



This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

Michigan Farmers' Attitudes Toward Federal Farm Programs,

1950

presented by

Philip A. Wright

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

M.S. degree in Agricultural Economics

Lawrence W. Witt

Major professor

Date March 17, 1953

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MICHIGAN FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD  
FEDERAL FARM PROGRAMS, 1950

By

Philip A. Wright

AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan  
State College of Agriculture and Applied Science  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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1953

Approved Lawrence C. Wright



Philip A. Wright

The purpose of this study was to (1) determine Michigan farmer's knowledge and opinions toward the federal price support program in effect in 1950, and also the Brannan Plan, the support of farm product prices as a general policy, the level of support desired, and their desire for security under a system of direct controls; and (2) to analyze their responses to determine if they were influenced by type-of-farm, tenure status, age of farmer, farming experience, education of the farmer, membership in farm organizations, political preference, active voting in 1948, real estate indebtedness and size of farm operated.

(1) The opinion as to whether a price support program was needed or not was equally divided, 46 percent being in favor and 46 percent opposed. The majority of the respondents, 67,percent, indicated that the 1950 program was intended to benefit farmers by holding prices up, keeping farm incomes level and preventing surpluses. Sixty-four percent of the farmers approved of a method of using the price support program solely for personal gain.

When asked to indicate the relationship between price supports and parity 80 percent of the farmers indicated that they didn't know. In a later question, however, 49 percent of the respondents said supports should be 90 percent of parity or higher while 18 percent were opposed to this and 32 percent did not answer or said they didn't know.

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More farmers were opposed to acreage allotments, 52 percent, than were in favor of them, 41 percent. However, 74 percent of the respondents said that if a farmer stayed within his allotment he should use intensified production practices to offset the effects of the reduced acreage. A majority of the farmers, 75 percent, felt that Michigan producers were being discriminated against in the imposition of acreage allotments and that the farmers in the West enjoyed an advantage in this respect.

Only 26 percent of the farmers indicated that they understood the meaning of marketing quotas. Of this number only one quarter approved of using them. Major objections were that they interfered with the farmers' freedom, that supply and demand would suffice, that crop yields were too uncertain and that no program was needed. Only 26 percent of the farmers indicated that they would accept more direct controls in order to achieve a greater degree of security. However, 67 percent felt that there should be a floor under farm prices.

While most of the farmers, 77 percent, indicated that they had heard of the Brannan Plan, 40 percent declined to express an opinion of it. However, 41 percent

of the respondents did express disapproval of it while only 6 percent expressed approval. In a later question 33 percent of the farmers said they had heard of direct payments while 15 percent said that this was part of the Brannan Plan. However, 39 percent of those who had expressed disapproval of the program did not recognize this important feature of it.

(2) The influence of the factors used in the analysis of the responses appeared to be very slight. In the analysis of the total of 168 coded responses to the 24 questions considered here the following factors were found to exert statistically significant influences on individual responses in the following number of observations: political preference, 8; Farm Bureau Membership, 6; tenure status, 4; Grange Membership, 3; education, 3; size of farm, 3; voting, 2; age, 1; and farm experience, 1. Type-of-farm was not found to be an influence on the opinions expressed.

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The author accepts full responsibility for any errors in or omissions from this thesis.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study summarizes one phase of a research project begun during the summer of 1950 by the Agricultural Economics Department, Michigan State College. The title of this project was, "Farmers Responses and Adjustments to Production Control and Price Support Programs in Michigan." This project was designed to provide information concerning Michigan farmers' behavior under, knowledge of and attitudes toward federal price support legislation. Detailed information was also obtained to reveal the extent of farmers' participation during 1949 and 1950, as well as possible changes in crop acreages and fertilizing practices induced by such participation.

Kettering<sup>1</sup> in writing up one segment of the project covered the general outline of the study, the sampling procedure and the extent of participation in the federal price support program by the farmers included in the study. The effects of size of farm, type of farm, tenure status, real estate indebtedness, political affiliation, membership

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<sup>1</sup> Kettering, D. G., "Participation in the Federal Price Support Program," unpublished Master's Thesis, Michigan State College, 1951.

in farm organizations, age of operator, farming experience and education of the farm operator on participation was analyzed. The reasons given by farmers for participation and for non-participation were also summarized.

Staser<sup>2</sup> in another subsection of this project reported on the actual changes in farm practices, as observed in this study, between farms participating in the federal price support program and those not participating in the program. The hypothesis was that participation in the acreage allotment program, while resulting in a decrease in acreage of those crops under allotment, was accompanied by an increased use of chemical fertilizers which would tend to offset any reduction in total crop production from the fewer acres planted.

#### Objectives of This Study

The objectives of this study are to examine that section of the project dealing with farmers' knowledge and opinions of the various instruments of the federal price support program and also their attitudes toward the Brannan Plan, toward the support of farm prices in general, toward the level of support and toward security

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<sup>2</sup> Staser, C. W., "Effects of the Price Support Program on Farming Practices in Michigan in 1950," unpublished Master's Thesis, Michigan State College, 1951.

and controls. The responses to questions 2 to 10 inclusive of Section III and questions 1 to 5 inclusive of Section IV, of the project questionnaire,<sup>3</sup> are those analyzed in this study.

In addition to reporting the total response, the responses are analyzed to determine the effect of type of farm, tenure status, age of farmer, farming experience, education of farmer, membership in farm organization, political preference, active voting in 1948, real estate indebtedness and size of farm. In order that results from this study may be used in conjunction with the findings of Kettering<sup>4</sup> similar categories for classification have been used in the above analysis. This procedure was of necessity an ex post decision and does not necessarily represent the opinion of this writer that the sub-classifications used constitute the optimum method of exposing relevant observations. It is intended to be an explicit hypothesis that significant variations in response will be found between sub-classifications of the main categories. The specific classifications are shown in Appendix B.

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> Kettering, op. cit.

### Method of Analysis

The total responses of the 500 farmers included in the sample are shown in arrays giving the actual number of responses by type of response as well as the percentage that each type of response represents of the total. All response codes used in this study represent the combined judgments of those people actually participating in the interviewing process and in the planning and direction of the project as to the meaning intended by the respondents. Thus it may readily be seen that every effort has been made to remove any individual bias from the coding procedure where conflicting personal valuations might easily lead to unknowing misinterpretations in the classifying of observations.

The testing for statistical significance of the factors used for analysis of each of the questions has been carried out in two ways. First, the responses as sub-classified by the various factors were tested using the chi-square test to determine if the observations deviated from the expected observations by more than could be attributed to random or chance factors in five cases out of 100, i.e., the 5 percent level of significance was used. This test, however, while revealing significant

variation does not point out the source of variation in a statistically acceptable manner. Accordingly, a second test was used for more precise analysis. This was the t test for significant differences of percentage observations for different populations. The test necessitates the assumption that each sub-classification constitutes a population, i.e., each age group, farm organization members, farm owners, debt-free respondents, etc. Since this assumption appears perfectly valid this test proved most useful in comparison of the percentage responses of the various groups to the questions asked.

It is to be emphasized that these two types of tests are not complementary. It is perfectly consistent that statistical significance should be observed using one test while no significant difference is revealed using the other. Unless otherwise noted the test of significance referred to throughout the analysis is the t test.

The tables from which the various calculations are made as well as those which yielded no significance are not included in this thesis. It was felt that to do so would include needless bulk without adding commensurate clarity. They will be placed on file with the remainder of the project material where they will be available to interested persons.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of agriculture in the modern American economy has been subject to various interpretations depending on the source of information. There has, however, been more uniformity when the welfare of this group relative to the remainder of the economy has been considered. Most authorities agree that a prosperous agriculture is an essential component of the productive agencies of the nation. Fluctuations in the purchasing power of so large a group cannot help but produce repercussions in other segments of the economy. An adequate supply of foodstuffs is vital, particularly in times of uncertain world conditions.

The need for a federal policy for agriculture has been recognized for decades although the reasons for and direction of such need vary widely. A number of the assumptions of various writers supporting or recommending various policies are listed below.

- a) Farmers are faced with imperfect factor and product markets with the advantage on the side of the manufacturing and distributing sectors of the economy.

- b) The farmer is faced with high fixed costs and an inelastic supply curve for labor. This tends to create an inelastic supply of agricultural products unresponsive in aggregate supply to fairly wide fluctuations in prices.
- c) Agriculture is a secularly declining industry faced with,
  - 1) high birth rate relative to industry,
  - 2) declining demand relative to other goods, and
  - 3) increasing productivity.
- d) Agriculture must be kept at a high level of productivity as a self-sufficiency measure for the nation.
- e) Society has a stake in soil conservation and its interest may extend beyond the desires and economic capabilities of the farmers.
- f) Many social customs such as free enterprise and democracy were founded when the population was largely engaged in agriculture and many people feel that the continuance of strong rural influences is essential to the success of such a politico-economic system.

- g) Many factors such as income distribution and total output need the coordination of a central agency if the most effective effort is to be realized.

It is recognized that this list is not complete and that, further, any one of these assumptions is subject to serious examination. However, since the purpose here is only illustrative, these factors serve as a basis of departure for the remainder of this chapter. It is felt that the necessity for adequate production by agriculture needs little or no discussion. The need for efficiency in production is also perfectly acceptable to the economist, or layman. It is therefore considered important to turn to the income aspects of agricultural policy for the consideration of various viewpoints. Here again the list is far from complete. To make it so would require volumes and in many cases be tautological.

An article by O. V. Wells<sup>5</sup> deals with parity prices as envisaged by some for providing an adequate or sufficient goal for over-all agricultural improvement. Mr. Wells does not agree that parity prices will contribute

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<sup>5</sup> Wells, O. V., "Parity Prices Versus Standards of Living as a Goal for Agricultural Improvement," Rural Sociology, Vol. 9, June 1944, pp. 115-122.

appreciably to the welfare of most of the nation's farm families. While commercial farmers might benefit, the need of the remainder is for a means of moving forward to a better standard of living. Mr. Wells proposes instead a set of goals limiting the minima of various phases of farm family living. Essentially, he is stating that the parity concept is much broader than the parity price part of it. He is contending that institutional and other factors will not permit parity prices alone to solve all agricultural problems.

Those who propose the alleviation of depressed areas by the introduction of improved technology gain encouragement from a study by Bryce Ryan.<sup>6</sup> This study deals with the technological diffusion of hybrid seed corn throughout Iowa. The problem involved two principal aspects: 1) the spread of utilization by the state as a whole, and 2) the comparative receptiveness of different areas in the state.

The major time period was from 1930 to 1942. The coincidence of the period of diffusion with that of agricultural depression and recurrent drought was a

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<sup>6</sup> Ryan, Bryce, "A Study in Technological Diffusion," Rural Sociology, Vol. 13, September 1948, pp. 273-285.

limiting factor due to the greater cash outlays demanded. However, there was no evidence to prove that diffusion lagged in "backward" areas due to cultural inertia. Indeed, while the time lag of acceptance was later, probably due to reasons already noted, the eventual spread or diffusion after its introduction came more rapidly in each of the retarded areas. A major feature of this type of improvement is, of course, that the nearly infinite divisibility of the operation gives ample range for conservatism.

