

Research in Brief



MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

SUPERVISORS—WHAT DO THEY READ?

How do you keep up with the latest developments in your field? This North Carolina study took a look at professional reading habits of nine men and eight women Extension district supervisors. These supervisors averaged about 9 hours a week reading beyond the daily newspaper and principally for professional improvement. On the average, they received nine professional publications and four popular publications each month.

Supervisors were asked how they read the various publications they received. Most publications were scanned only—mainly as a matter of intellectual curiosity. These scanned publications generally were rated only slightly to moderately useful in their work as supervisors. These included such publications as *Forecast*, *USDA Research*, *USDA Marketing*, *What's New in Home Economics*, and *Journal of Home Economics*. They tended to read two other publications—*Adult Education* and *Adult Leadership*—selectively. They read them for professional improvement and evaluated them as moderately useful to them as supervisors.

Overall, these supervisors ranked the *Journal of Cooperative Extension* and the *Extension Service Review* as the ones they read the most completely and for professional improvement. The *Journal* was rated somewhat higher than the *Review* in usefulness to the supervisors.

Robert C. Hubbard, Jr., "A Study of the Reading Habits of the Members of the N.C. Agricultural Extension Service, Part I, District Supervisors," Department of Adult Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, January, 1969.

MASON E. MILLER is Director, Institute for Extension Personnel Development, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

CHOICE VERSUS NO CHOICE

It may be that farmers adopt many practices before they have adequate knowledge of the possible consequences of adoption. That's a major implication from this study of adoption of bulk milk tanks by central Ohio dairy farmers.

Under what conditions might such adoption-before-knowledge take place? It appears that when the decision-maker sees no alternatives to adoption, he may adopt the innovation regardless of his attitudes toward or perceptions of the innovation. In the case of bulk milk tanks, these farmers' decisions were hastened by a deadline date by which they had to have bulk tanks if they wanted to continue to sell Grade A milk. Objectively, adoption wasn't the only alternative open to these farmers. They also could reject bulk tanks and continue with can-handling and sell lower grade milk for manufacturing purposes. Or they could reject the innovation and cease dairy farming.

In this study, adopters were divided into "involuntary" and "voluntary." This was determined according to whether they had seen themselves forced into using bulk tanks or whether they felt they had had alternatives and had made the choice of bulk tanks on their own.

Involuntary adopters were different from voluntary adopters. Some of them may have adopted without evaluating the innovation. In fact, 30 per cent of them employed no information sources during the adoption stage. On the other hand, the voluntary adopters predominantly continued their information-seeking until they finally purchased the bulk tank.

The study points out the importance of a change agent knowing how the individual farmer identifies himself and his farming situation. The change agent must also make clear to farmers the alternatives to a given course of action. By knowing how the farmer sees himself and his farming situation, the change agent can better decide what information the farmer needs to make his decisions.

The study also seems to make a case for personal acquaintance and influence being more important for change than impersonal sources, at least in this kind of situation. Impersonal sources cannot adequately take into account a person's identity or definition of the situation. It is not correct to assume that each individual perceives an alternative to adoption.

A. Eugene Havens, "Increasing the Effectiveness of Predicting Innovativeness," Papers for Fiftieth Anniversary of Rural Sociology at Cornell University, 1915-1965, Department of Rural Sociology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, September, 1968.

FARM PRACTICE ADOPTION IN WESTERN NIGERIA

As in most countries, the Nigerian government is concerned with getting their farmers to be as productive as possible. This is a study of factors associated with adoption of government-recommended practices to increase production of cocoa, poultry, and maize. Interviewed were 550 farmers from 11 villages.

In general, cocoa farmers were older, had more wives, cultivated more land, had the largest number of plots, had been farming longer, and participated more in organizations. Maize farmers had the lowest education level, hired the most help, participated least in organizations or in use of mass media. Poultry farmers had the most education; had greater access to information through postal service, radio, newspaper, and film shows; had more dependents; and had been farming the shortest time.

The reason given most frequently for non-adoption was that they had not heard about the practice. Advice given by an individual, usually a respected farmer, was the reason given by more than half the respondents for deciding to try new methods. Advice given by government extension officers ranked second in importance.

The most important single factor limiting expansion by the maize farmers was the unavailability of capital or credit. Limited land, lack of capital and credit were most important in limiting cocoa farm expansion. The unfavorable price of poultry and eggs discouraged the poultry farmer from continuing or expanding.

The service cocoa and maize farmers wanted most from the government was provision for credit and/or loans. Next in importance was ready and better markets. Planting materials and technical advice on cultivation ranked third. Most important for the poultry raisers were a supply of sexed, day-old chicks, technical advice on management and housing, veterinary care, a regular supply of poultry feed at a subsidized price, better and more economic feeders, and provision for loans and credit.

The authors also list a number of tentative hypotheses growing out of this study that have to do with characteristics of villages whose occupants were generally receptive to new ideas. Some of these factors were: age, historical development, ready access to other progressive villages, good roads, markets, progressive leadership, and the presence of several agriculturally oriented peace-loving tribes.

Robert C. Clark and I. A. Akinbode, "Factors Associated with Adoption of Three Farm Practices in the Western State, Nigeria," Research Bulletin 1, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ife, Nigeria, April, 1968.