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# **NEW HORIZONS IN AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

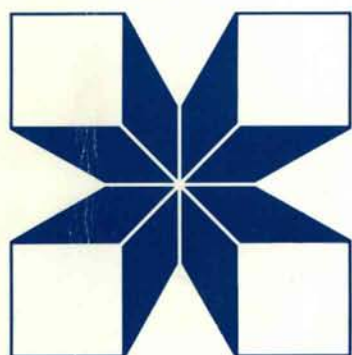
PROCEEDINGS

OF AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

MARCH 13-16, 1991

BEIJING, CHINA

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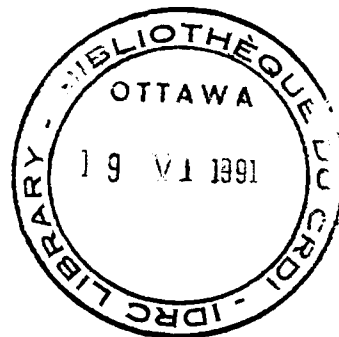
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# **New Horizons in Agricultural Information Management**

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**Compiled and Edited by**

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# **Joining the Main Front for Economic Construction to Open Up a New Aspect of Information Research**

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Agricultural production, rural economy and agricultural modernization are the main front for agricultural scientists and technicians. As a component part of agricultural science and technology, agricultural information research should go to this main front to make a contribution directly to the socialist movement to open up new aspects of information research. It is a very important issue confronting information research organizations and their researchers, which relates to the orientation of agricultural information research. Our exploratory practices and viewpoints in this respect follow:

## **I. Advancing the meaning of going to the main front of agricultural information research.**

### **(1) The extension of service area**

Agricultural information research work needs to be extended from its service objectives of policy-making, scientific research and education to include agricultural production, rural economy and agricultural modernization.

### **(2) Diversification of the service focus**

Diverting the focus of service to the promotion of agricultural development, rural economy and the construction of agricultural modernization, including:

- The coordinated development of agriculture, industry, and cities and towns.
- The control of agricultural stabilization, coordination and continuing development and their general and specific policies.
- Agricultural development planning and key scientech projects.
- Rural economic development and farmers' lives.
- Readjustment and improvement of rural enterprises.
- Research and extension of agricultural science and technology.
- Development of agricultural modernization.
- Improvement of farmers' education.

**(3) Improvement of research methods.**

The traditional method of agricultural information research was based on material resources and lacked on-the-spot investigation. As the focus of agricultural information research has diverted to serving the main front of agricultural production, the method of agricultural information research needs to be associated with spot investigations.

**2. The necessity of taking agricultural production and the construction of agricultural modernization as the main front of agricultural information research.**

(1) The eight hundred million farmers are the main focus for agricultural production and rural economic activities. As a result of the reform of the rural economic system, farmers now are not only the producers but also the agricultural managers. The establishment and development of a planned commodity economy in socialist countries mean a readjustment in the benefits at state, collective and individual levels. They also mean the interrelation, interaction and competition among producers and among sellers. Under this social condition, the people who want to win have to master information which is the key factor.

(2) The decision-making of agricultural departments at all levels is now diverting from an experimental type to scientific decision-making on the basis of accurate, comprehensive and up to date information research.

(3) Depending on science and technology is an important factor of agricultural production, the rural economy and agricultural modernization. In present times, the amount of scientific information is increasing rapidly and a great amount of information is mixed together including correct and incorrect, useful and useless. The main functions of information research are data collection, selection, summarizing and analysis according to the demands of users and user groups to form new scientific products which are the products of information research.

(4) The existence and development of information research work must go through serving the main front of economic construction to improve its capacity for existence and development and for serving the socialist planned commodity economy.

(5) The results of information research can achieve social and economic benefits which help promote the unity inside the information organizations. The value of information research can be changed as we change from theoretical analysis and dissemination into an objective existence as the result of scientific research. This is a leap in the concept of traditional library and information service and will be easier to be recognized, supported and evaluated by society.

