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A STUDY OF FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA WHO WERE AWARDED THE  
AMERICAN FARMER DEGREE FROM THE SOUTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION  
DURING THE YEARS 1930 TO 1950 INCLUSIVE

by

B. T. Nelson

A problem submitted to the Faculty of South Dakota State  
College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Science (Plan B)

June 1951

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## INTRODUCTION

After graduation from high school, what happens to the members of the Future Farmers of America? What type of citizens do they become? The purpose of this study is to get at least part of the answer to these questions.

This problem is limited to a study of the Future Farmers in South Dakota who have been granted an American Farmer Degree. The F. F. A. is a national organization of boys.

Active membership in the Future Farmers of America, commonly known as the F.F.A., is restricted to high-school boys who are enrolled in vocational agriculture. An active membership may be maintained for a period not to exceed three years after graduation.

The degrees of promotion in the F.F.A. are Green Hand, Chapter Farmer, State Farmer, and American Farmer. The minimum requirements for an American Farmer degree are discussed in Chapter three.

All states in the Union, and Puerto Rico and Hawaii, have state associations and local chapters of the F.F.A. In each state the Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture is the adviser for the state association of the F.F.A. On a local school level the senior teacher of vocational agriculture is the chapter adviser. The Chief of the Agricultural Education Service of the U. S. Office of Education is the national adviser of the F.F.A.

Question has sometimes been raised regarding many school organizations: do the students who were recognized as being outstanding in some field of activity in school prove themselves in later years? No one

study or many studies can answer all questions that might be brought up, but it is timely to check on outcomes or results of a program.

### Purpose of Study

The men who receive the American Farmer Degree are outstanding in high school, and at least up to the time that they are awarded this honor, which is conferred upon them after they complete secondary school. In this study the writer wishes to find out if they are still outstanding. The following questions are also discussed: are they contributing to leadership; are they adjusted in an occupation; are they working in agriculture; and what progress have they made in their field? Information was gathered by means of a questionnaire which asked these men to state how vocational agriculture had influenced or helped them in selecting and entering their occupation.

It is expected that this study can serve as a measure in evaluating the F.F.A. Vocational agricultural teachers can better understand the need of making their courses practical and usable on the farms and ranches of their communities when they realize that a big majority of their students are likely to be farmers or in related occupations.

Many industrial and commercial organizations are rallying to promote and support the F.F.A. It is well that stock be taken of this organization to assure that it will continue to be effective as an independent agency that aids its members and contributes to the cause of better agriculture.

### Procedure

In making this study, a list of the names and the local chapters of

the twenty-two F.F.A. members who have received the American Farmer Degree through the South Dakota association were secured from the Office of the Adviser of the State Association.

A questionnaire was mailed to each of the twenty-one American Farmers still living. Sixteen, or seventy-six per cent, completed and returned the questionnaire. One man is deceased and therefore was not counted in the tabulations.

A sample of the questionnaire used is included in Appendix A, and a copy of a letter mailed with the questionnaire may be found in Appendix B. A follow-up on the questionnaire brought the percentage of replies from sixty-six to seventy-six.

In a few cases personal interviews were made following the questionnaire.

The data collected were compiled and certain conclusions were reached. They are reported in this study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE  
PERTAINING TO AMERICAN FARMERS

The F.F.A. became a national organization in 1928. The history of the first twenty-two years of the association shows a tremendous growth and increase of influence by this youth organization. At the National Convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, in October 1950, two hundred and sixty-five boys received the degree of American Farmer.

A few previous studies of the American Farmers in other states have been made to determine the progress and success of these boys after leaving high school. A study of American Farmers and State Farmers in West Virginia<sup>1</sup> was made in 1938 in order to find out their progress in agriculture, their participation in non-farm occupations, and their participation in community organization and activities. If engaged in other fields, these men were asked their reasons for not farming, and their plans for the future.

Eighteen members were working at full-time farming; four of these were owners, four were partners, eight were working at home for wages, and two were working at home with an income from one or more owned enterprises. Of this group, ten were farming part-time, three owned farms, five had a share interest in farms, one was working at home for an indefinite wage, and one worked at home with the income of one or more owned enterprises. Eight were attending agricultural college, and three were attending other colleges, while two were still in high school.