In a discussion of price policy Johnson<sup>7</sup> lists four general income goals presumed to have general acceptance. These four goals are: (1) achieving a minimum scale of living for all members of an economy, defined as specific scale-of-living content in terms of health, education, nutrition, housing, public services, and cultural opportunities; (2) achieving a reduction in the general disparity of income distribution; (3) achieving a parity or equality of income among broad economic or occupational groups; and (4) attaining a high degree of stability in the aggregate level of income. The subsequent analysis in this work reveals that price policy can have little effect on poverty in agriculture. This is largely due

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<sup>7</sup> Johnson, D. Gale, Forward Prices for Agriculture, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947, especially Ch. III.

to the fact that the impoverished sectors of agriculture have little contact with the price system.

It is further asserted that if labor incomes, and thus farm incomes, are to be raised, labor must be made relatively more scarce than it is now. Price policy is seen as contributing to improved income distribution among commercial farmers by making access to capital assets more equally available. The stability of aggregate farm incomes through time is assumed to be improved by price policy due to its certainty conditions. It should be noted that the price policy referred to here is a "forward" price policy.

Another treatment of the income problem is provided by Schultz.<sup>8</sup> Against a background of a system of compensatory payments for agriculture as a general policy during an agricultural depression there is drawn a sharp distinction as to other forms of income payments to farmers. These additional payments would be of the following types: (1) Adjustment payments to aid a depressed sector of agriculture in making a difficult adjustment; (2) Transition payments to discharge the government's commitment relative to the support of farm prices for a specified period; (3) Conservation payments to induce farmers to undertake

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<sup>8</sup> Schultz, Theodore W., Agriculture in an Unstable Economy, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1945, especially Ch. 10.

farm practices and techniques that will contribute to the conservation of soil resources; and (4) Welfare payments to enhance the social efficiency of farm people, i.e., income payments intended to serve welfare criteria.

The introduction of conservation payments in point (3) of the above reference bring into focus the conditions listed by Bunce<sup>9</sup> under which social action to achieve conservation is desirable. These are: (1) When it would be economic for the individual entrepreneur to conserve but he does not; (2) When conservation is not economic for the individual but is economic for society; and (3) When intangible ends desired by the majority of individuals in a democracy can be attained only by collective action. Much of our current agricultural program, particularly its administrative framework, has been built around the second point. However, it appears doubtful that any periodic appraisal in light of the above conditions has ever been made.

Some economists such as Nicholas Kaldor<sup>10</sup> take the stand that the economist should base his recommendations

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<sup>9</sup> Bunce, Arthur C., *The Economics of Soil Conservation*, Iowa State College Press, 1942, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Kaldor, Nicholas, "Welfare Propositions of Economics and Interpersonal Comparisons of Utility," Economic Journal, Vol. XLIX, (Dec. 1948), pp. 696-712.





on efficiency conditions alone and rely on others to take care of the distributive aspects of the problem. This would appear to designate a community whose political representatives are fully conscious of the problem of distribution and are willing to assume full responsibility for maintaining a program of equitable income distribution.

Scitovsky<sup>11</sup> expresses his disbelief that this type of approach can be applied in the United States. The implication here is not that Congress is not concerned with the equity of income distribution, but that there is a presumption in the free enterprise economy against the State correcting any maldistribution of income brought about by the market mechanism. This would, then, appear to militate against an economic policy which would have to be accompanied by a payment of subsidies or compensations. A separation of the effects of an economic policy on efficiency on the one hand and on income distribution on the other hand is not considered feasible in a free enterprise economy. This is mainly due to the fact that compensation payments are not politically feasible. The requirement would be, then, that all economic policies

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<sup>11</sup> Scitovsky, Tibor, "The State of Welfare Economics," The American Economic Review, Vol. XLI, June 1951, pp. 303-315.

be appraised by their effects on efficiency and equity simultaneously rather than on the basis of one of these criteria alone.

Since it is the ultimate purpose of this study to examine the attitudes and opinions of Michigan farmers with the object of determining their position as an important and articulate segment of the farm population for whom agricultural policy is designed, the observations of Hardin<sup>12</sup> have particular significance here. Hardin discusses conflicts in beliefs (what things actually are) and consequent valuations (what things ought to be) between farm-bloc Congressmen and agricultural pressure group leaders and economists in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Hardin's observations may be summarized briefly as follows:

Farm-bloc

Belief - there is a free market, and it is really honest in its distribution of economic rewards among men according to their contributions.

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<sup>12</sup> Hardin, Charles M., "The Bureau of Agricultural Economics Under Fire: A Study in Valuation Conflicts," Journal of Farm Economics, Vol. XXVIII, August 1946, pp. 635-668.

- Valuations - 1) A man should get what he is worth.  
2) A man should get this reward from  
his own efforts.

B. A. E.

Belief - the market is not automatically free.

Valuation - the government ought to work out  
programs to correct the imperfections  
of the market.

The above conflict reveals that economists of the B.A.E. are mentally oriented to the development and examination of positive agricultural programs. Farm-bloc Congressmen and farm pressure group leaders would have to admit of disordered beliefs to favorably consider subsidies. Similar conflicts can also be expressed on such beliefs as 1) all men are equal, or 2) the "greater nobility" of farmers. The economists of the B.A.E. may not be as fundamental in their approach and thus different means evolve in connection with conflicting valuations. It is hoped that the present study will reveal some of the beliefs of farmers and perhaps some of their valuations as well.

The possibility of actually determining what farmers want by the methods used in this study is actually

exceedingly difficult to interpret. The use of aggregate expression totals, or percentages, negates the obvious conflicts or variants of intra-personal expression in the various schedules. Even if it were possible to determine these conflicts and express them in empirical terms the work of Arrow<sup>13</sup> shows the possible type of indeterminate solution which may be obtained. In attempting a true representation of individual preferences, that is, a social ordering that is positively correlated with individual preferences, he gives one simple example (among others in a very complex treatment) as follows: Imagine a community of three people, X, Y, and Z, who have to choose from among three alternative social policies, A, B, and C. X prefers A to B, B to C, and hence also A to C. Y prefers B to C, C to A, and hence also B to A. Z prefers C to A, A to B, and hence also C to B. If we then give each person's preferences equal weights, we can try to construct a social preference function on the basis of majority rule. Since two out of three people prefer A to B, we have a social preference for A over B. On the same basis there is a social preference also for

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<sup>13</sup> Arrow, Kenneth J., "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare," The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. LVIII, August 1950, pp. 328-346.

B over C. From this it follows that there must also be a social preference for A over C. But two out of three people prefer C to A, so that there is a social preference also for C over A. Hence, majority rule in this example leads to a contradictory social preference function.

The above example serves to illustrate the necessity for a very detailed analysis of information of the type gathered in this study. The writer regrets that a detailed consideration of the intra-schedule variations posed too lengthy a problem at this time.

### CHAPTER III

#### FARMERS KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARD PRICE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

This chapter analyzes the responses of Michigan Farmers to questions dealing with the price support program. The questions were designed to obtain their beliefs as to why there is such a program, their opinions as to whether such a program is needed or not, their knowledge of the fundamental concept of parity in relation to support prices, and their reactions to a situation possible under the current program. It is expected that the responses to these questions will provide information of considerable value to policy makers by giving some insight into the extent of the farmers' knowledge, and an indication of the differences in opinions among the various groups used for sub-classification.

The coded responses are reported here by the percentage each represents of the total responses under each question. The detailed analysis by particular groups is not presented here except where significant differences were revealed in the statistical treatment.

### Reasons for a Price Support Program

The first question to be considered deals with reasons for the price support program. The farmers were asked, "What do you understand to be the reason why there is a price support program for some farm crops?" It was expected that their beliefs about this policy instrument would be affected by institutional and other factors but would, nevertheless, be fundamentally accurate.

Table 1

#### Farmers' Reasons Why There Was A Price Support Program

Response	Percent
Hold prices up, stabilize prices	19
Hold farm incomes level, help farmers	28
Prevent surpluses, stabilize production	20
To even out marketing periods and prevent speculation	1
To encourage raising of required crops	3
Political reasons, give jobs, get votes	11
To help consumers, keep prices down	1
No reason	7
Don't know	8
Other	<u>2</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The responses shown in Table 1 indicate that most of the respondents gave reasons of a type which may be

considered as being favorable to farmers. Regardless of whatever their general feeling toward the program might be, they believed that the fundamental bases of the program were designed to help farmers by one means or another. Only 12 percent gave answers which implied motives to benefit other than agricultural groups, that is, political motives and to help consumers.

The analysis of the responses by the various factor groups revealed only one significant difference. Fewer Farm Bureau members, 5 percent, signified that they didn't know a reason for price supports than did non-members, 11 percent. Thus it appears that Farm Bureau members are better informed on this subject, although the reasons given by Farm Bureau members were not sufficiently divergent under any single type of response to be statistically significant using the  $t$  test.

#### Need for a Price Support Program

The next question to be analyzed gave the respondents an opportunity to express their beliefs as to whether a price support program is needed or not. They were asked, "How do you personally feel about it? Do you think that a price support program is needed or not? --- Why do you feel that way?" It is understood that their answers to



the previous question need not bear direct relationship to this question. The response in this case was expected to reflect their fundamental beliefs as to the operation of the market, of the role of government in a free economy and perhaps an indication of change in the attitudes of farmers who have long been the proponents of individual enterprise and freedom from interference. The responses will be presented under the individual headings, "yes", "no" and "don't know" with the reasons given for each.

Table 2

Farmers' Reasons for Favoring  
a Price Support Program

Response	Percent
Protect farmers, by keeping prices up to a fair level	37
To place farmers on the same level as unionized labor	10
To keep down surpluses	8
Needed when times are bad	2
Enables farmer to plan, removes uncertainty	14
Help farmers by cutting out speculators	7
In favor but need an improved program	<u>22</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 228)	100

The number of respondents signifying that a price support program was needed was 46 percent of the total number of farmers interviewed. Of this group, 47 percent emphasized the need of protection for the farmers, 37 percent stressed aiding farmers in getting a fair price and 10 percent putting farmers on the same competitive basis as unionized labor. The concept of a fair price is, of course, not new, but the feeling of a threat in the form of unionized labor is a growing sentiment of fairly recent origin. Other types of problems are seen in the need for curtailing surpluses, the problem of uncertainty in price expectation, and the problem of speculators in the market. None of these are new problems in agriculture and their current importance is amply demonstrated here. One major group, 22 percent of the "yes" respondents, expressed approval of a program other than the present program or at least some improvements in the present program. It is probable that many of these also fall into the large group who feel that some protection is needed for farmers in the modern world.

While numerous variations in response were observed in analysis by the factor groups none were found to be statistically significant.

Table 3

Farmers' Reason for Not Being  
in Favor of Price Support Program

Response	Percent
Supply and demand and/or good Lord will take care of it	43
The farmer can do his own adjusting	15
Politically objectionable, socialistic	4
Present system not acceptable, red tape, etc.	14
Cost too much, taxes higher, no gain	10
Benefits only big, or inefficient, farmers	6
Encourages overproduction	2
No longer needed	5
Prices not far enough apart to be significant	<u>1</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 230)	100

The number of farmers responding that no price support program was needed was also 46 percent of the total number interviewed. The major emphasis of this group was placed on supply and demand. This implies the traditional belief that a free market functions to adjust inequalities and should not be interfered with. This position was substantially endorsed by another large group, 15 percent who stated that a farmer can do his own adjusting, and

a smaller group, 4 percent, indicating that such a program was politically objectionable. Reasons not necessarily tied to fundamental beliefs were that the present system was not acceptable mainly due to red tape, and that the cost of the program might offset gains. Two small groups which might well change their position readily were those who signified that the program was no longer needed, or that prices were not far enough apart to be significant.

