. The Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture was originally founded in 1926 (Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture, n.d.). The mission of the LCA is to be the main supporter of the viability of rural society and raise a strong, motivated and independent person, able to develop a competitive agriculture and to maintain safe and attractive living environment. According to Edwards, Thuemmel, and Kisieliene (2000), "In February 1989...a conference of young farmers was held at which time it was decided to 'restore' Young Farmers' Circles in Lithuania" (p. 18).

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a strong emphasis on incorporating international agriculture concepts into secondary agricultural education curricula in the United States. In 1989, Martin wrote about the global perspective for agricultural education. He suggested that agriculture students should get involved in the Work Experience Abroad program, teachers should be involved in travel/work experience overseas, and that agriculture teachers should develop an exchange system with a school in another country.

In another article, Martin (1993) wrote a rationale for internationalizing agricultural education. His selected activities to internationalize agricultural education programs included a recommendation that FFA should "help establish/enhance youth organizations in other countries" (p. 21). He also suggested that the FFA develop youth leadership camps in other countries around the world. Martin concluded by stating, "There is a tremendous

international frontier waiting for development of programs modeled after agricultural education/FFA as we know it in the U.S.A.” (p. 22).

Writing about the need for rural youth development around the world, Lindley (1989) stated, “Youth activities and competitions at the national, regional, and international level are almost non-existent in the developing countries. Support and promotion of international youth exchanges among developing countries would provide opportunities for leadership development for rural youth” (p. 13)

Lindley gave several examples of youth components in rural development programs including:

The organization and guidance of rural youth for leadership development, skill training, service and production purposes. This includes the formation of youth clubs such as 4-H in the USA, Tani Tasuna (future farmers’ groups) in Indonesia, Anak Bukid (farm youth clubs) in the Philippines, rural youth clubs in South Korea, 4-S in Swaziland, 4-K in Kenya through the agricultural extension services.” (p. 14)

Agricultural education professionals in the United States, have been involved in international activities for almost a century. They have worked in distant countries to develop their agricultural education systems. They have worked to infuse leadership development activities for rural youth in poor, developing countries, and they have worked to incorporate international agricultural concepts into domestic agricultural education curricula. The establishment of future farmers’ clubs in other countries is just one way that American agricultural education has worked to improve agricultural education and youth leadership development around the world.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this historical research study was to document the history of future farmers’ organizations around the world. Specific objectives which directed the study included:

1. Document the interest in, and establishment of, future farmers’ youth organizations in other countries.
2. Describe the history of international activities within the National FFA Organization.
3. Describe the history of the international travel seminars for National FFA Officers, state FFA officers, and national award winners.

### **Methods**

This study was a historical research investigation. McDowell (2002) stated that, “Historians examine the past so that we may have a better understanding of the content of past events and the context in which they took place” (p. 4). I utilized historical research methods to address the purpose and objectives of the study. Borg and Gall (1983) wrote that, “Historical research involves the systematic search for documents and other sources that contain facts relating to the historian’s questions about the past” (p. 800). Research was conducted at the National FFA Archives at Indiana University ~ Purdue University, Indianapolis, at land-grant university libraries, and departments of agricultural education libraries. Whenever possible, primary sources were utilized. Primary sources included magazine articles, journal articles, meeting notes, and personal communications in the form of original source letters available at the National FFA Archives. Secondary sources of information included books, convention proceedings, and periodical articles (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

In every case, I exposed the historical documents to external and internal criticism to determine their value in addressing the objectives of the study. I examined each document thoroughly to ascertain if it was authentic and authored by the individual whose name appeared on the document. I then examined the content of the document to establish internal criticism. I evaluated the document to determine the worth of the evidence and whether it provided a true report of the historical event. I also attempted to triangulate information from several sources, both personal

notes, minutes, and secondary reports of activities.

One limitation of this study was my inability to determine the current status of future farmers' youth organizations in other countries. This objective, which would provide valuable information, was unfortunately outside the scope of this study.