1. W. H. Wayman, A Follow-up Study of Distinguished West Virginia Future Farmers, p. 53.

Three men were in occupations related to agriculture, and twelve were in non-agricultural occupations.

The men replying to the questionnaire had an average of two memberships in community organizations, and the fifty-six members held thirty offices.

The reports of twelve members gave attendance at college or earning money to attend college as reasons for not farming full-time, whereas ten men said that they lacked the money to farm. Fourteen members expected to farm as owners: six as partners, four as managers, three as renters; and seven expected to farm on a part-time basis: three as owners and four as partners. Nine members planned to do related agricultural work, three were undecided, and six expected to do non-agricultural work during the next five years.

In Oklahoma,<sup>2</sup> a study of sixty-one young men holding the American Farmer Degree was made in 1947. The purpose of this study was to determine the progress made in their leadership ability in their farming programs and in other activities after receiving the degree. Comparisons were made of groups of young men in three different periods, 1928-38, 1938-42, and 1942-47.

The men holding the American Farmer Degree have a comparatively strong educational background. All were high school graduates and a large percentage attended college for at least one year. From the time that the first degree was awarded in 1928, a steady increase was shown in the production of wheat and beef as a result of skillful farm practices.

2. G. W. Keener, A Study of Young Men Holding the American Farmer Degree in Oklahoma, p. 58.

From the time the American Farmers received their degrees, their livestock and farm machinery investments increased a total of \$234,040. These men were active leaders in their communities and state farm organizations.

Eleven of the group held offices.

In a Master's Thesis in 1947, J. D. Roger<sup>3</sup> reports that of the thirty-six American Farmers in Louisiana from 1933 to 1947, fourteen were farming, six were in occupations related to farming, and sixteen were in occupations not related to farming. Ten of the fourteen American Farmers engaged in farming were located in the home community, and the other four were located elsewhere in the state. Fourteen of the twenty-two engaged in occupations other than farming were located out of the home community but within the state, while three were in other states, one in a foreign country, and four were engaged in the home community. Twelve of the seventeen American Farmers who went to college attended an agricultural college.

In an occupational distribution study of American Farmers in North Carolina,<sup>4</sup> it was found that, at the time of the study, 45.2 per cent were farming, 10.9 per cent were in related occupations, and 15 per cent were in occupations not related to agriculture. Four per cent were still in military service. Of the American Farmers who were not in farming, 70 per cent did plan to farm, 25 per cent did not plan to farm, and 5 per cent were undecided.

These data indicate that American and State Farmers attend agricultural colleges and enter related occupations in greater proportions than young men not holding either degree.

3. J. D. Roger, Occupational Studies of American Farmers in Louisiana, 1933-47

4. G. B. James, An Occupational Distribution Study of Former Students of Vocational Agriculture Who Received the American Farmer Degree from the North Carolina Association of Future Farmers of America During the Period July 1928 through July 1947, p. 105.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR  
ELECTION TO AMERICAN FARMER DEGREE

The Future Farmers of America is a national organization of boys studying vocational agriculture. This organization is composed of chartered state associations, which, in turn, are made up of local chapters situated in high schools having departments of vocational agriculture. The boys enrolled in such courses constitute its active membership, but provision is also made for associate and honorary memberships.

There are four grades or degrees of active membership, namely: Green Hand, Chapter Farmer, State Farmer, and American Farmer. These grades are earned by definite accomplishments in connection with the vocational agriculture program of the school. Local chapters determine the individual's advancement in the first two grades of membership, the state association determines the third, and the national organization confers the fourth degree. Specific levels of attainment with respect to farming, earnings, investments, leadership, and scholarship are set up for each degree.

In the Official Manual of the Future Farmers of America, the minimum qualifications for election to the degree of American Farmer are given as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. Must have held each of the three prerequisite degrees prior to election to the Degree of American Farmer, have been an active member of the F.F.A. continuously for at least 35 months, and have a record of satisfactory participation in the activities of the local chapter and State association.
2. Must have satisfactorily completed at least three school years of instruction in vocational agriculture, or have completed all of the vocational agriculture offered in the

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Official Manual for Future Farmers of America, p. 16.

school last attended, have been out of high school for at least 12 months prior to the convention at which the degree is granted, and have in operation an outstanding program of supervised farming. Productive projects must show comprehensive planning, continuation, growth, and increase in scope as substantiated by complete, accurate, and neat records.