In the analysis by factor groups it was found that significantly more Farm Bureau members, 25 percent than non-members, 17 percent expressed reliance on supply and demand. This is most probably due to group discussion and leadership of Farm Bureau policy makers. There were significantly more owners, 13 percent, than part-owners, 3 percent, whose response was that the farmer can do his own adjusting. This is a consistent finding, largely due to the meaning of part-owners in this study. Part-owners are those who own part of the land they operate and rent additional acreage. Frequently this additional acreage is used to raise cash crops which may be eligible for support prices so that they may well be loss prone to accept an independent position.

The table giving variations in the responses after an initial "don't know" is included here because it soon

became apparent during the survey that many of these responses meant that the respondent was uncertain. Accordingly, it was felt that it would be valuable to record the causes of indecision.

The principal reason for a "don't know" response in this category seemed to be due to a lack of understanding of the operation of the price support program. All responses may be taken to signify that this group has no expressed decision and needs more understanding, conviction of need or benefit before taking a definite stand. However, it is considered significant that such a relatively small proportion of the sample, 8 percent, gave "don't know" as an answer. This is strong evidence that much thought and discussion have been given to the problem.

Table 4

Farmers' Reasons for being Uncertain as to  
Whether a Price Support Program was Needed or Not

Response	Percent
Don't understand it	43
May be needed in some cases	28
Helps in some ways but cost may be more than gain	17
No response	<u>12</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 42)	100

The really significant results of this question are the virtually equal "Yes" and "No" responses. The desires of the farmers are very closely balanced in this case and this is in itself contradictory to our traditional acceptance of the position of agriculture. Certainly some factor has worked to reduce the independent position of many Michigan farmers. Possibly there is a growing belief among farmers that markets are not perfect. The expression by many that a program was needed to ensure a fair price supports this hypothesis. The mention of unionized labor signifies the farmers' awareness of the great bargaining power of unions relative to their own individually weak positions and of farmers' tendency to align themselves with business and industry and opposed to labor. Whatever the reason, there is need for legislators and policy makers to be aware of findings of this type. While the traditional position was firmly espoused by the "no" respondents, it was much lower in volume than one is led to believe by the more articulate of the farm groups.

#### Parity and Price Supports

The next question to be examined was designed to indicate the knowledge of farmers on the relation between support price and parity. They were asked, "What do you

understand to be the relation, if any, between support price and parity?" It was considered that this brought in a concept, parity prices, which is a constant feature of discussion on agricultural policy. The relation to support prices is similarly, or should be, an essential feature in the discussion of the relative merits of various proposed programs. This question should indicate the degree to which this relationship has been considered, or overlooked, or have not been clearly put across to the farmers.

Table 5

Farmers' Knowledge of the Relationship  
Between Support Prices and Parity

Response	Percent
Don't know	80
Some understanding, not in detail	13
Good understanding	<u>7</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The overwhelming evidence of the lack of understanding of the relationship between support prices and parity seems exceedingly difficult to interpret. Possible explanations are that the respondents did not properly understand the question and evaded with a don't know response, or that

they felt that their knowledge was inadequate for a good answer and evaded. However, it is difficult to believe that these explanations alone would account for such a high frequency of "don't know" responses. It is felt that quite probably this relationship has not been stressed in discussions by extension or farm groups. The emphasis has probably been placed more on entire programs, e.g., "Brannon Plan", than on the significant features of them which would stress this relationship.

There were a number of significant differences in the classification by education. Those having less than 5 years of school responded 100 percent "don't know" while those having 5 years up to high school responded 87 percent in this manner. Those having high school and college educations were still lower, 74 percent and 55 percent respectively. Thus education appears as an important factor in this case.

The benefits of group participation were revealed in that a significantly smaller number of Farm Bureau members, 75 percent, than of non-members, 83 percent, indicated that they didn't know the relationship. A further check after removing the educational difference noted above did not change the relationship. However, the high percentage in both cases is sufficient cause for amazement.



Farmers' Attitudes Toward a Method  
of Using the Program for Personal Gain

The last question to be included in this chapter deals with a possible method of using the price support program for personal gain by a farmer who has no real need to use the program. The respondents were read the following description of the situation and asked to comment on what they thought of the farmers' actions:

Mr. Stone ordinarily raises about enough corn to feed his livestock. Last fall he found that he could get a government loan of \$1.40 a bushel of corn. Since Mr. Stone had plenty of good storage space, he saw a chance to make some extra money by taking advantage of the loan and storage program. He put his entire crop in storage with a loan of \$1.40 a bushel on it and bought corn for livestock feed at 90 cents a bushel from neighbors who did not have approved storage. He was thus able to make 50 cents a bushel on his own which he would otherwise have fed to his livestock.

This provided an opportunity to see how far their overall response to the need for a program agreed with their opinions of its use in this manner. Unfortunately individual consistency is not broken down on this point so that only general observations can be made.

The results seen in Table 6 show that 64 percent of the respondents expressed approval of this use of the program in a manner differing from that for which it was designed. That 24 percent qualified their approval

does not appear particularly important. This expression typifies the general reaction of ambivalence in the thinking of farmers about agricultural programs. That is, that despite the fact that they may not approve of a thing they might as well get in on some of the handouts, and that this attitude may help to perpetuate the policy of which they say they do not approve. It should also be noted that the question was loaded by the use of the words "taking advantage," which have a popular connotation of unfair practice. Actually 33 percent of the respondents expressed moral disapproval, but of these 10 percent still gave approval to the action as a business practice.

Table 6

Farmers' Opinions of a Method  
of Using the Price Support Program

Response	Percent
Approves	40
Approves but - costs more than he figures	2
- fault of the program	12
- taking advantage of others	5
- morally wrong	5
No	4
No because - morally wrong (good business)	23
- fault of the program	8
Not answered	<u>1</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

In the analysis by factor groups it was found that significantly fewer Grange members, 27 percent, than non-members, 41 percent, gave approval of this use of the program. The reason for this difference is not clear to the writer. Also a significantly larger percentage of those who expressed a preference for the Republican party, 43 percent, than of those who expressed no party preference, 30 percent, gave approval for this action. Again there appears to be no obvious reason for this differential.

In summation it may be stated that although opinions are equally split as to whether a price support program is needed or not there is a clearly expressed approval of using it to the best individual advantage. Value judgments are apparently subordinated to good business decisions. If objective discussion of policy programs is to have a grass-roots origin there is at least a need for some understanding of the relationship between parity and support prices. This may be a key factor in considering the cost of a particular policy recommendation. While a few cases of significance were observed in the analysis by factor groups they did not materially influence any of the major observations. Indeed, one must observe that there is a high degree of uniformity in the responses.

## CHAPTER IV

### ACREAGE ALLOTMENTS AS A POLICY INSTRUMENT

The consideration of acreage allotments is of particular value in that it provides an opportunity for studying the reactions of Michigan farmers to an instrument of policy which places restrictions upon the operation of the individual farm. At the time of this survey it was necessary for farmers participating in the price support program to comply with acreage allotments. Accordingly, it was expected that some of the responses will have saliency with respect to their necessary compliance, while others would apply to the general concept of individual restriction by government. These might well be separable for analysis in a more detailed study of public opinion.

The questions which are analysed in this chapter provide a range of responses to reasons for acreage allotments, the need for acreage allotments, satisfaction with local operation of the program and situational problems dealing with a means of negating the effects of acreage allotments and the equity of sectional

imposition of allotments. Since all farmers in the area of study were notified of their individual allotments no specific question as to the means of imposition was included.

#### Reasons for Acreage Allotments

The first question to be considered obtained the farmers' reasons for the need for acreage allotments on such crops as corn and wheat. They were asked, "What do you understand to be the reason for acreage allotment on such crops as corn and wheat?" This was, again, an attempt to learn farmers' beliefs as to why this policy instrument has been used. The results as seen in Table 7 show that most of the farmers believed that the purpose of acreage allotments was to prevent surpluses by controlling production. That the value of acreage allotments for this purpose would depend largely upon voluntary compliance or extensive participation in the price support program was not mentioned. However, 5 percent of the respondents did mention that acreage allotments were needed to maintain the price support program. Only 8 percent of the farmers stated that there was no reason for them or gave reasons implying other than production control.

Table 7

Farmers' Reasons Why There Were  
Acreage Allotments on Certain Crops

Response	Percent
To keep down production, prevent surpluses	76
To keep prices up	5
To keep up the price support	5
No reason for them	5
To create jobs for government workers	1
To dictate to farmers	1
To help the big farmer	1
Don't know	5
Other	<u>1</u>
Total (number of farmers: 500)	100

Analysis by factor groups revealed no significant differences in the various types of response given. This uniformity is probably attributable to the readily understood relationship between acreage planted and volume of production, as well as the farmers' awareness of the problem of surpluses extending over many years of their own experience.

#### Need for Acreage Allotments

The next question attempted to obtain the farmers' judgement as to whether acreage allotments are necessary,

or not. They were asked, "How do you feel about it personally? Do you think that acreage allotments are necessary, or not? ---- Why do you feel that way?" Their responses under the "yes", "no" and "don't know" headings are further subdivided into the reasons given for each of these responses. It should be noted that these questions were asked shortly after the outbreak of the Korean war. It would, therefore, be expected that a certain amount of bias has been introduced due to this fact. Such bias would, the writer believes, be more likely to appear in questions of direct control rather than in the more general and situational questions.

Table 8

Farmers' Reasons for Favoring  
the Use of Acreage Allotments

Response	Percent
To prevent surpluses, overproduction	54
Necessary to work with price supports	20
To keep big farmers from overproducing	10
Needed in some states at some times	8
For soil conservation reasons	4
Because of the threat of war	2
Other	<u>2</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 204)	100

The major emphasis of those responding "yes" concerned the problem of surpluses. The common belief that it is the big farmer who causes the surpluses was expressed by 10 percent of this group. The same meaning may also be implied by those who stated that acreage allotments were needed in some states at some times. Reference here was most likely to the large grain producing states. Rather different expressions were those mentioning soil conservation and the threat of war. Another group, who probably favored price supports, responded that acreage allotments were necessary to work with price supports. No significance was found in the detailed analysis by the various groups.

The major sentiments of the group responding "no" to the need for acreage allotments, Table 9, are seen as the individual farmer's right to make adjustments as he pleases, and reliance in supply and demand or other natural forces. Here we again have a strong expression of traditional judgement, perhaps even more emphatic as it reaches down to the individual farm in this case. Those stating that there was no surplus problem may well have been influenced by the outbreak of the Korean war. During the interviewing process the writer was constantly aware of the feeling that most farmers anticipated the



need for larger crops as a result of the war. The writer doubts the value of the response that acreage allotments were not accomplishing anything. It is very difficult to see how these individuals could objectively arrive at this decision since the ramifications of the program are certainly more widespread and subtle than the apparent effects to the individual farmer. Possibly many of these respondents are dairy farmers who use all their crops for feed and are therefore unaffected by direct contact with the program.