### Results

Shortly after the FFA was organized, agricultural educators, FFA advisors, and members began traveling the world to promote youth development through Future Farmers' clubs. In a summary report on International Programs (Tenney, 1977), it was written that,

Some pioneering work was done in many countries, including Albania, Greece, Egypt, India, Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, South Viet Nam, Honduras, Canada, South Australia, Peru, Columbia, Brazil, and Mexico. (p. 119)

The National FFA Archives contains hundreds of letters from government officials, educational professionals, and community organizations from around the world requesting information about the FFA. The following is a sample of some of the countries from which letters were received:

|                           |                |                        |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <i>Bavaria (Germany)</i>  | <i>France</i>  | <i>Malaya</i>          |
| <i>Brazil</i>             | <i>Germany</i> | <i>Morocco</i>         |
| <i>Ceylon (Sri Lanka)</i> | <i>India</i>   | <i>Philippines</i>     |
| <i>Cyprus</i>             | <i>Ireland</i> | <i>Sweden</i>          |
| <i>Denmark</i>            | <i>Israel</i>  | <i>Trinidad~Tobago</i> |
|                           |                | <i>Uruguay</i>         |

Figure 1. Countries from which request letters were received

### Future Farmers of Greece

In 1935, Adams reported that the Future Farmers of Greece was currently being organized in the Mediterranean country. The American Near East Foundation was working with the Greek government to develop a youth organization. Adams wrote that,

Consequently, the first 'Future Farmers of Greece,' organization had its beginning. A national chapter was written up by the supervisors of the Near East Foundation work, and presented to the Greek courts for approval in accordance with Greek law. By the end of 1933, two chapters had been organized and some experience gained in developing rounded out long-time programs of work. (p. 190)

Adams reported, "In 1934, five new clubs were organized making a total of seven chapters, with an enrollment of 140 boys" (p. 190). The FFG chapters "organized its yearly programs

along four lines - recreation, agriculture, cultural improvement and health sanitation" (p. 190).

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual National FFA Convention in October 1938, Dr. H. B. Allen (1939), Director of Education for the Near East Foundation, delivered an address titled "Future Farmers in Other Lands." Allen stated, "I bring you greetings and best wishes from the Future Farmers of Greece, the Future Farmers of Bulgaria, and the Progressive Farmers of Albania" (p. 236). Allen expressed his thanks to the Future Farmers when he stated, "In developing your fine organization during the past 11 years, you, and others before you, have built much better than you knew; the influence of your high ideals and sound principles is much wider than you realize" (p. 236).

### Future Farmers of Japan

Immediately following World War II, America was actively involved with rebuilding the country of Japan. Efforts were being made

to improve the educational institutions across Japan. In order to improve agricultural education programs, the Future Farmers of Japan was created in 1950. Tenney (1977) stated,

George Lewis, former national president of the FFA, made a report at the 1951 FFA convention on his visit with the Future Farmers of Japan. It was reported that Ivan Nelson, a former teacher of vocational agriculture attached to General MacArthur's staff in the Army of Occupation, had been influential in the development of the Future Farmers of Japan. (p. 119 & 120).

Meaders (1985) reported that the FFJ, "...continues as a strong youth organization for boys and girls who are students of vocational

agriculture. Its three goals of leadership, social character, and scientific character have provided a focus for promoting agricultural education" (p. 11).

### **Future Farmers of Canada**

Immediately following World War II, agricultural education was expanding rapidly in Canada as in the United States. The Future Farmers of Canada organization was created in January 1947. One of the first chapters of the FFC was the Creston Valley chapter from Creston, British Columbia. The National FFA Archives contains copies of the FFC Creed and Bylaws. Figure 2 below contains the Creed of the Future Farmers of Canada.

#### Creed of the Future Farmers of Canada

I believe in the future of farming and that life on a farm is both honorable and satisfying.

I believe that success in farming comes through a scientific attitude, efficiency, hard work and determination.

I believe in being a good citizen...honest and fair in all my dealings.

I believe in accepting responsibilities and doing my part in my home, school and community.

I believe that serving my country, helping others, and doing my best in my vocation will lead to a happier, fuller life.

*Figure 2.* Creed of the Future Farmers of Canada

The Future Farmers of Canada adopted a crest as its emblem. The crest consisted of a tree, a plow, a maple leaf, and the sun. The tree symbolized growth, the plow labour in agriculture, the maple leaf represented Canadian heritage, and the rising sun represented the future. The FFC included three degrees; Farmhand (bronze), Chapter Farmer (silver), and Provincial Farmer (gold). According to Tenney (1977), "The Future Farmers of Canada sent representatives to the national FFA conventions in 1952 and 1953" (p. 120) and in 1954 the

Canadian Ambassador to the United States was a speaker at the convention.

### **Future Farmers in Southeast Asia and the Pacific**

The Future Farmers of the Philippines was established in 1953. Many of the components of the FFP were adopted from the Future Farmers of America. In a letter to the Supervisor of Agricultural Education in the Philippines (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to A.G.

