

# THE AGRICULTURAL TRADE POLICY EDUCATION PROJECT

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The agricultural trade policy education project was established to develop educational materials related to agricultural trade and trade policy issues. It is a national project supported by special funds provided by the Extension Service, USDA, and by the professional efforts of policy specialists and economists in the state Extension Services and USDA.

The scope and direction of the project has been guided by a national steering committee composed of individuals from the various regions of the U.S.

The first effort under the project was to develop a publication called *Speaking of Trade: Its Effect on Agriculture*. The purpose was to provide for anyone, not particularly familiar with international trade history, theory, institutions, and issues, with a convenient way of reading in these areas. The publication was not developed for widespread distribution but rather for a fairly specialized audience. The publication provides the reader with historical and theoretical background in agricultural trade relationships between agricultural policies and trade policies; international institutions and trade arrangements; the quantitative aspects of world and U.S. agricultural trade; and, current and emerging issues.

If the authors of the chapter on current and emerging issues were to rewrite it today, no doubt they would want to change a number of things. But even so, I was pleased and a little surprised with the relevance of the chapter to today's trade issues. Many events of the past two years fit into the chapter as examples of what the authors were discussing.

I don't know to what extent *Speaking of Trade: Its Effect on Agriculture* has been used in the way the steering committee visualized. I think it may be quite extensive. It has also seen considerable classroom use. The publication received a 1979 Superior Certificate Award of the National Communicators in Education and a 1979 American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) Quality of Communication Award.

The second effort was a set of six leaflets with the title, *Speaking of Trade: Key Issues for Agriculture*. Here the idea was to prepare materials that respond to the kinds of questions that agricultural producers might have about agricultural trade, and so were prepared for this specific audience. The leaflets were:

*Why Trade, Protection or Free Trade, Commodity Marketing and World Trade, Expanding Trade, The Balance Trade, International Marketing System*. The authors are mainly Extension policy specialists.

## **Future Plans**

The project has also been supportive of some regional trade conferences. Some plans have been made for future developments. The steering committee has focused on an important educational need, that is, to understand the nature of the markets for our agricultural products, and the factors that will affect future expansion. The materials will emphasize the agricultural policies and the trade policies of these countries as they bear on our efforts to gain greater access to these markets. There is a great educational need in this area, particularly in the present environment of lagging U.S. exports. We read editorials and hear reports of what is needed to expand markets without any reference to political and policy considerations. We propose a set of papers as follows: An overall perspective paper; four papers for the developed countries: Japan, EC-10, Canada, and Western Europe; three papers for the centrally planned: USSR, Eastern European and PRC; and three papers for the LDC's: the oil rich LDC's, the rapidly growing middle income LDC's, and the low income LDC's. Some further breakdowns are possible. We intend that these papers be made available to the states as camera ready copy.

My final comment relates to distribution of the papers described above. Perhaps they will be used as handouts at trade policy conferences and meetings. We are thinking about a package of materials that the individual policy specialist can adopt to a variety of outlets such as newspapers, magazines, and other media.