Table 9

Farmers' Reasons for Not Being  
In Favor of Acreage Allotments

Response	Percent
The farmer should be allowed to manage his own business	37
Let supply and demand handle it	22
We haven't any surpluses to worry about here	15
The weather and/or other natural forces will handle it	6
It is not accomplishing anything	7
Cuts the small farmer down too much	9
Other	<u>4</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 258)	100

The "don't know" responses to this question amounted to 7 percent of the total response and did not break down to reveal various reasons for indecision as in the responses relative to a price support program. Thus there is an expression of 41 percent of the respondents in favor of allotments, 52 percent not in favor and 7 percent don't know. The equal split relative to price supports has been shifted here to a majority opposition to acreage allotments. This was not unexpected, as it was found that relatively few farmers indicated that they recognized a complementary relationship between price supports and acreage allotments. Accordingly, it seems reasonable that these judgements should depend more on farmers' beliefs than on their knowledge or understanding of the complexities of an agricultural program. The belief that farmers should get a fair price for their products apparently led to the equal split in the judgements relative to a price support program, but when the question of the restrictions on individual farmers was introduced in the form of acreage allotments the feeling of farmers inviolable autonomy apparently led to a negative majority judgement.

### Farmers' Attitudes Toward a Method of Offsetting the Effects of Acreage Allotments

The next question to be considered is another of the situational type. The respondents were read the following description of the situation and asked to give their opinions of the farmer's actions:

Mr. Brown usually grows about 20 acres of wheat. He was notified his 1950 wheat allotment would be 16 acres. He stayed within this allotment because he thought he might want to use the purchase agreement or loan-and-storage program. Mr. Brown tried to get as high a yield as he could on the 16 acres of wheat that he was allotted. He got the best seed he could find, fertilized heavily, and sowed his wheat on the best 16 acres on the farm. A friend commented that it seemed to him such practices would result in a bigger cut in wheat acreage this fall if most farmers did the same thing as Brown. Do you think Brown was justified in his actions even though it would mean bigger cuts in acreage allotments this fall?

This offered another opportunity to observe the farmers' responses in a situation where the program might be used to individual advantage. That most of the actions possible by a farmer in this situation may be included under the heading of good farming practices may have a modifying effect on the value of the responses. However, while observing that the farmer would be following recommended practices it is also worthy of note that this fact alone would tend to place him in a somewhat unusual category in most of the farming areas in Michigan.

Table 10

Farmers' Opinions of a Method of  
Offsetting the Effects of Acreage Allotments

Response	Percent
Yes	67
Yes, but - means another cut defeats program	6
- breaks up field	<u>1</u>
Total affirmative	74
No	5
No - costs as much, wouldn't pay	2
- defeats purpose of the program	<u>12</u>
Total negative	19
Other	5
Don't know	<u>2</u> <u>7</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The results as seen in Table 10 show 74 percent of the respondents approving the practice suggested by the question. This reinforces an earlier observation that value judgments are apparently subordinated to good business decisions. In this case such a position is perhaps easier to support in that except for the possible disruption of a rotation the other practices are perfectly

acceptable. This may be seen in the response of only 12 percent of the farmers that the actions were wrong as they would defeat the purpose of the program, and the over-all "no" response of only 19 percent of the respondents. The responses also furnish support to the popular hypothesis that cuts in acreage may encourage improved cultural practices.

Age was the only factor showing a significant observation in the group analysis. Proportionately more farmers in the "less than 30" age group responded "yes" than in the older age groups. This may be explained by the fact that these farmers have lived and farmed under various types of programs for most of their lives. They may also be attuned to a modern money economy to a greater extent than older farmers, and, perhaps, less securely established with respect to financial reserves and physical assets.

#### Farmers' Opinions as to Where Acreage Allotments should be Imposed

Another problem relative to acreage allotments is the equity of their imposition in various parts of the country. To get the farmers' opinions on this matter another situational type question was used as follows:

A group of farmers were discussing price support programs at a meeting on agricultural policy. Mr. Smith was speaking: "I am in favor of the general idea of a price support program for farmers which would keep their incomes from falling too far. I think, however, that the present program is unfair to us farmers here in Michigan. We don't grow very many acres of these so-called basic crops. It's the big fellows further West who ought to have their acreage allotments cut, not us. They're the ones who really cause the surplus."

Table 11

Farmers' Opinions on the Statement  
that Acreage Controls should be Imposed Further West

Response	Percent
Approve	57
Approve, but - they can only raise wheat	3
- fair treatment for all	4
- low yield in the West	<u>1</u>
Total approving	65
Disapprove	2
Disapprove because - fair treatment	
for all	19
- only one crop there	5
- should be no program, free enterprise	<u>3</u>
Total disapproving	29
Don't know and no response	<u>6</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The majority of the respondents, 65 percent, apparently felt that the present program was unfair to them, even though some of these modified their answers somewhat. Of those disapproving of the statement the largest group gave fair treatment for all as their reason. These observations confirm the hypothesis that Eastern farmers, or at least Michigan farmers, believe Western farmers to be responsible for surpluses. Their concept of equity in allotments is based on historical patterns rather than on possible changes, even on their own farms, in Michigan grain production potential in recent years. Many fail to realize that their own production is contributing to total feed supplies whether fed or sold.

Significantly fewer part-owners, 48 percent, than owners, 61 percent, expressed outright approval of the statement. Also, more part-owners, 25 percent, than owners 17 percent, disapproved of the statement because of fair treatment of all. This is an interesting situation as part-owners were those who had additional rented land, frequently used to raise corn or wheat. Actually, they are the ones who probably have more awareness of the program and whose reasons would therefore be more salient. Further analysis showed that significantly more of the

owners, 44 percent, were on the smallest size of farm group, 119 acres and under, than part-owners, 15 percent. Since the small farms are undoubtedly more in the self-sufficient or feed-deficit class the reason for their difference in attitudes is more readily seen. This does, however, pose a serious question. That is, how salient are the opinions of those to whom the problem is not vital, or at least familiar? This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. One other significant difference was observed in the analysis by factor groups. Proportionately more in the 30-39 age group, 22 percent, stressed the need for fair treatment, for all than in the 60 and over-age group, 12 percent.

#### Farmers' Attitudes Toward Local P. and M. A. Administration

The last question to be analyzed under the acreage allotment topic is related to the local administration of the program and was asked as follows:

We've been talking about the price support and acreage allotment program as it operates over the whole country. Now let's come back to your local situation. How do you feel about the way the program is operating in this county?

This reduces the broader context of treatment used in the other questions asked under this topic to the level at



which most of the farmers in Michigan have had an opportunity to view the program and its administration in action. It was expected variations in administration would be observed. This is perfectly explicable, for while procedures may be standardized personalities seldom can be. In this context the writer and the other interviewers found that the local P. and M. A. office was usually personalized in terms of the local chairman. However, there has been no attempt to report the responses by counties in this report. This is a deliberate decision in this case, where general attitudes are being examined. One weakness in the value of responses to this question lies in the fact that it was not asked exactly as it was written by all of the interviewers. This was both admitted, and apparent from the responses. Accordingly it was coded in a less detailed manner than was originally planned.

Possibly the most significant feature of the responses as seen in Table XII is the fairly large group expressing no opinion. This is a much larger "no opinion" group than has been observed in any of the other questions analyzed so far. It is paradoxical that the phase of the program closest to the farmer should fail to produce a strength of expression equal to that of the broader

question. Perhaps the result is due to lack of contact and the relatively low importance position accorded the local administration, or possibly the question itself was poor phrased.

Table 12

Farmers' Opinions of the Local Operation  
of the P. and M. A. Program

Response	Percent
Satisfactory	49
Unsatisfactory	29
No opinion	<u>22</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The chi-square test showed a significant variation from expected response due to farm experience but does not enable us to show to which group this is due. Those having some college education expressed satisfaction to a significantly greater extent than those below college level, 71 percent to 46 percent. This may be due to a better understanding of various aspects of the program. Significantly more Farm Bureau members, 55 percent, than non-members, 45 percent, expressed satisfaction with

local administration. This at first appears inconsistent with their previous expression of opposition to the program, but is probably an expression of their rationalization at a local level despite objection to a national program. It was also found that significantly more farmers in the 280 - 359 acre size-group, 71 percent, expressed satisfaction than in the smaller size-groups, 46 percent. This is no doubt attributable to the fact that they are the ones who have had more contact with the local administration, had crops to market and have a bigger stake in the program.

The results found in this chapter indicate a majority expression of opposition to specific restriction in the form of acreage allotments. The autonomy of the individual farmer is a strongly held judgment. The functions of a free market also received strong endorsement. The endorsement of action to defeat the purpose of acreage allotments, if necessary, was exceptionally strong. It would appear that this course of action could expect little, if any, success if we may judge from the farmers' responses in this instance. The equity of acreage allotments was denied by a large majority of Michigan farmers. Part of the response in this case may be due to lack of knowledge of the allotments in other sections of the country. Local administration received tacit approval from those expressing an opinion.

## CHAPTER V

### FARMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD CERTAIN OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY

This chapter includes the opinions of the farmers interviewed about certain instrument of policy which are for the most part not currently included in the federal program. These include the concept of marketing quotas, the Brannan Plan, features of the Brannan Plan in contrast to those of the current plan and some concepts of the goal for security through price support legislation. Accordingly, the farmers' responses may not necessarily represent their considered judgment to the extent that their previous responses were expected to. However, it was expected that their basic beliefs would facilitate their responses to most of the questions and, indeed, might prove more accurate indications of individual opinion than responses to questions on policy matters already subject to detailed discussion in various groups.

To a certain extent the individual farmer's knowledge of the present program and of proposed programs, particularly the Brannan Plan, should have facilitated

understanding of the questions and enabled the farmers interviewed to respond more freely. In general, it was found by the interviewers that the questions included here required frequent repetition and/or reference to the main question when the sub-questions were asked. This may also be attributed in part to the need for interviewing when the farmers frequently were pressed for time and thus under pressure and also to the fairly complex wording of the questions. Accordingly, the responses were seldom as positive and unhesitating as those received to the questions previously analyzed.

#### Farmers' Knowledge of Marketing Quotas

The first question considered in this chapter concerns marketing quotas. It was desired to find out whether or not farmers were familiar with the meaning of marketing quotas. Some of the farmers were expected to have experienced the use of marketing quotas as a policy instrument since they were used for the marketing of wheat in certain areas of Michigan in 1941. Marketing quotas were also explained in current publications of the U.S.D.A. relative to price support programs then in effect. The question was asked as follows:

We sometimes hear people talking about using marketing quotas in connection with price support programs. Would you mind telling me just what the term "Marketing Quota" means to you?

Table 13

Farmers' Understanding of the Meaning  
of the Term "Marketing Quota"

Response	Percent
Don't know	62
Wrong explanation	12
Right explanation	<u>26</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The evidence seen in Table 13 is that the large majority of the respondents, 74 percent, had either no knowledge or an inaccurate knowledge of the meaning of the term "marketing quota". This is probably due to the fact that marketing quotas were not a current feature of the federal price support program at the time of the interviews. It does, however, give some indication of their lack of general knowledge of federal programs and their application in other areas, for marketing quotas were in use in other areas, notably on tobacco.

In the analysis by factor groups it was found that significantly more renters, 82 percent, than owners, 71 percent, had no knowledge of the meaning of marketing quotas. This may be due to the fact that owners receive more information relative to the programs and are also more usually members of groups where such matters are discussed. Age was found to be significant by the Chi-square test but this does not point out differences between age groups. The t test showed significant differences in educational levels, with those having complete high school or higher education indicating a much better understanding of the meaning of marketing quotas than those having less education. Significantly fewer voters, 58 percent, than non-voters, 76 percent, responded "don't know", which may be attributed to the voters' more active interest in public affairs. Size of farm was also found to be a significant factor, with those operators of over 200 acres revealing a better knowledge of marketing quotas than those on smaller farms. This can be ascribed to the greater interest of the larger owners in the use of programs due to their normally having more marketable surplus of grain crops.