Matela, March 7, 1949) Tenney wrote, “This is to advise that you have our permission to use the materials in our Official Manual and other items which may be appropriate for you to use in the Philippines. We can see no objection to your using these since your organization will be the Future Farmers of the Philippines.”

FFP officers include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Press Relations Officer [Reporter], Sergeant-at-Arms [Sentinel], and Advisor. The emblem of the FFP is shown in Figure 3 below. It includes eight symbols including rising sun, plow, owl, crops, and flag which are similar to symbols on the FFA emblem. It also includes the words Future

Farmers of the Philippines, FFP, Vocational Agriculture and 1953, the year FFP was founded. The degrees of membership in the FFP are Greenhand (bronze), Chapter Farmer (silver), District Farmer (gold pin), Filipino Farmer (gold key). The organization also had the Master Filipino Farmer of the Year, Honorary Chapter Farmers, Honorary Filipino Farmers, and Collegiate FFP members (Future Farmers of the Philippines, 1959).

Figure 3 below contains the emblem of the Future Farmers of the Philippines. Table 1 lists the emblem symbol, the office it represents and the description of the symbol’s meaning.



Figure 3 Future Farmers of the Philippines Emblem

Table 1

Future Farmer of the Philippines' Emblem Symbols and Their Meaning (FFP, 1959)

| Emblem Symbol            | Associated Office                 | Description                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rising Sun               | President                         | Progress, skills, enlightenment and the token of a new era in agriculture, brotherhood, and cooperation.                                 |
| Plow                     | Vice President                    | labor, industry and tillage of the soil as well as agriculture which is the basic industry of the Filipino people.                       |
| Rice and other crops     | Secretary                         | Wealth and economic stability of the nation                                                                                              |
| Picture of Jose P. Rizal | Treasurer                         | National unity because as a patriot and as a farmer he kept accurate records of his business and his activities to guide his countrymen. |
| Filipino flag            | Press Relation Officer (Reporter) | Loyalty and unity of purpose                                                                                                             |
| Head of a Carabao        | Sergeant-at-Arms                  | Strength of the nation and the national scope of the organization.                                                                       |
| Owl                      | Advisor                           | Knowledge and time-honored wisdom                                                                                                        |
| Book with Torch          | -----                             | Learning and the records of achievements of the nation                                                                                   |

The *Future Farmers of Australia* was probably established in the early 1950s. In October 1950 Tenney (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to A. R. Ninnes, October 24, 1950) wrote to the Advisory Teacher of Agriculture at the South Australia Department of Agriculture, stating, "It would not be a difficult undertaking to organize the Future Farmers of Australia. The first step would be to study the official manual of our organization and revise it so that it would meet your needs." In a subsequent letter (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to A.R. Ninnes, July 10, 1953), Tenney wrote, "We are very glad to learn of the development and growth of the Future Farmers of Australia. It is significant that you are holding a State Convention the first week of September" [1953]. In late 1955, a high school principal in American Samoa requested permission to establish an FFA chapter. Tenney (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to M.J. Senter, December 30, 1955) wrote that,

...the Future Farmers of America organization is composed of high school students who are studying vocational agriculture in the public schools of the United States. For that reason, the

students enrolled in high school in Samoa will not be eligible to take part in contests sponsored for and by the Future Farmers of America.

Tenney explained that,

The Congress of the United States extended our program a few years ago that made possible a working relationship with Hawaii [not yet a state] and Puerto Rico. We are not in a position to assist you officially until the authorization is given by the Congress to extend the program to Samoa.

Tenney even suggested that, "If you wish to organize the Future Farmers of Samoa, we shall be very glad to provide complimentary copies of appropriate literature for you to use."

At the same time interest was expressed by vocational agriculture teachers on the island of Guam to establish Future Farmers' chapters. In 1956, Tenney (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to H.P. Adelbai, December 19, 1956) wrote that

"I am interested to learn in your letter of November 29, that you want to form a chapter of the Future Farmers of America on Guam. I regret to advise that at the present time the vocational

agriculture department in Guam is not qualified to have an FFA chapter that can affiliate with the national organization.”

This was because at that time the National Vocational Education Act did not include Guam.

### **Future Farmers in Africa and the Middle East**

The National FFA Archives includes letters referencing the *Future Farmers of Liberia* (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to F.B. Sands, March 14, 1955), the *Young Farmers of South Rhodesia* (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to D. E. Baker, May 19, 1952), and the *Future Farmers of Israel* (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to M. Aloni, October 26, 1955). Letters indicate that a chapter of the Future Farmers of Israel was established at Givat Ada. Letters were also found from officials in Iraq in reference to future plans to create “an appropriate youth organization in the field of agriculture” (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to J. H. Lintner, June 5, 1957). Other documents were found that referred to the Future Farmers of Egypt but no additional information about this organization was located.