3. During the period covered by his application, the candidate must have earned by his own efforts from farming and other agricultural work and have deposited in a bank or otherwise productively invested at least \$500, provided that at least two-thirds of this amount is derived from his supervised farming program. In the cases where the applicant has assisted in the support of dependents, the amount so expended, in the judgment of the National Board of Trustees, may be considered as an investment.

4. Show outstanding ability as evidenced by his leadership and cooperation in student, chapter, and community activities, and have a satisfactory scholarship record as certified to by the local school superintendent or principal.

Burdette Sheldon of Brookings was the first F.F.A. member in South Dakota to receive the American Farmer Degree. Since the awarding of this degree in 1930, there have been twenty-one other young men so honored. This makes a total of twenty-two South Dakota F.F.A. members who have received this degree during the twenty-one year period 1930 through 1950. The requirements for this recognition are necessarily high, as indicated by the fact that with a state membership of approximately 2200 in 1951 only two degrees were apportioned to South Dakota.

The names of the men who have received this degree and the addresses of the local chapters of the F.F.A. to which they belonged are given in Appendix C.

## EXPERIENCES OF AMERICAN FARMER CANDIDATES

A brief summary of some of the experiences and accomplishments of three American Farmers is given here to illustrate the type of credentials furnished to the National Executive Committee in behalf of a candidate for the honor of the Degree of American Farmer.

We wish to pay tribute here to Andrew Sundstrom (deceased) of the F.F.A. chapter at Lennox, who was elected National President of the F.F.A. in 1934. As President, Mr. Sundstrom traveled in many states and Hawaii. He was outstanding as a student at South Dakota State College, and graduated with majors in agronomy and journalism. From the time when he left college in 1939 until his death in 1950, Mr. Sundstrom was engaged in related occupations, and was an able leader. He also served as an officer in the United States Navy during World War II. The F.F.A. chapter at Lennox has been renamed the Sundstrom Chapter.

Burdette Sheldon, of the Brookings chapter of the F.F.A., is the first American Farmer from South Dakota. He is a successful farmer and sale-barn owner and operator in his home community. As a vocational agriculture student, he owned three sows, forty-six pigs, and fifteen acres of corn, as reported in "Fifteen Years of Future Farmers of America Progress in South Dakota" by Arlington Eddy. In addition, Sheldon was responsible for the management of some cattle. He also had an interest in land and machinery. In 1951, twenty years after high-school graduation, Mr. Sheldon owns 118 head of livestock, 200 acres of land, and manages 480 acres. He is a member of the Production and Marketing Administration Committee, an officer in a service organization, a member of a lodge, and a 4-H club leader.

Francis L. Van Sambeek of Milbank, who received the degree in 1947, has not had much time to build up a large holding in agricultural goods or real estate. In 1951 he reports that he owns ten head of dairy cattle, and that he has been operating a 480 acre farm for three years. In addition, he has been a district weed-control supervisor and a member of a state board for a rural youth organization. From his farming program, while still a student in agriculture, he earned \$1904.59. One part of his farming program serves to illustrate one objective in vocational agriculture, namely, to build a long-time program. Van Sambeek started in the dairy business as a sophomore in high school with two dairy animals. In his senior year he had three dairy animals, and, at present, three years later, he owns ten head.

## PROGRESS OF SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN FARMERS

## Education

As reported on the sixteen questionnaires returned (out of twenty-one mailed), thirteen of these American Farmers had four years of vocational agriculture in high school. One student had only two years of agriculture, while the two others had three years. Seven, or 43.7 per cent, had attended college, all studying agriculture. Five of the sixteen, or 31.2 per cent of those reporting, had graduated from college; one had completed a doctor's degree and another a master's degree, both in agriculture. In a study in Louisiana, 38.9 per cent of the American Farmers studied had attended college, while 33.3 per cent had attended an agriculture college. A recapitulation of the educational advancement of the South Dakota group is presented in Table I.