### Need for Marketing Quotas

Those respondents who gave an answer to the question relative to the meaning of marketing quotas were further questioned as to the need for marketing quotas as follows:

How do you feel about it personally? Do you feel that marketing quotas should ever be set up or not? ---- Why do you feel that way?

Table 14

#### Farmers' Reasons for being in Favor of Marketing Quotas

Response	Percent
To handle the surplus problem	31
To even out marketing opportunities for large and small farmers, fair to all	27
At certain times and/or on certain crops necessary to a price support program	<u>10</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 41)	100

The number of farmers expressing the opinion that marketing quotas should be used was 8 percent of the total number of respondents and 24 percent of the group who responded to the question asking the meaning of marketing quotas. The largest response was again



concerned with the surplus problem. Equal emphasis was given the response "to even out marketing opportunities for large and small farmers" and the response "at certain times and/or on certain crops." Ten percent of this group expressed the need of such a policy instrument to maintain a price support program.

Analysis by factor groups yielded too many incomplete tables to permit statistical comparison, due to the small number of respondents in the group.

Table 15

Farmers' Reasons for Not being in  
Favor of Marketing Quotas

Response	Percent
Interferes with farmers' freedom	32
Supply and demand and/or good Lord will handle it	16
Don't need any program	13
Crop yields are too uncertain	15
Hurts small farmers	9
Not with present program	5
Other	<u>10</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 114)	100

The numbers of farmers opposing any use of marketing quotas was 23 percent of the total number interviewed and 66 percent of the group giving a meaning to the term "marketing quota". Opposition to federal restrictions comprised the largest single group, and, combined with the nearly synonymous expressions of reliance on supply and demand and no need for a program, amounted to 61 percent of the response in this category. Other specific responses point to the uncertainty of crop yields, and hardship imposed on small farmers as objections to the use of marketing quotas. A small percentage of the respondents did not give desired responses in that they considered marketing quotas only in relation to the current program and said that under this system they are not needed.

Of those asked this question 18 farmers or 4 percent of the total replied that they didn't know whether marketing quotas should ever be used. The answers here did not warrant classification into different reasons.

### The Brannan Plan

The next question to be considered deals with the Brannan Plan. Inasmuch as the Brannan Plan was considered to have been discussed and reported on to a considerable

extent in both agricultural and political circles, it was believed that farmers would be reasonably familiar with the name and possibly some of the contents of the plan. It provided an opportunity to observe opinion formation as affected by other than actual experience. Some indication of the extent of understanding of such a proposed plan obtained from group meetings, extension information and press and radio coverage was expected to be revealed. The farmers were asked:

Have you heard of the "Brannan Plan"? ----  
(If Yes) How do you feel about it?

Another question, to be considered later, was designed to check the accuracy of these responses with respect to the respondents' understanding of the Brannan Plan.

Table 16

Farmers' Knowledge and Opinions of the Brannan Plan

Response	Percent
No opinion or insufficient knowledge to comment	40
Never heard of the Brannan Plan	13
Do not approve	34
- because too many government controls	4
- because too costly	<u>3</u>
Total not approving	41
Approve	<u>6</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The number of respondents who claimed that they had never heard of the Brannan Plan amounted to 13 percent of the total. While it is felt that some of the farmers gave this response to avoid questioning, the total is not considered unduly large. It is not to be expected that any controversial issue will be observed or felt important by all of the population. This is particularly true where effects on the individual could not be expected to be great.

The largest single group response here were those who, while answering that they had heard of the Brannan Plan, expressed no opinion or insufficient knowledge to comment. Here again it is felt that many of the respondents evaded answering the question. However, it is understandable that the expression of insufficient knowledge should arise frequently. The unusual aspect is the expression of no opinion, for sufficient knowledge is not a usual prerequisite for comments on controversial subjects. The total of 41 percent expressing disapproval of the "Brannan Plan" comprised the largest single group response and the overbalancing majority of those giving an opinion.

In the analysis by factor groups significantly fewer part-owners, 34 percent, than renters, 48 percent, expressed no opinion and more part-owners, 40 percent, than renters, 27 percent, expressed disapproval of the "Brannan Plan".

Since these tend to be compensating expressions the main emphasis should appear on the first difference. It appears to emphasize a consistent position of less awareness of controversial issues by renters. Fewer Farm Bureau Members, 4 percent, than non-members, 18 percent, stated that they had never heard of the Brannan Plan while 44 percent of members as contrasted with 27 percent of non-members expressed disapproval of the plan. These are consistent and expected observations reflecting the communication functions of group participation as well as agreement with the organization's stand on the subject. Significantly fewer Republicans, 8 percent, than Democrats, 21 percent, said they had never heard of the Brannan Plan. Also, more Republicans, 42 percent, than Democrats, 17 percent, expressed disapproval while more Democrats, 17 percent, than Republicans, 2 percent, expressed approval of the plan. Part of the response may be attributed to party allegiance and part to the fact that more Republicans than Democrats proportionately are members of the Farm Bureau. This difference in membership alone would be expected to be a major influence as observed above. Thus we see that in this case tenure status, political affiliation and Farm Bureau membership have contributed to significant differences in opinion.

Farmers' Attitudes Toward Methods  
of Handling Perishable Farm Products

The next question to be analyzed was designed to test, in a discrete manner, the respondents' attitudes toward some pertinent features of both the current agricultural program and the proposed Brannan Plan. This testing is both absolute and relative, relative in that the validity of responses to the question analyzed above may be compared with the recognition of the proposal unencumbered by formal designation in this case. The wording of the situational type background for the questions is as follows:

Two farmers were talking about ways to keep farm prices and incomes from falling too low. Both men agreed that the present plan of price supports for such crops as corn and wheat worked fairly well, that is, having farmers arrange purchase agreements or loans-and-storage with P. and M. A. --- They didn't agree, however, on how perishables like butter and eggs should be supported. One of the farmers, Mr. Benson, said he favored the present method in which the government buys direct from processors and stores the products in order to hold prices up. Mr. Wood, on the other hand, said that he favored a plan under which farmers would sell all their perishable products like eggs for whatever they would bring. If these prices were so low that farm incomes would be below parity, then the government would make direct payments to farmers in order to bring their incomes up.

Table 17

Advantages seen by Farmers in the Indirect  
Payment Method of Handling Perishables

Response	Percent
None	32
Don't know or not answered	34
Keeps prices up for farmers	21
Reserve food stockpile	3
Prevents flooding the market-price fluctuation	2
Less government influence	3
Other	<u>5</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The responses, as shown in Table 17, indicate that the majority of the farmers interviewed saw no advantages in the current plan or couldn't think of any advantages to it. Actually, a large number of respondents thought it pointless to ask them both questions pertaining to this plan and the high negative response indicates this attitude. Of those expressing an advantage the object of keeping prices up for farmers was the major response, including 21 percent of the respondents. Minor responses included the maintaining of a reserve food stockpile, preventing flooding the market and minimizing government influence. Analysis by the factor groups did not reveal any significant differences in the types of response.

Table 18

Disadvantages seen by Farmers in the Indirect  
Payments Method of Handling Perishables

Response	Percent
Causes waste - poor distribution	30
Costly - increased taxes	24
Causes overproduction	3
Holds prices down when stocks sold	5
Processor or middleman has the advantage	5
Other	6
None	7
Don't know or not answered	<u>20</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The response concerning disadvantages to the current program as shown in Table 18 was much more specific than that relative to its advantages. The major disadvantage was seen as the waste of food involved with poor distribution being given very frequently as an associated factor. Another important disadvantage was seen in the cost of the program and the increased taxes necessary to cover this cost. Other less frequently given reasons combined with the above show 73 percent of the farmers seeing disadvantages in the current program. This is contrasted with 34 percent expressing some





advantages to the program in the previous question. These results indicate that that part of the current program included here did not meet with the approval of the farmers interviewed.

The next section of this question is specifically designed to test the respondents' recognition of one feature of the Brannan Plan. It was felt that such a question was desirable to test the validity of the responses to the specific question about the Brannan Plan discussed previously or to find approval given to the idea which was rejected when called by name. This offered the possibility of testing the hypothesis expressed above that a good knowledge of a controversial issue is not a prerequisite for the expression of public opinion. It was also hoped that significant influences on the farmers' opinions could be checked by this method of testing previous responses.

Table 19

## Farmers' Recognition of the Brannan Plan

Response	Percent
Yes	33
Yes, Brannan Plan	15
No	50
Don't know	<u>2</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

A brief examination of Table 19 would reveal what is apparently a very close agreement of response to this question and the previous question concerning the Brannan Plan. Here 52 percent of the respondents replied that they hadn't or didn't know if they had heard of this proposal, while the earlier analysis showed 53 percent of the respondents as reporting that they hadn't heard of the Brannan Plan or had insufficient knowledge of it to comment. However, a sort on those expressing disapproval of the Brannan Plan showed 16 percent of the total respondents did not recognize this feature of the plan even though they had condemned it. The apparent harmony of the results observed above is, therefore, due only to coincidence and has no particular significance. The hypothesis relative to expressions of public opinion appears to be validated in this case.

In the analysis by factor groups it was found that significantly more Grange members, 53 percent, than non-members, 30 percent, claimed to have heard of this idea before without naming it as the Brannan Plan. This may be another reflection of a group's informational program. Analysis by size of farm also showed significant differences where fewer farmers in the 200 acres and up farm size

groups, 37 percent, than in the smaller farm size groups, 55 percent, responded that they had not heard of this idea.

The farmers were next asked to express any advantages they saw in "Mr. Wood's idea", for the idea was never identified to those who didn't recognize as part of the Brannan Plan. This procedure seemed to offer a basis for obtaining more valid judgments, and results noted above would appear to bear out this assumption.

Table 20

Advantages seen by Farmers in the Direct  
Payment Method of Handling Perishables

Response	Percent
None	31
Don't know or not answered	35
Increase food consumption - less waste	19
Lower cost to government	2
More money for farmers	11
Other	<u>2</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The majority of the farmers questioned, 66 percent, did not express any advantages to be attained by this

plan. Of those expressing advantages two majority categories stand out, that is, increased food consumption and more money for farmers. This first of these was seen in opposite form, excessive waste, as a criticism of the current program, while the second is in contrast to earlier criticism of the current plan as giving processors or middlemen the advantage. In the analysis by factor groups the only significant item was seen in fewer Democrats, 23 percent, as opposed to Republicans, 33 percent, expressing the opinion that there were no advantages to the proposed plan. This is an apparent expression of party allegiance where recognition of the plan would permit such expression.

The farmers were then asked, as was done in the question relative to the current program, to express the disadvantages to "Mr. Wood's idea".

Table 21

Disadvantages seen by Farmers in the Direct  
Payment Method of Handling Perishables

Response	Percent
Costly, increased taxes	23
Too much red tape	18
Farmer too dependent on government	5
Too much regimentation	3
Cause over-supply	4
Other	11
None	9
Don't know or not answered	<u>27</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The major objection to this plan, as seen in Table 21, was its expected cost. This is a much more explicit response than that received when the Brannan Plan was mentioned previously, and is also in accord with the expression of many agricultural economists. Another major objection related to the red tape involved in such a plan. This is a normal reaction of farmers to the need for keeping detailed accounts and should be considered in any agricultural program. The increased role of the government in farmers' affairs was mentioned as a disadvantage by only 7 percent of the respondents.

