The Land Grant College Act went into effect in 1862 more than one hundred years ago. It set a pattern for public education at the college level and created opportunities not heretofore available to the youth of our then infant country.

Companion acts, such as the Hatch Act in 1887 for research and the Smith–Lever Act in 1914 for extension, followed and created opportunities for agricultural development whose far-reaching effects have amazed and are still the envy of the entire civilized world.

In their original concepts, these programs were extremely broad, and highly applied. The Hatch Act which established the State Agricultural Experiment Stations states, “It shall be the object and duty of the State Agricultural Experiment Stations . . . to conduct original and other researches, investigations, and experiments, bearing directly on and contributing to the establishment and maintenance of a permanent and effective agricultural industry of the United States, including researches basic to the problem of agriculture in its broadest aspects, and such investigations as have for their purpose the development and improvement of the rural home life and the maximum contribution by agriculture to the welfare of the consumer, as may be deemed advisable, having due regard to the varying conditions and needs of the respective states.”

As of that time, the opportunities, obligations, and objectives for all those affected by the Hatch Act were clearly spelled out.

In a very real sense, the United States Department of Agriculture and the various departments in our nation’s Schools and Colleges of Agriculture are the direct outgrowth of these early Agricultural Acts. And, indeed, the American Society of Agronomy itself has its roots here—as have most of our professional agricultural societies.

It is not our purpose here to document how completely, or how faithfully, agricultural researchers, teachers, and extension workers have adhered to the obligations and objectives set forth so long ago. Suffice it to say that American Agriculture today is one of the miracles of the present century, and that we are justifiably proud of what we have accomplished. The United States Senate, in 1965, recommended that the Department of Agriculture, the land-grant experiment stations, and industry assess the present status of research in agriculture as a basis for future recommendations. A momentous task was undertaken by a joint committee of the Department of Agriculture, the land-grant experiment stations, and industry to reassess the present status of research in agriculture and to establish priorities for research. Their results are presented in a report entitled “A National Program of Research for Agriculture,” issued in October 1966. I have drawn heavily on that report since it was first time in our history that an over-all, objective, comprehensive inventory of agricultural programs in the United States, including the role of industry in these programs, has been made.

When the Hatch Act was originally drawn, the contribution of industry to agricultural research, though a contribution, was insignificant. The Department of Agriculture and the State Agricultural Experiment Stations were given primary responsibility both for research and development. By 1965, however, the role of industry had grown to the extent that it accounted for over half, or about 54% of the 854 millions of dollars spent by the State Agricultural Experiment Stations, 33% from Federal sources, 7% from by-product sales. About 60% of these 854 millions of dollars used for agricultural research was spent by industry in its own laboratories. About 27% was spent by the State Agricultural Experiment Stations, and about 19% by the United States Department of Agriculture. Within the State Agricultural Experiment Stations, only 32% of the funds came from state appropriations, 47% from Federal sources, and 21% from industry.

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