TABLE I. EDUCATION OF AMERICAN FARMERS

ITEMS	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Had four years of vocational agriculture	13	81.2
2. Holding bachelor degree in agriculture	5	31.2
3. Holding bachelor degree not in agriculture	0	0
4. Holding a graduate degree	2	12.5
5. Attended college studying agriculture, no degree	2	12.5
6. Attended non-agriculture college, no degree	0	0
7. Attending college in May, 1951	0	0
8. No college training	9	56.2

The requirements for an American Farmer Degree have such large and inclusive supervised farming program requirements that it is only natural for these boys to take the next step, that of farming. Military service during and after World War II undoubtedly affected the plans of some of these men. One American Farmer had completed work on a master's degree

in animal husbandry and was a farmer, but the majority had no college training.

### Occupations

All but one of the men in this study were in agricultural work, and all but two were farming or managing farms while engaged in related occupations. The non-farmer did farm for five years, and in his present occupation of carpenter and contractor, he stated that farm shop "had given him valuable information."

Considering the fact that many of these men are comparatively recent high school graduates, a surprisingly large percentage (62.5) are farming full time. In similar studies of American Farmers in Louisiana, it was reported that 39 per cent were farming; whereas, in North Carolina, 45.2 per cent were farming. The relationship between receiving the American Farmer Degree and entering agricultural work is very high in this study. The study would indicate that this select group of Future Farmers of America does become farmers.

Table II shows the various agricultural pursuits followed by the 88 per cent who farm or manage farms full time or part time. This table also shows only one who is not in agricultural work.

TABLE II. OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AS OF MAY, 1951

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PER CENT
1. Full time farming	10	62.5
2. Farming and operating livestock sale barn	1	6.2
3. Agri. college dept. head and managing farm	1	6.2
4. Agri. journalist and managing farm	1	6.2
5. Farming and teaching veterans' agriculture class	1	6.2
6. Soil conservationist U. S. D. A.	1	6.2
7. Carpenter and contractor	1	6.2
Total	16	99.7

The occupations other than farming followed by these men since high school graduation is illustrated in Table III. Only occupations which were followed for a year or more are included in the study. It seemed obvious from the study that some had not included time in the armed forces as an occupation when filling out their reports. Of this group only four reported having been in military service a year or more.

Seven out of sixteen, or 43.7 per cent, had attended college where they studied agriculture, but one of the number had attended only part of a year and therefore was not counted in Table III. Five of the six who attended college more than one year were graduated with Bachelor of Science degrees in Agriculture. Not one of the group reporting attended a non-agricultural college.

TABLE III. OCCUPATIONS: NOT FARMING, FOLLOWED ONE YEAR OR MORE

OCCUPATION	NUMBER INDIVIDUALS
Carpenter and contractor	1
Agriculture teacher in college, dept. head	1
Agriculture Journalism	1
Soil Conservationist	1
Livestock sale barn manager	1
Attending college	6
U. S. Armed Forces*	4

\*Being in the armed forces was not suggested as an occupation in the questionnaire, and apparently many did not report armed forces experience.

The results of this study show very little shifting from one occupation to another. Only in one case did an individual shift from farming to an unrelated field. The writer has classified the following as being related agricultural occupations: teaching in the field of agriculture,

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agricultural journalism, soil conservation service, and livestock sales barn operation. The agricultural economy has been favorable in the past ten years, a fact which may have helped influence these men to stay in farming.

The questionnaire used in this study asked each participant how vocational agriculture had influenced or helped him in selecting and entering his occupation. All replies, with but one exception, listed one or more ways in which this course had been helpful. The answers given were not easily grouped for tabulation. Similar answers have been combined, and the eighteen points given in Table IV are used to illustrate the types of answers given. The frequency of each point is shown in column three.

The question discussed in the preceding paragraph was formulated by design and not by accident. The thought in mind was not to draw answers to questions which suggested their own answers, but rather to have the respondent give his own answers as they occurred to him. On this premise, the question could perhaps be criticized in its assumption that vocational agriculture had helped the subject select or enter an occupation. It would be unlikely that the individual could escape being affected by the agricultural course and the F.F.A.