### **3. The analysis of internal conditions and environments for information research work going to the main front of economic construction.**

#### **(1) External conditions.**

1/ Evaluation of the demand of users. As mentioned above, the prospect is bright for marketing information research results from the developing trend of society's point of view, but at present, there is a significant difference between potential and actual demand for the results of information research. One of the reasons is that information consciousness is not well recognized by society. On the other hand what is more important is how to improve the quality of information research workers. As one part of the social consciousness of the people, information can reflect political and economic and cultural development levels of society. The aspiration to strengthen social information consciousness can be accepted, but its effect is limited. We can't strengthen social consciousness without limits and we can't wait either. We must face the facts and improve the quality and the level of information research to meet the demands of social development. This is the serious situation facing us.

2/ The evaluation of the competitive market situation for the information research. After the meeting of National Soft Science, the soft science research organizations came out one after another in our country. A large part of the work done by these organizations is similar to information research work. Some organizations in the agricultural field are:

- The research centers for rural strategic development range from central to local government departments at all levels.
- The research divisions for rural policy at different levels of the party committee.
- The research organizations for rural development set up by scientific committees and planning committees.
- The investigation and study offices in agricultural administration departments at all levels.
- The research institutes of agricultural economy, rural development and agricultural modernization in the Chinese Academy of Science, Chinese Academy of Social Science and Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.
- The research organizations of agricultural economy and agricultural modernization in the institutions of higher education.
- The research organizations in the system of agricultural banks.
- Although the names of these organizations are not information research organizations, most of their work belongs to information research or is based on information research. These organizations have more favorable conditions for information research than most information organizations themselves.

- The researchers in these organizations understand every department, the intentions of the main officials and can grasp the whole situation, helping their research results to be expanded easily.
- The organizations have advantages in talented people and funds, and have more research activities because of the system.
- Their research results can be applied because the method of their work is not only dependent on materials but also on practical investigations.

## **(2) The evaluation of social adaptability of information research work.**

There is a rich resource of materials in information research organizations and almost no other organizations can compare with it. They are provided with the ability and the method of researching, applying and analyzing material resources.

Better research results and experiments have been achieved after more than ten years of practice, laying a foundation for information research including social influence.

## **(3) The general situation.**

Information research work is facing an opportunity to develop while the crisis and challenge still exist. If it is to exist and develop while serving the main front of economic construction, information research should pay more attention to the internal and external environment. The external environment is an objective existence which can not be changed but the internal environment can. The internal environment should adapt to the external environment in ways which will improve our work. The external environment can have a great influence through the information research work itself which reflects its adaptation to the external environment.

# **4. The considerations on how to open up a new aspect of information research work in the main front of serving economic construction.**

## **(1) Strategic objective**

On the whole, the organization of agricultural information research should put its main forces into the main front of agricultural development and strengthen its theoretical construction, its rank of talented people and its modernization construction to improve their service level and their adaptability to the social demand of information.

An information research unit should undertake and take part in research work in one or more subjects according to its condition, environment, and level so its research projects can be developed from lower to higher, gradually establishing its authority within certain limits to attract more users or user groups.

## **(2) Some methods and countermeasures for improvement of information research work**

1/ Extending the service field to the basic level and industrial and agricultural production. Agricultural production, the rural area, and the farmers are the large user markets for agricultural information research to which more attention should be paid. A great amount of accurate and up-to-date information research is needed in agricultural coordination and development, agricultural policy, rural economy, development of agricultural production, planting and management of different crops, various social, economical and technological measures, and extension and popularization of agricultural technology.

2/ Changing traditional ideas to new ideas of users first and strengthening the competition consciousness. The results of information research must be evaluated by the users as any other product in a competitive market.

3/ Information researchers must have a strong information consciousness. The so-called "social information consciousness" is the product of certain developments in economics, science and culture in society. Without information consciousness, information researchers will lose their initiative in the work and their research results can not be satisfactory.

4/ The basic conditions for the existence and development of information research are the associations of social and economic effects.

Information research work possesses certain public benefits.

Avoid egalitarianism in internal management.

Taking project research as their main task, information research organizations can develop some new projects and business within its scope to make full use of labor resources and increase their income and research funds.

5/ Developing research theory and methodology are ways to improve the quality and level of information research results and are the critical factors in for the existence and development of information research. The practice of information research needs guidance under the relative theory and method.

6/ More attention should be paid to the recruitment of talented people into information research. This is the key factor for the success of information research. The competition of information research is actually a competition of talented people. Organizations which have talented people will have research projects and successful results.