### **Future Farmers in Central and South America**

Several future farmers’ organizations were established in Central and South America. The Future Farmers of Panama was established in 1955. The official name of the organization is Asociación Nacional de Futuros Agricultores de Panamá. In 1960, E.J. Johnson, Program Planning Specialist in the U.S. Agricultural Education Branch, visited Peru to help officials develop the Future Farmers of Peru. The FFP even received permission from the FFA to have the official FFA manual translated into Spanish for the use of its members (Tenney, A.W., 1950-1957, Tenney to J. G. Coombs, April 7, 1955).

The agenda for the Committee on International Educational Activities for the Future Farmers of America (1967) meeting included references to the Future Farmers of Mexico, Future Farmers of Colombia, the Future

Farmers of Peru, and the Future Farmers of Costa Rica. The committee recommended to “develop guidelines to outline how the FFA would be used to supplement agricultural education programs in other countries, and recommended conducting a “World FFA Seminar” in 1970 (Future Farmers of America, 1967).

### **International Programs**

In 1947, the National FFA Officers invited Lord Inverchapel, Ambassador from Great Britain to address the national convention (Tenney, 1977). Accompanying him on his trip to Kansas City were six members of the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs of Great Britain. At the same time six FFA members traveled to Britain for a tour. This led to the development of an international exchange program between the two organizations.

It was reported in the *FFA at 25* booklet (Farrar, 1956),

One of the convention activities was the approval of a plan for establishing an annual exchange program between the FFA and the Young Farmers Clubs of Great Britain. Four Future Farmers made the trip to Britain in 1949 and four British Young Farmers came to this country. (p. 41)

This exchange program continued for many years. In the history book *Blue Jackets Gold Standards* (National FFA Organization, 2003), it was stated that, “Two 18-year-olds represented FFA in the organization’s British Exchange Program in 1953. David Boyne, Marlette, Michigan, and L. Philip Brouillette...Richford, Vermont, spent four summer months that year in Great Britain visiting in homes of young farmers” (p. 26).

In 1963, the FFA contracted with the Peace Corps to sponsor agricultural development projects in West Pakistan. A.W. Tenney traveled to West Pakistan in 1965 to observe the projects and meet the FFA members who volunteered to spend two years working in the country (Tenney, 1965). Building on the FFA’s success with exchange programs, the FFA Work Experience Program was developed in 1969. This program would later be called *Work*

*Experience Abroad, and World Experience in Agriculture.* Other international activities in which the FFA participated included the *Congress/Budestag Exchange Program* in West Germany, and the *World AgriScience Studies Program* (“Making the Grade Across the Ocean,” 1988).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, FFA involvement in international agricultural education continued to grow. Joe Martinez, 1968-69 National FFA Vice President, journeyed to Cali, Columbia to represent FFA at the 1969 National Convention of the Future Farmers of Columbia. Martinez’s (1969) speech included the following passage,

It was interesting to me to note that your liberator, Simon Bolivar, whom you regard as the Father of your nation is symbolic of the Treasurer’s post in the FAC, just as George Washington, the Father of our nation is symbolic of the FFA Treasurer. Your reference to Bolivar and the respect you show your country and its leaders is indicative to me that the FAC like the FFA seeks to encourage patriotism for country and fellow man.

The Future Farmers of America also got involved in improving production agriculture practices in foreign countries. In 1972, the FFA worked with the Iowa FFA Association to develop a swine improvement program in Jamaica (Tenney, 1977, International Programs, n.d.). Tenney (1977) reported that,

After Lennie Gamage and Tim Burke, national FFA president in 1972, visited the Youth Development Agency and Youth Clubs in Jamaica, the FFA offered to provide high quality, pure-bred swine to be given to the youth camps in Jamaica to launch a pig chain to upgrade swine (p. 122).

In 1973, Lennie Gamage, former National FFA Officer, and Director of FFA International Programs, traveled to Australia to deliver the keynote speech titled “FFA Australia” to the 1973 convention of the Future Farmers of Australia (Tenney, 1977). In 1974, H. Nevil Hunsicker traveled to Medellin, Columbia to deliver a speech titled “The Role of Vocational Agriculture and Future Farmers Programs in

Rural Development” to the First General Meeting of the Committee on Interamericano de Educación Agrícola (Hunsicker, 1974a). .. On the same trip Hunsicker gave another speech titled “The Role of Student Organizations in Vocational Agricultural Education” to the 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention of Futuros Agriculturoes de Columbia (Hunsicker, 1974b).