TABLE IV. INFLUENCES OR HELP FROM VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE  
IN SELECTING AND ENTERING OCCUPATIONS

ITEM	FREQUENCY
1. Broadened view and created more interest in agriculture	9
2. Received much valuable information on farming	5
3. Judging work one of greatest advantages of voc. ag.	3
4. Interested me in taking further study in agriculture	2
5. Learned by actual case situations	2
6. Taught me that there is true satisfaction in farming	2
7. Farming program helped me get started in farming	1
8. Learned to keep records	1
9. Learned to plan ahead	1
10. Taught me that agriculture is a profession of which to be proud	1
11. Using practical things learned in agriculture I built a run-down farm into a well-producing farm	1
12. Compared farming to other occupation	1
13. Voc. ag. was an assist in getting employment	1
14. Helped give poise and confidence	1
15. Leadership was developed	1
16. Boys with voc. ag. background become excellent conservationists in their farming operations because they know why such practices are important	1
17. Developed my interest to promote better agriculture and methods	1
18. Gave me valuable information through my shop work	1

Item eleven in Table IV, although expressed but once in these words, seems to summarize several sub-topics and point out one of the salient measures of the worth of the whole program. All replies to this query were complimentary to the program, as might well be expected in view of the wording of the question. Item one of the same table is a compilation of nine statements which were summarized into one statement as follows: broadened viewpoint and created more interest in agriculture. Some of the men who said that their viewpoint had been broadened also said that they had learned to appreciate the importance of farming and farm problems. The following statement was made by a United States

Department of Agriculture soil conservationist (see item sixteen in Table IV): "Boys with voc. ag. background become excellent conservationists in their farming operations because they know why such practices are important." This statement is a tribute to the practical aspects of vocational agriculture. Undoubtedly, this list of items could have been further condensed and shortened, but more condensing would have removed from the table certain significant variations of thoughts expressed.

#### Farming Status

All except one of those who returned a questionnaire reported one or more years of experience as a farm laborer, partner, tenant, manager not owner, or owner-operator. In Table V an attempt was made to analyze the progress made toward farmer owner-operator, with respect to the number of years spent in the various categories of farming. It is not to be assumed that these subdivisions of the occupation of farming listed above are necessarily successive steps on the ladder of success. Most farmers, however, are too limited in finances to start farming as owner-operators immediately after high school. Therefore, these farmer classifications, although they are not successive steps, are groupings within which many farmers have spent some time. The goal of most full-time farmers is that of owner-operator.

TABLE V. AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE SCHOOL  
IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF FARMING

CLASSIFICATION	AVERAGE NO. YEARS
1. Laborer	1/2
2. Partner	2 7/16
3. Tenant	1 11/16
4. Manager, not owner	3/16
5. Owner-operator	1 1/4

In Table V the average number of years spent in the various subdivisions of farming has been computed. Here again, most of these men are comparatively recent graduates of vocational agriculture, which perhaps explains the large number of years spent as partners and tenants as compared to the years spent as owner-operators. It seemed significant that only three, or 19 per cent, reported having spent a year or more as farm laborers. This situation can no doubt be explained in part, at least, by the requirements of the supervised farming programs engaged in by boys who apply for the American Farmer Degree. This supervised farming program virtually requires that the boys be started in farming, even though the start need not be large in scope. The findings here correspond closely to the results of a study by the Agricultural Economics Department of South Dakota State College in which they found the period spent as a farm laborer was relatively short.

In Tables VI and VII the group was divided into two classes: those living on a farm (Table VI), and those not living on a farm (Table VII) but owning, operating, or managing one or more farms. Only two were neither living on a farm nor engaged in any phase of farm management as a side line. To express it another way, 87.5 per cent were engaged in some phase of farm management, as shown in Tables II and VI. Of the men living on farms, we find that 35.7 per cent own land. Twelve of these men operate 4983 acres, of which 1463 acres are owned and 3120 acres are rented from others. When these management phases are broken down into average acres operated, owned, and rented per individual, it was found that the twelve who lived on farms were operating an average of 415.2 acres per operator. The five farm owners who lived on farms owned an average of 292.6 acres each, while eleven renters were renting an average

of 283.6 acres apiece. Classification four, "acres managed, not owned," is interpreted to include those who have management responsibility of a farm, but are not operating or doing the work on the farm.