The only significant difference in the factor group analysis was seen where fewer Grange members, 12 percent, than non-members, 25 percent, stressed cost to government as an objection to this method of marketing perishables. Thus it would appear that group discussion, if any, did not bring out this point to Grange membership. It is considered significant that none of the groups showing significant differences when the Brannan Plan was mentioned by name showed a consistent position in this case. It would appear that one may conclude that understanding of the plan played a less important role with regard to opinions of it than other factors. However,

despite the disparities observed above the over-all reaction to the plan was such as to indicate that it was not considered desirable by most of the farmers interviewed.

Another question was asked which wanted the respondents to choose between the two ideas for handling perishable products. The question was worded as follows: "In general, which of the two ideas for handling perishable products do you prefer? (1) Purchase from processors, (2) Direct payments to farmers, (3) Don't know." Unfortunately it was realized when the study was fairly well advanced that a response of "neither" was being frequently expressed. This would have been acceptable had it received uniform treatment by the interviewers but such was not the case. Some interviewers recorded a "neither" response, some requested that the respondent restrict his response to the precoded categories and some recorded a "neither" response as "don't know". Accordingly this writer does not consider this question as accurately recorded and worthy of further treatment or analysis.

#### Security and Controls

The last question to be analyzed here was designed to find the extent of farmers' desires for security and

how far they would agree with the extension of federal control in order to achieve income security. The wording of the situational type background used in this question was as follows:

Mr. Black had been doing a lot of thinking about the whole price support problem and its relation to farmers' incomes. One day he was talking with a neighbor about it and said, "There's a lot of talk about security these days and it's high time farmers had a little of it. They ought to be entitled to have a floor under their prices so their incomes wouldn't fall too far and plunge the whole country into a depression. The way I see it a farmer ought to be guaranteed 90 percent of parity on everything he sells so his buying power will never fall too far behind that of the city man. I'd go for that even if it meant acreage allotments, production controls on livestock, marketing quotas or any other kind of regulations to make it work.

Table 22

Farmers' Attitudes Toward the Statement  
that there should be a Floor under Farm Prices

Response	Percent
Yes	60
Yes - if there is a farm program	3
- should be flexible	1
- if other groups (labor) have a program	<u>3</u>
Total in favor	67
No	17
No - because opposed to control	4
- because supply and demand adequate	<u>6</u>
Total opposed	27
Not answered and don't know	5
Other	<u>1</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100



The results shown in Table 22 indicate that two thirds of the farmers felt that there should be a floor under farm prices. This response varies from the result seen in Chapter III, Table 2, where 46 percent of the farmers indicated that a price support program was needed. This may be attributed to at least two factors, dissatisfaction with the present program and the structure of the question which emphasized the disadvantageous position of farmers. Only 27 percent of the farmers expressed opposition to the idea of a floor under farm prices.

Analysis by factor groups revealed several significant differences. Fewer farmers in the forty-year and over experience group said that there was need of a floor price than in the groups having less experience. This may be attributed to their having achieved their goals or being financially secure, while the others still anticipate price problems. More Farm Bureau members, 24 percent, than non-members, 13 percent, responded that there was no need for a program. This is a consistent position with the national Farm Bureau expression for reliance in the forces of supply and demand or at least flexible support level. More Republicans, 20 percent, than Democrats, 11 percent, expressed the opinion that there was no need for a program.

This observation may be attributed to the significantly larger number of Republicans, 67 percent, than Democrats, 51 percent in the Farm Bureau membership.

The respondents were then questioned to determine if they considered 90 percent of parity a satisfactory level of support for farm prices.

Table 23

Farmers' Opinions of the Statement  
that they should receive 90 Percent of Parity

Response	Percent
Approve	33
Approve but - too high	4
- if there is a program	2
- should be flexible	5
- should be higher	<u>5</u>
Total approving	49
Not in favor	11
Not in favor - because against programs	5
- because too costly	<u>2</u>
Total disapproving	18
Not answered and don't know	32
Other	<u>1</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The results of Table 23 show a sharp contrast to those seen in Table 5, Chapter III, relative to understanding the relationship of price supports and parity. In that case 80 percent of the respondents had no knowledge of the relationship, while only 32 percent refrained from comment here. Approval, in full or qualified, was given by 49 percent of the respondents, while only 18 percent expressed disapproval. A large group, 32 percent, refrained from responding or taking a side on this issue.

Significantly fewer farmers who voted in the 1948 election, 31 percent, expressed outright approval than those who didn't vote, 43 percent. This is again affected by Farm Bureau membership which showed a high percentage voting than did non-members. Also, significantly more Democrats, 46 percent, than Republicans, 29 percent, gave outright approval of this level of support. This is a consistent expression of party approval. Fewer farmers on farms of 280 acres and up than farmers on smaller farms failed to answer or replied "don't know". This may be attributed to the fact that the larger farmers have more at stake on the issue than do those on smaller farms.

Table 24

Farmers' Opinions of the Desirability of  
Security under a System of Controls

Response	Percent
Agree	19
Agree if - prices certain	2
- all treated the same	4
- it would balance production	<u>1</u>
Total agreeing	26
Disagree	33
Disagree, because - loss of freedom	24
- dependent on government	6
- hurt small farmers	<u>1</u>
Total disagreeing	64
Not answered and don't know	9
Other - non-classified	<u>1</u>
Total (Number of farmers: 500)	100

The farmers reaction to this question show only 26 percent would agree to more stringent control measures to achieve price security. The large majority of them, 64 percent, would not sanction a further extension of controls. The largest group giving a reason for disagreeing felt that the farmer would lose his freedom under such a system. Only 9 percent remained non-committal on this question.

A significant difference was seen in the responses of Republicans as contrasted to those of Democrats. Loss of freedom was a reason for disagreement by 26 percent of the Republicans questioned and only 18 percent of the Democrats. More Democrats, 32 percent, than Republicans, 14 percent, agreed with the statement in question. Thus it would appear that Democrats are more willing to yield to governmental interference, or management, than are Republicans.

In summation it may be stated that the results studied in this chapter show the majority of the farmers interviewed to be opposed to any further extension of controls by government. The Farm Bureau has appeared to have an influence on members' responses, while several differences of opinion between Republican and Democratic respondents have been disclosed. Both the current program and the proposed Brannan Plan were seen to have features objectionable to a majority of the farmers. The hypothesis that there was no necessary connection between the expression of opinions and knowledge of a subject was verified in several instances.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The existence of an informed public constantly expressing opinion on controversial issues and the responsiveness of lawmakers to the expressions of the electorate are considered hallmarks of democracy. Agriculture has enjoyed this privilege to an extent somewhat greater than its social and economic importance in the United States. This may be attributed in part to advantageous political representation in Washington and in part to a large and active lobbying program. The real problem under this system is the determination of what actually constitutes public opinion. This study has attempted to determine the opinions of a representative group of Michigan farmers toward federal farm programs and some factors which may influence the opinions expressed.

First it may be desirable to outline the bases of public opinion formation. Public opinion is considered here as any expression, generally verbal, about a controversial subject. It is not necessary that it concern all of a nation's population, or, indeed, all of a

nation's farmers. The issue may be considered to be sufficiently important to be debated or even considered by only a small segment of a population. Thus the size of any particular public is subject to definition relative to the subject matter.

The remainder of a population may or may not be interested in the controversial issue. In the case of agricultural policy which is, in the final analysis, social action of major importance, the effects on the non-agricultural segment of the population may be quite direct. It is probable, however, that their interests and opinions will concern different aspects of the subject. Accordingly, the democratic society does not leave any particular group to its own devices. This imposes the necessity of knowing and understanding the interests of particular groups and reconciling their needs and desires with the best interests of the larger society.

When a study is proposed the question of whom shall be interviewed must be decided. The problem in this case can be broken down into two phases, first, that there shall be an adequate probability selection of the population and, second, that the opinions of those to whom the problem is salient or meaningful should be

sought. With regard to the second phase, for example, it was found that only 25 percent of the respondents in this study had used either the loan and storage or purchase agreement plan of price support in 1949.<sup>14</sup> The opinions of these participants undoubtedly contain a higher degree of saliency than do those of non-participants. This does not mean that the latter group will have no opinion, as opinions will usually be expressed whether there is saliency or not. In a policy study it is probably desirable that both groups be questioned. Actually both groups have means of expressing their opinions at the polls, and in the over-all evaluation for policy making the information from both sources is needed if the interests of all farmers are to be considered. This problem is also important in pressure group organizations where interests must be reconciled prior to unification of group recommendations.

The previous discussion limits the interviewing procedure to the agricultural sector of the economy, while disregarding the remainder of the society to whom the emerging agricultural policy decisions can be a burden or blessing. It would seem that the subject matter of

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<sup>14</sup> Kettering, op. cit., p. 90.



the present study would be even less salient to this latter group. It is probable that obtaining their opinions on matters of agricultural policy would be a most unrewarding task. Few, if any, of this group, in common with many farmers, could be expected to have the capacity for understanding social action in such an unknown context. For most urban dwellers agricultural policy has all the aspects of a semantic wilderness from which emerge various measures for maintaining an aristocracy in agriculture. Their interests and needs with respect to the products of agriculture, consistent with the prices required to meet these needs within a framework of social equality of incomes, should be the consideration of those by whom policy is made. Their position may also be enhanced by more articulate representation through labor unions and other urban groups.

The present study points up the need for an understanding of opinion formation and its determination by those concerned with the welfare of agriculture. It was found that 46 percent of the farmers interviewed were in favor of a price support program while 46 percent were opposed and 8 percent responded "don't know". These results indicate a much more delicate balance of

opinion than the articulate segments of the farm population would admit. Further analysis indicated that even on the question of a restrictive measure such as acreage allotments opinion is not as strong against them as supposed, 41 percent indicating that acreage allotments were needed, 52 percent that they were not and 7 percent responding "don't know". This is the type of information that, along with the reasons for such opinions, provides the understanding of both the problems and desires of the farmers in as accurate a form as possible.

It is also desirable to have some indication of the depth of understanding which farmers have relative to important features of farm program. An example from the present study shows only 7 percent of the respondents having a good understanding of the relationship between price supports and parity, 13 percent had some understanding and 80 percent expressed no understanding. Accordingly, when these farmers were asked if they thought that farm prices should be supported at 90 percent of parity and 41 percent said "yes", 18 percent said "no" and 21 percent were uncertain, the validity of their responses was subject to question. This type of information is also valuable as a guide to the points

which could be stressed in extension and farm organization meetings.

One problem in obtaining expression of opinions is the need for near perfect communication. This study observed two cases, at least, where this was not achieved. The first instance was in question 7, of Section II, pertaining to local administration of the P.M.A. program. In the attempt to avoid a forthright question the wording was made sufficiently nebulous as to render the responses practically worthless. Again, in question 5 of Section IV, where farmers were asked to express a preference between two methods of handling perishables, the limitations of response to the categories desired was not made clear and accordingly the results were of little value. A second and closely related problem here is the need for uniform handling of the interviewing procedure. In the above noted cases lack of uniformity compounded the initial lack of clarity.

The clarity of the analysis of opinion will be enhanced if it is seen as consisting of at least three levels, one assumed and two which will be demonstrated from the responses obtained. First, it is assumed that each individual has a tendency to express himself,

behave or act in a certain individualistic manner. This is a necessary and consistent assumption if we accept the concept of individual personality. Secondly, we have obtained individual verbalized responses to specific questions but we cannot be certain that this expression is consistent with the first level of opinion. Thirdly we have obtained some information which would suggest overt behavior in certain situations. The complete and accurate expression can only be obtained when these three levels of opinion are closely correlated in terms of contiguous translation.

