



THE FUNCTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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Research in the agriculture of a commercial society has two-fold function, namely, the improvement of the economic and social life of the individual, and second, the improvement of that society. Research, therefore, must seek means of making the individual farmer efficient, not only to improve his own status economically and socially, but to fulfill the obligation of the farmer as a member of a society that is increasing its efficiency throughout all its members. In other words, the results of increased efficiency have always gone in part to the efficient individual or groups of individuals and in part to the society of which the individual or groups are a part. Research in agriculture therefore, aims not only for making the individual farmer efficient in production and in giving him the physical benefit thereof; it aims also at uplifting as a whole the society of which the farmer is a part.

Agricultural research had its origin at a time when production problems were the chief concern of agriculture and society as a whole, hence the early efforts at research were directed largely towards the development of information in the field of production. Another important factor affecting the course of development of research was the need for teaching literature. This research has brought under control most of the factors which limit the food and clothing supply of the world. The chief phases of the problem yet unsolved are for the most part matters of transportation and an adequate distribution of the purchasing power of the masses of our population. A study of recent trends in agricultural research reveals the fact that between the years 1919 and 1930 there was an increase of 87.3 per cent in the total number of projects listed by the office of Experiment Stations. This survey is not presented as an accurate determination of the amount of research work being done in various fields, but it is an indication of the trend. It reveals the fact that the largest increase in percentage has been in the field of rural sociology, second largest in the field of agricultural economics. Other fields showing growth are agricultural engineering, economic zoology, field crops, food technology, forestry, genetics, home economics, and weeds. Fields showing a percentage of decline during the same period are agricultural chemistry, animal husbandry, poultry, dairying, bacteriology, botany, economic entomology, horticulture, meteorology, plant pathology, soils and fertilizers, veterinary medicine and seeds. This indicates an increased interest in the fields of economics and sociology. While research has checked or eliminated most of the hazards of production and has helped to guarantee an adequate supply of food, clothing, and shelter; further research in the same field is still required to keep agriculture abreast of a progressing civilization. Just now a change of emphasis would probably be justified, placing great emphasis on social and economic aspects of agriculture and on standards of living. One of the greatest questions confronting agriculture at present

is the matter of stabilized purchasing power on the part of the entire population and a higher standard of living which would enable this nation to consume most agricultural products. There are also many new problems outside of the field of production which need to be attacked. There is still much room for improvement in health conditions, in standards of living, and the quality of our products, and in the field of marketing. Finally it may be said that the function of research and training of farmers is to continue to provide the blue prints for a more prosperous agriculture to the end that the social and economic life of farmers may be improved and that society as a whole may be benefited.