TABLE VI. STATUS OF OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF FARMS BY AMERICAN FARMERS LIVING ON FARMS AS OF MAY, 1951

CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF ACRES	NO. INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING	AVERAGE NO. ACRES
1. Acres operated	4983	12	415.2
2. Acres owned	1463	5	292.6
3. Acres rented	3120	11	283.6
4. Acres managed, not owned	320	1	320.0

TABLE VII. STATUS OF OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF FARMS BY AMERICAN FARMERS NOT LIVING ON FARMS AS OF MAY, 1951

CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF ACRES	NO. INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING
1. Acres operated	320	1
2. Acres owned	200	1
3. Acres managed but not operated	800	2

In Table VII are grouped those who do not live on a farm but who operate, own, or manage farms. There were two in this study who lived away from the farm and managed farms as a side line to some other agricultural work. One man lived in town and operated a farm nearby.

#### Livestock Ownership

In Table VIII, a recapitulation of livestock ownership as of May 1951 is shown. Eighty-seven per cent of those reporting said that they owned livestock. The classes of livestock included on the questionnaire were as follows: beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, sheep, poultry, and

horses. It is to be understood that this investigation includes only livestock owned on a given day in May of 1951, and not total livestock owned over a period of time. In cases where livestock was owned in partnership, only that percentage of the stock owned by the American Farmer was included.

One report indicated ownership of beef cattle, swine, and horses, but the number of head owned was not given, and so this report was omitted from the table and the compilations of this phase of the study. After omitting this questionnaire from the tabulations of livestock only, there were fifteen cases to study. The individual whose report was omitted in the livestock study did not report living on a farm or managing a farm.

TABLE VIII. LIVESTOCK OWNERSHIP AS OF MAY, 1951

KIND OF LIVESTOCK	NO. OF HEAD	NO. OF OWNERS IN ENTERPRISE	AVE. NO. HEAD OWNED PER OWNER
1. Beef cattle	232	9	25.8
2. Dairy cattle	56	5	11.2
3. Swine	673	10	67.3
4. Sheep	284	5	56.8
5. Poultry	1100	5	220.0
6. Horses	10	4	2.5

The total head of cattle owned by this group was 288, with a preponderance of beef cattle over dairy cattle of slightly more than four to one. Fourteen, out of fifteen individuals counted, owned cattle; whereas ten owned swine. The total number of swine, 673, is an average of 67.3 head per owner. Only four of the group reported ownership of horses, and six of the ten head reported belonged to one owner.

Of that group who are farming, all own livestock, and all of the livestock recorded in Table VIII is owned by these thirteen men.

## Leadership in Organizations

One of the purposes of this problem was to study the leadership furnished by American Farmers after they leave school. On this score, we find that the boys do measure up after school as well as while in school. One of the questionnaires returned listed no activity in any organization; whether or not this omission was an oversight was not determined. However, the young man in this case had just completed his college work.

With the exception of the F.F.A., all school organization activities, both in high school and college, were omitted in this study. The only F.F.A. activities included are as follows: membership, which all must hold at the time when they receive the degree even though that may be nearly three years after high school; and the office of State President, which three of these men have held. One of South Dakota's American Farmers was National F.F.A. President in 1934-35. This man died in 1950 and is not included in the tabulations of this study.

Table IX lists the types of offices held by this group, and Table X gives the types of organizations in which memberships are or have been held. No claim is made here as to the accuracy of the reports returned. To illustrate, we point out that five individuals reported holding an office in a church organization, and only six reported a membership. This of course is possible, but it is equally possible that some memberships were not reported.

