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Goals of research . . .

FOOD FOR PEOPLE— QUALITY OF LAND AND LIFE

IN SIMPLIFIED TERMS, the goal of agricultural research in this university, and others, is to provide people with better lives. Reaching that goal, though, is a process of attaining many subgoals, some of them very slippery goals that challenge the ingenuity of scientists and the resources of the scientific establishment.

Fundamentally we in agricultural research have a general aim: to preserve and enhance the ability of the land to produce food, ornamental plants, and the cotton, wool, and wood we call fiber. In a world that has paid minimal attention in the past to the finite nature of its land resource, the land itself needs help.

The need to keep land productive is a goal defined for us by every new report on world population. We can no longer think of food needs outside our borders as a bonus on top of our regular domestic markets. We have an economic need in terms of world trade and a moral need in terms of relieving hunger and fostering world peace.

The goals of production efficiency include efficient use of soil, which means adding needed nutrients, applying needed pesticides—and not applying them when they are not needed. Efficient production means efficient use of water. A goal of efficiency in the use of the inputs of agriculture is a goal of reducing losses from whatever source: insects, weeds, excess water, and—very pointedly in the future—excess fuel and other energy sources.

There is another subgoal in agricultural efficiency: making agriculture an enterprise economically attractive enough to keep farmers in business and maintain a flow of new generations into agriculture.

Basic to our goal of production—growing of food and fiber—is our goal of preserving the resources of agriculture: the land, water, and air that people, animals, and plants live in and on. Research and extension programs are focused on goals of preserving uncontaminated and productive wildlands. Preserving the

wildlands for multi-purpose use is one goal of research, and restoration of land damaged by agricultural and timber harvest practices of past years is another, and urgent, goal.

Ultimately, though, our goals in the agricultural sciences get down to people and the quality of their lives. Our goal in production agriculture is a people-oriented goal. The connection between research that brings forth higher-quality tomatoes, year-around strawberries, twinning beef cattle, or even drought-resistant highway landscaping is a direct and clear connection with the needs of people. Research directed toward improved human nutrition, on the medical-nutritional aspects of lactose intolerance, or on control of mosquitoes—disease carriers or just nuisance varieties—is obviously people-concerned research.

In a period of broadening public interest in food and use of the nation's natural resources, science's goal of serving people must be sharpened. Food safety has always been a goal of agricultural science. Today it is a brightly spotlighted public goal. Science has responsibility to develop the means of insuring food safety and assuring the public of the integrity of food sources.

Science, of course, is not alone in pursuit of that goal. New public agencies have been created to watch over food supplies and safety and to guard our limited resources from the destructive impact of the activities of man. Our goals must include protection of our land, air, and water from irreparable damage while using these vital resources to meet food and fiber needs of people. Much research needs yet to be done to achieve this goal.

Goals of the Division of Agricultural Sciences clearly are diverse goals. But dominating all of our research effort and extension teaching is the goal of providing food, ornamental plants, and cotton and wool, and wood—the products of the land—in greater quantity and quality while preserving and improving the land to serve future generations.