In the analysis we have seen that, whereas opinion was equally divided as to whether a support program was needed or not, 64 percent of the farmers approved the use of the program in a case where personal gain would result, 35 percent disapproved and 1 percent did not answer. Again, in the case of acreage allotments 74 percent of the farmers approved of a means of defeating their purpose even though 41 percent had said they were needed. Therefore, it is seen that their expressed opinions do not coincide with the action they express as desirable in certain situations. This leads to the hypothesis that opinions must be more narrowly defined

as a function of particular situations as well as other factors.

If opinion is in a state of flux, and it is suspected that the outbreak of the Korean police action may have contributed to such a state during this study, even highly reliable instruments of questioning or measurement may yield inaccurate or inappropriate results. Expectations must certainly play some part in opinion formation and a question should have been included to measure the effect of the Korean outbreak in this respect. An even more desirable procedure would be the maintenance of periodic surveys to observe change at different periods.

Favorable expectations might well be expected to reduce affirmative responses to such questions as the need for acreage allotments, the need for a price support program, the need for marketing quotas or the extent to which farmers would accept direct controls to gain security. In the latter case, for example, 26 percent of the farmers said they would accept controls to gain security, 64 percent rejected the idea and 10 percent gave no definite answer. It can only be hypothesized that unfavorable expectations would have altered this response. However, despite favorable expectations,

67 percent of the farmers expressed a need for a floor under farm prices while 27 percent were opposed and 6 percent were uncertain.

The determination of the effect of certain factors on the opinions expressed by the respondents constituted another phase of this study. This was designed to test the hypothesis that opinions are influenced by environmental and natural forces as well as group participation and economic status. The results seen in earlier chapters revealed that the following factors contributed to significant variations in responses with the number of instances of significant variation noted after each factor; political preference, 8; Farm Bureau membership, 6; tenure status, 4; Grange membership, 3; education, 3; size of farm, 3; voting, 2; age, 1; and farm experience, 1. Type of farm was not found to be an influence on opinions expressed. These results provide a guide to the evaluation of results of such studies as the present one and also reasons for the apparent disparity of desires of particular groups.

So far the contents of this chapter have dealt with general concepts but mainly within the particular frame of reference to the present study in mind. To be meaningful in an aggregative context the area of reference must

be broadened to a national scope. It is, of course, obvious that the interests of farmers in Michigan may differ markedly from those of farmers in any other given area. The finite differences between the interests of the farm and non-farm populations may also be many and varied. However, in the consideration of national goals, such as efficiency in the use of resources and achieving equality of income producing opportunity among broad occupational groups, these differences tend to become minor components of a national aggregate.

The ultimate achievement of desirable policy measures resolves into a series of functionally differentiated roles assigned to the various levels of the opinion process through to the policy-making level. These roles are not fixed or precisely defined as in a totalitarian society, but, rather, are the means by which the democratic process is functional rather than theoretical. The extent to which the assumption of these roles is possible is dependent to a large extent on the degree in which the characteristic ambivalence of American society can be reduced.

At the beginning level of opinion formation and expression it is necessary that farm people assume the

complete role of citizens as well as producers of agricultural products. This would require the apostasy of many cherished beliefs as to the nobility of agriculture. There is a need for farmers to improve their understanding of national affairs relevant not only to themselves but also to other groups in order that they may become increasingly competent to cope with the demands of modern farm management in a dynamic society. It is necessary that they anticipate their problems, adjust their management practices to meet changing demands and be vocally and politically articulate in proportion to their role.

The farm organizations have been shown to have an effect on farmers' opinions. In those cases where the expression of farmers' needs and desires is considered an important function they should contribute to a decrease in agrocentricity of outlook. This involves a duty to ascertain the true expression of membership opinion and to avoid expressing mainly membership's approval of leaders' valuations. There is considerable evidence that leaders can influence opinion unduly, largely because they are frequently in a position to get more information and to manipulate events. This imposes the responsibility for constructive leadership consistent with the national objectives.



Those colleges which are specifically dedicated to serving the needs of agriculture must be particularly alert to their role. They should maintain continuing studies of the needs and desires of farmers with respect to agricultural policy. While this appears to be a normal function it is in very few cases one which is critically studied. The lack of understanding of the intricacies of public opinion is reflected both in the teaching of students destined to work in agriculture and in the analysis of research on farmers' opinions. This should not be misconstrued as a blanket indictment, but, rather, a plea for the assumption of increased competence in matters philosophical, sociological and psychological in addition to the extreme factualism so commonly stressed.

The mechanistic and empirical methods cannot alone meet the needs of modern America. To a large extent these organizations must contribute the specialists who will arrive at technical conclusions beyond the competence of the average citizen. Only by the use of such specialists can the integration of area differentials be successfully accomplished. If these functions are fulfilled and the results presented and explained the final decision must be left to a politically alert public. If the role has

been properly carried out the final act is merely ratification of the public's own desires.

Federal government has a role of responsibility to the whole society. It must at once minimize its interference in the affairs of individuals and yet be prepared to meet the periodic demands for aid from these same individuals. In the true meaning of democracy it must be aware of and sort through the desires of the people, the recommendations of specialists and the interests of areas, groups and the nation. This is the nearly insuperable problem of democratic government in a capitalistic society. That it must in the end come up with a solution which is acceptable to a politically articulate majority is a check on its efficiency. It has a particular responsibility in that it must assume that political judgments are possible on most issues. If and when federal government forsakes this responsibility, for technical judgment and executive decree, it is no longer democratic and fails to be acceptable in our society.

Up to the present time there is considerable doubt as to the legislators' awareness of public opinion on current matters. Indeed, it is possible that bureaucratic

leaders may have a better conception of current public opinion than do legislators. If this is true it may point to an important functional role for the U.S.D.A. as a coordinator for the determination of farmers' opinions on agricultural policy.

Some may wonder why the mass media have not been accorded a role here. The evidence at the present time is that mass information media have little impact on public opinion. That is to say, that the opinions emanating from such sources have been found to have little effect on issues of national importance such as elections. However, the matter of coverage by mass information media could be very important. That is, that whether a matter is reported or not is entirely different from whether it is reported favorably or adversely. It is felt that if the other group roles are functioning properly the mass media will in turn function acceptably.

In summation it may be said that the necessary conditions for the determination of public opinion have been outlined. The specific instruments are subject for treatment elsewhere. The process for the translation and integration have been briefly



considered and some roles for action have been suggested. Illustrations from the current study have been used where applicable. Some suggestions for future studies may be gained from this method of presentation. The successful realization of the ideal is not expected but it is hoped that some direction has been provided. It is in the interests of both the individual and the nation that ambivalence be replaced by a unified, single-minded purposiveness.

## APPENDIX A

### The Questionnaire

Michigan State College  
Aug., 1950 (Rev. 2)

Agr. Econ. Dept.  
and S. R. S.

### FARM MANAGEMENT SURVEY

All information in this schedule is strictly confidential and under the control of the Agricultural Economics Department of Michigan State College. Names of persons interviewed in this survey will not be made public in any way.

County \_\_\_\_\_ Township \_\_\_\_\_

Tract Number \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

#### Dates of Calls and Interview

Call Number	Call		Interview Completed	
	Date	Time of day	Yes	No
1.				
2.				
3.				

We're making a special farm management survey in several counties in Michigan this summer. We're particularly interested in crops grown on Michigan farms, in the use and sale of crops, and in farmers' ideas about price supports for farm products.

We're talking with some of the farmers in \_\_\_\_\_ County this week. We pick out the farms to be visited by chance and talk with the operators.

First I need some information about the size of your farm.

1. How many acres do you farm altogether whether owned or rented? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If less than 70 acres, terminate the interview)
2. How many acres do you own? \_\_\_\_\_ (If the answers to question 1 and 2 are the same, omit question 3.)
3. How many acres do you rent? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Is all of this rented from the same owner? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What is the name of the owner and number of acres rented from each owner?
 

(1) Name _____	Acres _____
(2) Name _____	Acres _____
(3) Name _____	Acres _____

(See separate instructions for method of deciding whether or not to complete the interview.)

-2-

Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Section I

1. Now I would like to sketch a map of your farm to help us get a better picture of your cropping and soils programs.

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.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

(Assign a number to each field for reference in getting land use and soils data. Use farmer's numbering system if he has one. Indicate acreage and 1950 crop for each field and transfer to page 3.





## SECTION II

-4-

Tract No.

1. We are also interested in what Michigan farmers did with some of their crops last year, and to what extent they use government price supports.

- a. How many bushels of corn did you harvest in 1949?
  - (1) (If any land was rented) what was the landlord's share?
- b. Did you sign a purchase agreement with P. & M. A. (A. A. A.) for any of your 1949 corn crop? For how many bushels?
  - (1) Did you store it on your farm or in commercial storage?
  - (2) How much did you deliver to the government?
  - (3) (If all under purchase agreement was not delivered to the government) what did you do with the rest of it?
    - (a) How much did you sell on the open market or to other farmers?
    - (b) How much do you have on hand which you intend to sell or deliver to the government?
    - (c) How much was or will be fed to livestock?
- c. Did you put any of your 1949 corn crop in approved storage and get a loan on it under the P. & M. A. program? How much did you store?
  - (1) Did you store it on your farm or in commercial storage?
  - (2) Is it still in storage?
  - (3) Delivered to the government?
  - (4) Loan repaid and crop sold?
- d. Did you sell any of your 1949 corn on the market or to other farmers which was not under purchase agreement or loan? How much did you sell?
- e. Do you have any on hand now which you are planning to sell? How much?
- f. Do you usually sell some corn in most years?
  - (1) (If yes) About how many bushels per year would your sales average?
- g. How much corn did you feed to livestock?
- h. Could you tell me what the landlord did with his share?
  - (1) Did he use a purchase agreement?
  - (2) Loan and storage?
  - (3) Did he sell it outright?
  - (4) Was it fed on this place?

(Repeat for wheat, oats, barley, rye, dry field beans, soybeans, and potatoes if raised on this farm in 1949.)

2. Now we would like to know something about what you intend to do with some of Your 1950 crops.

- b. Do you intend to use a P. & M. A. purchase agreement for your 1950 (corn) crop?
  - (1) Will you store it on your farm or in commercial storage?
- c. Do you plan to get a loan on any of your 1950 (corn) crop through P. & M. A.?
  - (1) Will you store it on your farm or in commercial storage?
- d. Do you intend to sell any of your 1950 corn crop on the open market or to other farmers?
- g. Do you intend to feed any of your corn?
 

(Repeat for wheat, oats, barley, rye, dry field beans, soybeans, and potatoes if raised on this farm in 1950.)

## REPLIES TO QUESTIONS 1 AND 2

Item	(1) 1949 Actual				(2) 1950 Intended			
a. Amount harvested					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(1) Landl'ds share					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
<u>Operator's share</u>					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
B. Purchase agreement								
(1) Where stored					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(2) Del. to gov't					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(3) (a) Sold outright					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(b) On hand					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(c) Fed to Livest'k					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
c. Loan and storage								
(1) Where stored								
(2) Still in storage					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(3) Del. to gov't					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(4) Repaid and sold					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
d. Out right sale								
E. To be sold					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
f. Usually sells					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(1) Average					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
g. Fed to livestock								
<u>Landlord's share</u>								
h. (1) Purchase Agreement					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(2) Loan and storage					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(3) Outright sale					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
(4) Fed to livestock					XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX



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Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Some farmers use the P. & M. A. purchase agreements or loan and storage programs and others don't. We'd like to know some of the reasons for this.  
 (Ask the following questions for each of the crops listed on page 5.)  
 (1) I notice that you put (didn't put) your 1949 corn crop under a purchase agreement (and/or under loan and storage). Why did you decide to handle your crop that way?  
 (2) What other reasons?