TABLE IX. OFFICES HELD IN ORGANIZATIONS SINCE GRADUATION

TYPE OF OFFICE	NO. OFFICES	NO. INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING
1. Church officer	11	5
2. Professional organization officer	6	3
3. State F.F.A. president	3	3
4. Rural youth organization officer	7	4
5. Farm and agricultural organization officer	4	2
6. 4-H club leader or officer	5	3
7. Chamber of commerce officer	2	2
8. Service club officer	2	2
9. Board of education member	1	1
10. A.A.A. officer	1	1
11. Lodge officer	1	1
12. President reserve officers ass'n	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	44	28

TABLE X. MEMBERSHIPS IN ORGANIZATIONS SINCE GRADUATION

ORGANIZATION	NUMBER MEMBERSHIPS	NO. INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING
1. Farm and agricultural organizations	14	10
2. Professional organizations	11	4
3. Church	6	6
4. F.F.A.	16	16
5. Crop Improvement Association	5	5
6. Service clubs (including P.T.A.)	4	4
7. Rural youth organization	5	5
8. Chamber of commerce (including commercial clubs)	3	3
9. Community band	2	2
10. 4-H club	2	2
11. Reserve officers association	2	2
12. Lodge	1	1
13. Toastmasters	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	72	61

It is significant to note that of the fifteen questionnaires which indicated participation in organizations, only one did not list an office held at some time. One questionnaire, as mentioned previously, did not reveal organizational activity.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the writer set out to find out what the American Farmers who had received their degree through the South Dakota Association of the Future Farmers of America were doing. The question of leadership furnished by this group was also studied. By questionnaires mailed to the twenty-one living American Farmers, and by personal interviews, these men were studied and analyzed with reference to their educational and occupational experience.

The tabulations show that fifteen of the sixteen who responded were in agricultural work, and ten, or 62.5 per cent, were full time farmers. Fourteen of the sixteen, or 87.5 per cent, were full time or part time farmers or were managing land operated by someone else. In similar studies in North Carolina and Louisiana, 45.2 and 39 per cent respectively were engaged in full time farming.

Five of the seven who attended college earned bachelor's degrees in agriculture, and two earned advanced degrees. This means that 31.2 per cent graduated from college, and not a single student attended a non-agricultural college. Thirteen, or 81.2 per cent, had four years of vocational agriculture instruction in secondary school. Conservative estimates usually report that about from five to fifteen per cent of high school graduates complete work toward degrees.

All of these students have been connected with agriculture at least for a time since leaving school. Except for time spent in the armed forces, all but one have been in agriculture for nearly the entire period since leaving school. The per cent of American Farmers in farming or in related occupations is higher for the South Dakota group than for any group studied in which the figures were available.

In reply to a question relative to the influence or help received from vocational agriculture in selecting and entering an occupation, the

response was generous with comments such as: broadened view; created interest; learned by actual case situations; learned to plan ahead; and assisted in getting employment. A few real cases were noted where the high school training had been of paramount importance in doing a major farm management job.

The supervised farming programs carried on while attending, and also after graduation from high school, moved many of these boys directly into farming as partners. The holdings in livestock and other agricultural goods acquired while in their teens seemed to help these students shorten or by-pass a period as a laborer while accumulating enough capital to start farming.

Progress toward owner-operator was in evidence, although only five reported owning land. Beef cattle owned by this group outnumbered the dairy cattle about four to one, or 232 beef to 56 head of dairy cattle. Only those who lived on farms owned livestock or poultry as reported in Table VIII. The average number of animals owned per owner were as follows: beef cattle, 25.8; dairy cattle, 11.2; swine, 67.3; sheep, 56.8; poultry, 220.0; and horses, 2.5. Considering the comparatively short time since many of these men were high school boys, the progress in livestock ownership is significant.

Only one of the sixteen who replied failed to show at least two memberships in organizations, whereas all except two had held one or more offices each. It seems quite probable that the above findings show more activity in leadership than that furnished by the average high school graduate, or by the average F.F.A. member in a like period of time. In a West Virginia study of American Farmers in that state, the men replying

to a questionnaire had an average of two memberships in community organizations, and fifty-six members held thirty offices.

In answer to a question asked with regard to the purpose of this study, it seems that the writer is justified in saying that as a group these American Farmers became American Farmers because they were outstanding and to this day are still outstanding.

