

PROVIDING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF TEACHERS

E. M. Juergenson, University of California, Davis

Few educators would debate the fact that the single most important agent in the success of a high school agriculture department is the teacher. In most states example after example can be found where a department has been flat on its back and an enthusiastic, effective new teacher has taken over and in a very little while put the department back on its feet. Granted that there are many problems involved in building a strong agriculture department, such as weak administration, indifference at the community level, or urbanization, but by and large a good teacher can overcome most of these problems. If this is so, then it would follow that leaders in agricultural education, and agriculture teacher educators especially, should devote most of their efforts toward providing an adequate supply of effective teachers.

In recent years a dwindling supply of new teachers has become a nationwide problem, often becoming so acute that a general alarm exists. The factors responsible for this decline in persons interested in teaching agriculture are difficult to pinpoint. Salaries are high, working conditions are good, demand is strong, advancement is often rapid and leads to many other stimulating fields, yet interest among qualified young people is low.

Members of the 1963 Pacific Regional Conference of Teacher Educators and Supervisors were so concerned about the situation that they made it a major item of consideration for the 1964 conference. In preparation for this it seemed logical to discover the current supply and demand and, if possible, any trends involved in order that deliberations and possible courses of action be based on sound premises. Accordingly, each state was polled (by questionnaire) in order to bring together statistics for the past five years. In many cases the information was difficult to ferret out and put together into a common, meaningful pattern or form. Nevertheless, a total of 36 replies were received and the information presented here is based on answers to this nationwide poll.

A summary of the teacher supply is made in the chart, beginning with the year 1960.

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TREND IN TEACHER SUPPLY FOR AGRICULTURE*

Survey Question		1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
Number of teachers prepared in your state	Total	961	824	736	707	407
	Average	26.7	22.9	20.4	19.6	17.0
Number of new teachers placed in your state	Total	503	447	464	460	77
	Average	14.4	12.8	13.3	13.5	15.4
Anticipated openings for 1964	Total					575
	Average					17.9

The anticipated openings in 1964 totaled 575, with an average of 17.9 per state, so it appears that demand is going to be even greater in the period ahead.

*Replies were received from Arizona, Arkansas, California (University of California, Davis, and California State Polytechnic College), Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

New teachers beginning July, 1963, averaged \$5,638 with a range from \$4,300 to \$7,380 (on an 11 month basis) for all states reporting. The average salary for all teachers was \$6,671. This represents an average of means reported by all states. While this figure is not as accurate as it might be, it represents the best single average that could be determined from the data available.

In an attempt to stimulate the production of ideas that might increase the supply of teachers, states were asked to list the recruitment programs that had been most effective in their situation as well as indicating new ideas which they felt would be helpful. Some of the ideas mentioned most frequently in each of the categories are as follows: (Arrangement is in order of importance, with most valuable listed first.)

1. What recruitment programs have been most productive for your institution in getting student teacher candidates?
 - a. Direct recruitment through local teacher of vocational agriculture.
 - b. Personal recruitment by teacher educators who visit and address high school and junior college agricultural groups.
 - c. Recruitment through on-campus agricultural groups, such as Alpha Tau Alpha, Collegiate F. F. A., and Agricultural Education Club.
 - d. Contacting students participating in regional or statewide activities such as career days, judging days, or agricultural contests.

2. What ideas, programs, innovations, or contacts would you suggest that might be helpful in getting additional candidates?

- a. Contact personally the interested boy and his parents.
- b. Develop a continuing program to acquaint high school counselors with agricultural education and its opportunities.
- c. Use new folders and brochures, such as the one prepared by AATFA.
- d. Promote and use more scholarships for students enrolling in agricultural education.
- e. Develop special awards for teachers of agriculture for guiding students into teaching.
- f. Increase teachers salaries.
- g. Contact science students who have no initial interest in agriculture.
- h. Allow greater flexibility in course scheduling in high school so as to contact all possible students.
- i. Develop and use films and slides made specifically for recruiting teachers of agriculture.
- j. Initiate assistantship programs for graduate students leaning toward teaching.
- k. Place more emphasis on recruiting in-college students who have majors other than agricultural education.

3. What brochures or other written materials do you believe are needed?

- a. Develop and use local brochures to fit specific conditions.
- b. Make available on an annual basis brochures or bulletins listing available jobs, salary scales, and advancement opportunities.
- c. Develop slide sets depicting future needs and opportunities in teaching agriculture.

While in many areas of education an adequate supply of teachers exists, and in some even an over supply, in agricultural education this is not the case.

Agricultural education has long been the target of administrators who maintain that the supply of agricultural teachers is purposely curtailed in order to raise salaries. This is not true, has never been true, and teacher educators are often victims of the situation.

A great many reasons are listed for this decline in teacher supply; a major one seems to be the decline in total farm population. This has led to the erroneous general belief that fewer people are needed in agriculture and related agricultural occupations. Whatever these reasons are, teacher educators must consider this situation as the number one problem to be solved. Ideas expressed in the poll of states that would increase the supply have merit but are not earthshaking and to some degree have been tried before without real success.

The problem must receive new and vigorous attention from both teacher educators, supervisors, and administration. New avenues of supply and new methods of promotion are needed as never before if the trend is to be reversed so that properly qualified teachers exist for every school that needs them. This is the first step toward improving vocational agriculture and helping it to serve the community, which is now demanding that vocational education do more than ever before.