Over the decades, FFA continued to reach out to international organizations to offer international exchange programs to send FFA members to other countries, and bring young agriculture students to the United States. In 1989, the FFA International Department organized the “Experience America” program (El Salvador Students Experience America, 1989). One hundred El Salvador high school students traveled to the USA and spent two weeks with FFA families in California, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The project was sponsored by Partners, a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering understanding of Central American and Caribbean countries.

### International Travel Seminars

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the FFA began offering international study tours to Central and Eastern Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Central and Northern Europe, and South America. In the early 1970s, Lennie Gamage offered study tours to New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, Iran, Japan and Korea. The first World Conference in Agricultural Education for Youth and Adult Leaders was held in conjunction with the 1976 National FFA Convention. One of the major activities of the conference was the First International Agricultural Olympics “consisting of individual competitive activities in soil and plant judging, agricultural mechanics, tractor operation and maintenance, and livestock judging” (Tenney, 1977, p. 124).

In 1978-79, the national FFA organization created the Proficiency Travel Seminar for the finalists and winners of the national FFA Proficiency Awards. The first seminar took place in March 1979. Countries visited over the years included England, France, Belgium,

Luxembourg, West Germany, Liechtenstein, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Poland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Ireland. In the late 1980s, the FFA developed the Stars on Tour program (Mattics, 1988). It included the finalists for the Star Farmer of America and Star Agribusinessman of America. These two travel seminars were eventually combined to include both the star finalists and the proficiency finalists. In 1999, the FFA established the International Leadership Seminar for State Officers. This trip introduces State FFA Officers to international agricultural production and leadership development opportunities in Europe.

Eventually, state FFA associations and local chapters began participating in international programs. In the early 1990s, several chapters from across the country participated in the Russian exchange program with agricultural schools in the Russian Federation (former Soviet Union) (Zillinger, 1995). Six Pennsylvania FFA members from the Williamsburg chapter participated in a six-month Poland Exchange Program in 1994 (Bruce, 1995).

Throughout the decades, the National FFA Officers also got a chance to experience international agricultural education. The National Officer Good Will Tour to visit FFA Foundation Sponsors began in 1947. In the 1980s this trip was expanded into the International Experience Tour for National Officers and included a trip to Japan sponsored by Mitsui & Company, a major Japanese trading company. The 1989 National Officers tour traveled to Japan, Thailand, and China. “The officers also met with members of the Future Farmers of Japan and the Future Farmers of Thailand (“West Meets East,” 1989, p. 12).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The establishment of the Future Farmers of America in 1928 and its subsequent growth in size and scope was noticed around the world. Agricultural education professionals from dozens of other countries wanted to know about the organization and how it helped motivate young rural boys to study vocational agriculture

and choose agriculture as a career field. Over the course of several decades, many countries started their own “future farmer” organizations. The most successful was the Future Farmers of Japan which is a large and vibrant organization to this day. As the FFA grew, so did its involvement in international activities.

Based on the results of this historical research study, it can be concluded that the Future Farmers of America organization played a vital role in helping to establish similar “future farmer” youth organizations in numerous countries around the world.

The FFA has worked with many other countries to offer exchange programs, study tours, and travel seminars for state FFA officers, award winners, and national FFA officer teams. The FFA has also offered Work Experience Abroad, World Experience in Agriculture, and the World AgriScience Studies Programs. This research found that international agricultural education activities have been a major component in the 82 year history of the Future Farmers of America and the National FFA Organization. FFA leaders, staff, national officers, advisors, and members have traveled the world to offer assistance, gain valuable international work experience, or study agricultural production, policy, and culture in numerous countries in every corner of the globe.

Based on these conclusions, I recommends that a comprehensive assessment of worldwide agricultural education programs should be conducted. Sources of information for such an assessment would be Ministries of Education and offices of vocational education in countries to determine the status of their agricultural education programs and agricultural youth organizations such as future farmers’ and young farmers’ clubs. The National FFA Organization should reconstitute the Committee on International Educational Activities. It should work to consolidate all information about agricultural education/FFA involvement in international agricultural activities and make regular reports to the National Association for Agricultural Education (NAAE), American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE), the National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education (NASAE), and at National Ag Ed Summit meetings. The National

Council for Agricultural Education should work with FFA International Activities officials to organize and lead a revised emphasis on

international agricultural education and future farmer organizations for the youth of the world.

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