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A P P E N D I C E S

A QUESTIONNAIRE TO AMERICAN FARMERS OF SOUTH DAKOTA

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION

- 1. Year graduated from High School \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. Number of years of high school vocational agriculture \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. Number of years you have attended college: enrolled in agriculture \_\_\_\_\_, enrolled in other courses \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. Highest college degree you have earned, or number of years college training \_\_\_\_\_, and course pursued \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. Are you attending college now \_\_\_\_\_?

GENERAL

- 1. What is your present occupation \_\_\_\_\_?
- 2. List occupations, other than farming, you have followed for a year or more since leaving high school.

OCCUPATION

LENGTH OF TIME

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_

3. How has vocational agriculture influenced or helped you in selecting and entering your occupation?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

FARMING EXPERIENCES

1. List number of years since high school graduation you have been on a farm -as:  
laborer\_\_\_\_\_, partner\_\_\_\_\_, tenant\_\_\_\_\_, owner-operator\_\_\_\_\_.
2. If living on a farm or ranch: total number of acres operated\_\_\_\_\_, acres  
owned\_\_\_\_\_, acres rented\_\_\_\_\_, acres managed but not operated\_\_\_\_\_.
3. If not living on a farm or ranch: number of acres owned\_\_\_\_\_, acres  
operated\_\_\_\_\_, acres managed but not operated\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Livestock owned: beef cattle\_\_\_\_\_, dairy cattle\_\_\_\_\_, swine\_\_\_\_\_,  
sheep\_\_\_\_\_, poultry\_\_\_\_\_, horses\_\_\_\_\_.

ACTIVITIES

1. List offices you have held since high school graduation, such as: county or  
state office, farm organization, school board, church, professional organizations,  
and also activities outside your occupation which consume considerable time and  
are of benefit to the public, such as: major committee work.

Give the six main ones.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

2. List five organizations of which you are a member.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

766 Colorado Avenue S.W.  
Huron, South Dakota  
May 1, 1951

To: American Farmers of South Dakota

I am making a study of all the men who have been awarded the American Farmer Degree through the South Dakota Association of Future Farmers of America. By means of the enclosed questionnaire I hope to collect some pertinent information about all twenty-two of South Dakota's American Farmers.

By this study we hope to learn the relationship between outstanding work in vocational agriculture in high school and occupations followed after high school; also the leadership furnished by American Farmers after high school.

Information you can supply will be treated confidentially and results secured through the questionnaire will be compiled as a group study. Individual cases are needed only to get the total picture.

I will greatly appreciate your kind response in completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning same to me in the enclosed envelope at your earliest convenience.

I thank you for your contribution.

Sincerely yours,

Ben Nelson  
Vocational Agriculture Instructor  
Huron High School

South Dakota State College  
Brookings, South Dakota

I feel that this is a worthwhile problem and I would appreciate it greatly if you would cooperate in this study by returning the enclosed questionnaire to Mr. Nelson. We in agriculture education are anxious of securing this information.

Stanley Sundet  
Associate Professor of Education  
State College, Brookings

## AMERICAN FARMERS OF SOUTH DAKOTA

- 1930 Burdette Sheldon, Brookings
- 1931 Barth Maher, Brookings
- 1932 Max Meyers, Gregory
- 1933 Raymond Ellis, Canton
- 1934 Andrew Sundstrom, Lennox (deceased 1950)
- 1935 John Rohlf, Canton
- 1936 Martin Muchow, Hartford
- 1937 None
- 1938 None
- 1939 Owen Nagel, Brookings  
Donald Woodford, Redfield
- 1940 Hugh Barnett, Brookings
- 1941 None
- 1942 Donald Davis, Milbank  
Lowell Johnson, Alcester
- 1943 Robert Moorman, Wessington Springs
- 1944 Marion Johnston, Brookings
- 1945 Virgil Thiele, Milbank
- 1946 William Buller, Brookings
- 1947 Francis L. Van Sambeek, Milbank
- 1948 Loyd Minor, Brookings
- 1949 William Busk, Jr., Milbank  
Lawrence Lutz, Webster
- 1950 Jay Wein, Webster  
Darell Dean, Miller