Employment of Agronomists in the United States

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It is imperative that agronomists and their various specific professions be counted and studied in order to provide basic information to counselors who plan the training programs of future agronomists and advise them about the kinds of jobs and opportunities which are available to them upon completing their college or university training. All agronomists should be interested in the growth and characteristics of their profession.

This report is a study of the numbers of agronomists in various fields of employment and the changes which have taken place during the six years 1955 to 1960.

METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

At the 1954 meeting of the Agronomic Education Division of the American Society of Agronomy, a subcommittee on Employment of Agronomists was established as a working unit of the Committee on Training of Agronomists. This subcommittee was charged with making an annual survey of the employment of recent agronomy graduates (including those majoring in crops and in soils) at the end of the school year and to summarize and distribute this information to department heads and contributors to the census. A questionnaire-table was sent to department heads or other selected persons in each of 79 colleges or universities in the U. S., including Puerto Rico. Completing the table involved tabulating the numbers and percentages of B.S.A., M.S.A., and Ph.D. graduates employed in various kinds of jobs in each of several major professional areas of employment. These professional areas (capital letters) along with specific kinds of employment in each area (numbers in parentheses) were as follows: A. Agricultural Business—(1) banking and credit, (2) cooperative management, (3) farm utilities, (4) insurance, (5) land appraisal, (6) marketing, (7) private business, (8) other; B. Agricultural Communications—(1) advertising, (2) farm magazines, (3) market reporting, (4) newspapers, (5) radio, (6) television, (7) other; C. Agricultural Conservation—(1) fish and wildlife, (2) public parks, (3) range or forest, (4) soil and water including SCS, (5) other; D. Agricultural Education—(1) agricultural extension, (2) business firms, (3) college instruction, (4) farm organizations, (5) government agencies including both state and federal, (6) high school instruction, (7) other; E. Agricultural Industry—(1) farm machinery and equipment, (2) fertilizer and/or lime processing, (3) grain or seed processing, (4) pesticides or herbicides manufacturing, (5) sales, including farm supplies and equipment, (6) other; F. Agricultural Research—(1) agricultural experiment station, (2) private industry, and (3) other; G. Agricultural Services—(1) agricultural consultant, (2) inspection and regulation, (3) seed improvement, (4) pest control, (5) foreign agricultural service, and (6) other; H. Farming, Ranching, or Farm or Ranch management; I. Green keeper; J. Military service; K. Other; L. Unemployed; M. Unknown; and N. Graduate school attendance.

In cases where two or more departments occur in one state, the data from these various departments were combined such that in a given state only one statistic is required to show a summary of the state’s activity in employment of agronomists.

The data taken during the last 4 years (1957 to 1960 inclusive) have been classified according to the 4 regions representing the branches of the American Society of Agronomy, i.e., I. Northwestern, II. North Central, III. Southern, and IV. Western. Region V denotes a combination of data from Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

All of the data taken by the committee on Employment of Agronomists during the four years, 1957 to 1960 inclusive, were on IBM punch cards at the University of Illinois Agronomy Statistical Laboratory, Urbana, Illinois.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the 6-year (1955-1960 inclusive) trends in numbers of Agronomy B.S.A., M.S.A., and Ph.D. graduates employed in various kinds of jobs in each of the 9 major professional areas during the 4-year period, 1957-1960 inclusive. The major areas of employment for B.S.A. graduates were graduate school, military service, conservation, and industry. More than 1000 B.S.A. graduates were employed in each of these areas during the 4-year period. Graduate school and conservation were the three major areas for M.S.A. graduates, while more than half of the Ph.D. graduates were employed in research and miscellaneous professions.

The percentages of agronomy B.S.A., M.S.A., and Ph.D. graduates employed in each of the 9 major professional areas for the 4-year period, 1957-1960 inclusive, are given in Figure 2. The major areas of employment for B.S.A. graduates were graduate school, military service, conservation, and industry. More than 1000 B.S.A. graduates were employed in each of these areas during the 4-year period. Graduate school and conservation were the three major areas for M.S.A. graduates, while more than half of the Ph.D. graduates were employed in research and miscellaneous professions. While the percentages of graduates in education and miscellaneous professions declined from B.S.A. to M.S.A. and from M.S.A. to Ph.D., the percentages of graduates in conservation, industry, business, farm machinery and equipment, police, and miscellaneous professions increased from B.S.A. to M.S.A. and from M.S.A. to Ph.D. It appears that more than one-third, 1189, of the 3673 published July, 1962...