

# FEATURE STORY

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(EDITORS: This is one of the articles in the annual series of profiles of University of Wisconsin faculty members retiring this year.)

MADISON, Wis.--(Advance for PM's of Thursday, May 24)--The man who has guided the agricultural research activities of the University of Wisconsin for nearly a quarter of a century will retire July 1. He is Noble Clark, associate director of the Wisconsin agricultural experiment station.

In leaving the job, Clark can look back with satisfaction on 35 years in agricultural research administration at the University--years of fantastic growth in the research program and staff, years of changing research emphasis, and some of the most fruitful years of discovery.

He joined the Wisconsin staff in 1927, as assistant to Dean Harry L. Russell. Three years later, he was named assistant director of the agricultural experiment station. In another eight years--1938--he became associate director, a post he has held since.

In 1930, some 80 staff members were engaged in research projects in the agricultural experiment station. In 1962, the research staff numbered more than 250, plus numerous graduate student research assistants.

There have been many changes in the research program during Clark's years as associate director. More effort is being placed on basic research which seeks to build scientific principle in contrast to applied research which seeks to find a practical application of scientific principles. More support also goes to research in social science departments such as agricultural economics, rural sociology, and agricultural education.

-more-

add one--Clark

Clark views money spent for research as a public investment and agricultural research as a particularly high-yielding investment.

"Dollars which have been invested in agricultural research over the years --on projects that were unsuccessful, as well as highly profitable ones such as the development of hybrid corn--are year after year bringing public and private benefits of 35 per cent and more. Few investment opportunities can be compared with that," he stated in a 1958 speech commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Wisconsin agricultural experiment station.

Not a scientist himself, Clark takes little credit for the scientific advances which have come out of experiment station laboratories during his years in research administration. But his scientific colleagues quickly acknowledge the importance of Clark's wise administrative policies in the success of the research program.

"A good research administrator doesn't try to direct the immediate goals or the day-to-day work of the research man," one Wisconsin scientist states. "The wise administrator rather picks capable, forward-looking scientists for his staff, then gives them the freedom and funds to carry their programs forward. Noble Clark has done this and has protected his staff from undue outside interference which tends to lessen the freedom of the scientist to plan and carry out his specialized technical operations."

Throughout his professional career, Clark has been intensely concerned with world-wide problems of food supply. Immediately after World War II, he served as deputy director of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The year before he had headed a five-nation FAO mission which surveyed agricultural production in Poland. From 1943 to 1948, he was chairman of the Committee on Postwar Agricultural Policy of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities.

-more-

add two--Clark

He has also held a long time interest in land tenure and land use planning, an interest which stems from his early work as agricultural advisor for the Wisconsin Colonization Co. in Sawyer County. An early land tenure assignment was his post as regional director of the Land Policy Section of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1934 while on leave from the University.

Clark's concern for welfare of rural people has been a powerful influence strengthening social science research in the agricultural experiment station. In 1950-51, he was a member of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor. He firmly believes that science can help solve social problems.

In 1961, addressing a group of agricultural researchers in Texas, Clark said: "Research on agricultural production alone is not enough. Our job as agricultural research workers is to understand the human needs we can help meet by using research as our tool. We should endeavor to anticipate these human needs."

And again in 1961, Clark summarized a pressing social problem in a speech at the annual meeting of a milk cooperative in Minneapolis: "We need to give our farm boys a fair deal. They need, they should have, and they should be encouraged to take advantage of educational opportunities so they can make the most of their inherent capabilities. There is no time to lose, because our farm boys are growing up. They deserve better than to find themselves with urban employment their best alternative, but forced to write on their job application that they are 'unskilled'."

Clark's feeling about the future of agricultural production research is summarized in another quote from his Texas speech in 1961. "The agriculture of the future is likely to require, and to deserve, even more research than now in the various areas of crop and livestock production. New agricultural chemicals, new farm equipment and machines, new technological developments of many kinds, will increase the dependence of farmers on research to supply them with answers to the enormously complicated problems they confront."

-more-

add three--Clark

He began his professional career in 1915, when he graduated from Wisconsin with a B.S. degree and taught at Michigan State College for two years. In 1917 he was manager of a farm in Cook County, Ill., and a year later became agricultural advisor for the Wisconsin Colonization Co. in Sawyer County. From 1922-27 he was agricultural agent for Ontonagon County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Clark attended graduate school at Northwestern University and the University of Minnesota, and completed his M.S. degree in 1930 after his return to Wisconsin.

Clark plans further speaking and writing assignments on matters of world food production, land tenure, and research administration. His talents will be put to good use in guest lectures before University classes and in speaking appearances in the years to come. He'll devote more time, too, to the outdoor life he loves at the Clark's cabin north of Lake Superior, and to the flowers and vegetables around his Madison home.

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