Crop	Did	Did not	Reasons

4. (For all crops listed in question 1 and 2 for both 1949 and 1950, check to determine whether disposal intentions for 1950 are different than actual disposal in 1949 in the use of purchase agreement, loan and storage, outright sale, no sales at all, or in any combination of these. For each difference noted, ask the questions below.)

a. In handling your corn crop, I see that last year you (specify '49 practices) and that this year you intend to (specify '50 practices). I would be interested in knowing why you are making this change.

Crop: \_\_\_\_\_ Change: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Crop: \_\_\_\_\_ Change: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

5. In general, which price support plan would you prefer, the purchase agreement or the loan and storage program?

(1) Purchase agreement ( ) (3) Neither ( )  
 (2) Loan and storage ( ) (4) Don't know ( )

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

6. The County P. & M. A. Office has set up acreage allotments in 1950 for most farms that grow certain crops. What acreage allotment did you receive for corn? For wheat? For beans? For potatoes? (Record reply under question 7)
7. (Check p. 3 to see if within allotment on each controlled crop grown and ask:) Would you mind telling me why you stayed (did not stay) within your allotment on corn?

Crop	Allot. Acres	Actual Acres		Reasons why or why not

## Section III

1. Where do you get most of your information about the price support program and how it operates?

	Free Response	Follow up
(1) Township committeemen . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(2) County P. & M. A. employees . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(3) Other farmers . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(4) County agricultural agent . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(5) Radio . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(6) Newspapers . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(7) Farm magazines . . . . .	( ) . . . .	( )
(8) Other (specify) _____	( ) . . . .	( )

(For each source not mentioned as a free response ask: Do you get any information from \_\_\_\_\_? (Record response in follow-up column)

2. What do you understand to be the reason why there is a price support program for some farm crops? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you personally feel about it? Do you think that a price support program is needed, or not? Yes ( ) No ( ) DK ( )
- Why do you feel that way? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you understand to be the relation, if any, between support price and parity? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you understand to be the reason for acreage allotments on such crops as corn and wheat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you feel about it personally? Do you think that acreage allotments are necessary, or not? Yes ( ) No ( ) DK ( )  
Why do you feel that way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. We've been talking about the price support and acreage allotment program as it operates over the whole country. Now let's come back to your local situation. How do you feel about the way the program is operating in this country? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. We sometimes hear people talking about using marketing quotas in connection with price support programs. Would you mind telling me just what the term "marketing quota" means to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. (Omit 9 if answer to 8 is "don't know")  
How do you feel about it personally? Do you feel that marketing quotas should ever be set up, or not? Yes ( ) No ( ) DK ( )  
Why do you feel that way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Have you heard of the "Brannan Plan"? Yes ( ) No ( )  
(If yes) How do you feel about it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION IV

Now I'd like to get your comments on some situations dealing with farmers and the price support program.

1. Mr. Brown usually grows about 20 acres of wheat. He was notified that his 1950 wheat allotment would be 16 acres. He stayed within this allotment because he thought he might want to use the purchase agreement or loan-and-storage program. Mr. Brown tried to get as high a yield as he could on the 16 acres of wheat that he was allotted. He got the best seed he could find, fertilized heavily, and sowed his wheat on the best 16 acres on the farm. A friend commented that it seemed to him such practices would result in a bigger cut in wheat acreage this fall if most farmers did the same thing as Brown.

Do you think Brown was justified in his actions even though it would mean bigger cuts in acreage allotments this fall? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Mr. Stone ordinarily raises about enough corn to feed his livestock. Last fall he found that he could get a government loan of \$1.40 a bushel on his corn. Since Mr. Stone had plenty of good storage space, he saw a chance to make some extra money by taking advantage of the loan and storage program. He put his entire crop in storage with a loan of \$1.40 a bushel on it and bought corn for livestock feed at 90 cents a bushel from neighbors who did not have approved storage. He was thus able to make 50 cents a bushel on his own corn which he would otherwise have fed to his livestock.

What do you think of Mr. Ston's actions? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. A group of farmers were discussing price support programs at a meeting on agricultural policy. Mr. Smith was speaking: "I am in favor of the general idea of a price support program for farmers which would keep their incomes from falling too far. I think, however, that the present program is unfair to us farmers here in Michigan. We don't grow very many acres of these so-called basic crops. It's the big fellows further West who ought to have their acreage allotments cut, not us. They're the ones who really cause the surplus."

What do you think of Mr. Smith's statement? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Mr. Black had been doing a lot of thinking about the whole price support problem and its relation to farmers' income. One day he was talking with a neighbor about it and said, "There's a lot of talk about security these days and it's high time farmers had a little of it. They ought to be entitled to have a floor under their prices so their incomes wouldn't fall too far and plunge the whole country into a depression. The way I see it a farmer ought to be guaranteed 90% of parity on everything he sells so his buying power will never fall too far behind that of the city man. I'd go for that idea even if it meant acreage allotments, production controls on livestock, marketing quotas or any other kind of regulations to make it work."

- a. What do you think of Mr. Black's statement that there should be a floor under farm prices? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- b. What do you think of Mr. Black's idea that a farmer should receive 90% of parity? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- c. How far would you go in agreeing with Mr. Black that farmers ought to have more security even if it means more acreage allotments, production controls and marketing quotas? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. Two farmers were talking about ways to keep farm prices and incomes from falling too low. Both men agreed that the present plan of price supports for such crops as corn and wheat worked fairly well, that is, having farmers arrange purchase agreements or loans-and-storage with P. & M. A. -- They didn't agree, however, on how perishables like butter and eggs should be supported. One of the farmers, Mr. Benson, said he favored the present method in which the government buys direct from processors and stores the products in order to hold prices up. Mr. Wood, on the other hand, said that he favored a plan under which farmers would sell all their perishable products like eggs for whatever they would bring. If these prices were so low that farm incomes would be below parity, then the government would make direct payments to farmers in order to bring their incomes up.

- (1) As you see it, what are the advantages of Mr. Benson's suggestion that our government continue its present plan of buying direct from processors and storing perishables? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

What are the disadvantages? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_

- (2) Have you ever heard of Wood's idea that our government would allow perishable products to sell for whatever they would bring and then pay farmers direct, if necessary, to bring their incomes up?

1) Yes ( )                      3) No ( )  
 2) Yes, Brannan plan ( )                      4) Don't know ( )

(a) What do you feel are the advantages of such a plan? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Disadvantages? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- (c) In general, which of the two ideas for handling perishable products do you prefer?

1) Purchase from processors ( )  
 2) Direct payments to farmers ( )  
 3) Don't know ( )

#### SECTION V

We have just a few more questions to ask you. They have to do with general information about the farm and about you so that we can divide the responses people give according to the ages of farms and so on.

1. First, would you mind telling me how old you are?

(1) Less than 30 ( )                      (4) 50 - 59 ( )  
 (2) 30 - 39 ( )                      (5) 60 and over ( )  
 (3) 40 - 49 ( )

2. How many years have you been farming on your own?

(1) Less than 5 ( )                      (5) 20 - 29 ( )  
 (2) 5 - 9 ( )                      (6) 30 - 39 ( )  
 (3) 10 - 14 ( )                      (7) 40 and over ( )  
 (4) 15 - 19 ( )

3. What was the last grade or year you completed in school?

(1) No schooling ( )                      (5) Some high school ( )  
 (2) 1 - 4 years grammar ( )                      (6) Completed high school ( )  
 (3) 5 - 7 years grammar ( )                      (7) Some college ( )  
 (4) Completed grammar ( )                      (8) Completed college ( )

4. Have you ever taken a short course in agriculture? (1) Yes, college ( )  
 (2) Yes, Vet. Adm. ( )  
 (3) No ( )

5. Are you a member of the Michigan Farm Bureau? (1) Yes ( )  
 (2) No ( )

6. The Grange? (1) Yes ( )  
 (2) No ( )

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7. Do you remember for certain whether or not you voted in the 1948 Presidential Election?  
 (1) Yes, voted ( ) (3) No, too young to vote ( )  
 (2) No, didn't vote ( ) (4) Uncertain ( )
8. In general, which political party did you favor in the Presidential Election of 1948?  
 (1) Republican ( ) (3) Other (specify) ( )  
 (2) Democratic ( ) (4) Uncertain ( )
9. Now to complete the picture of your farm organization, we need to know how many livestock you have. How many dairy cows did you have on hand January 1, 1950?  
 (1) Dairy cows? \_\_\_\_\_ (6) Sows? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (2) Beef cows? \_\_\_\_\_ (7) Pigs? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (3) Feeder cattle? \_\_\_\_\_ (8) Hens? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (4) Ewes? \_\_\_\_\_ (9) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (5) Feeder lambs? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Have you bought any corn for livestock feed since last October 1? How many bushels? Other grain? (Specify) Corn \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you feel that you have adequate storage for your corn? Did you build any new storage for corn in the past two years, either permanent or temporary? Do you plan to build any additional storage for corn in 1950, either permanent or temporary?

(Repeat for wheat, other small grain, beans, and potatoes if grown on this farm in 1950.)

	Adequate			Built past 2 yrs.			Plans to build			
	Yes	No	Maybe	Perm.	Temp.	No	Perm.	Temp.	Maybe	No
Corn										
Wheat										
Other sm. gr.										
Beans										
Potatoes										

12. (If owner or part-owner) Would you mind telling me if you own your farm free and clear or if you still have some indebtedness?  
 Free ( )  
 Debt ( )
- 

13. Finally, so that we may check our records and also send you a copy of our report would you mind giving us your name and address?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

### Factor Groups Used in the Analysis of Responses

1. Age
  - a) less than 30
  - b) 30 - 39
  - c) 40 - 49
  - d) 50 - 59
  - e) 60 and over
2. Years of farm experience
  - a) Less than 5 years
  - b) 5 - 9 years
  - c) 10 - 14 years
  - d) 15 - 19 years
  - e) 20 - 29 years
  - f) 30 - 39 years
  - g) 40 years and over
3. Education
  - a) No schooling
  - b) 1-4 years grammar
  - c) 5 - 7 years grammar
  - d) Completed grammar
  - e) some high school
  - f) completed high school
  - g) some college
  - h) completed college
4. Farm Bureau Membership
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
5. Grange Membership
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
6. Voted in 1948 Presidential Election
  - a) Yes, voted
  - b) No, didn't vote
  - c) No, too young to vote
  - d) uncertain
7. Farm owned free and clear or some indebtedness
  - a) Free
  - b) Debt
8. Political party favored in 1948 Presidential Election
  - a) Republican
  - b) Democratic
  - c) Other (specify)
  - d) Uncertain
9. Tenure Status
  - a) Owner
  - b) Part-owner - (own some land and rent additional acres)
  - c) Renter
10. Type of farm
  - a) Crop - 60 per cent or more of total productive man work units used on crops
  - b) Livestock - 60 per cent or more of total productive man work units used on livestock.
  - c) General - using more than 40 per cent of the labor on crops and livestock without using more than 60 per cent on either crops or livestock.
11. Size of farm
  - a) Under 119 acres
  - b) 120 - 199 acres
  - c) 200 - 279 acres
  - d) 280 - 359 acres
  - e) 360 acres and over







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