The inauguration of the *Journal of Production Agriculture* is a welcome event. The American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America, and the Soil Science Society of America are to be congratulated for this effort. The involvement of five cooperating organizations—the American Agricultural Economics Assoc., the American Forage and Grassland Council, the American Society of Animal Science, the Society for Range Management, and the Weed Science Society of America—promises to make this an essential interdisciplinary journal for anyone involved in agricultural production.

The agricultural sciences are at a critical point. We are entering a period of federal budgetary restrictions. At the same time, political and economic forces are placing greater demands upon agricultural research and extension. Those involved in production research must share ideas that may have broad application or lead to solutions to nagging production problems. They must also look at their work in terms of the broader societal forces which are bringing new challenges to production agriculture.

The scope of the *Journal of Production Agriculture* seems to put it in an ideal position for communication among the scientific disciplines, and between researchers and the political, economic, and social forces which are moving agriculture in new directions.

Developing integrated approaches to the problems of modern agriculture and communicating those approaches to policymakers is critical. Agricultural research funding remains at 1967 levels, in constant dollars. Research and extension programs are funded with the “budget dust” left over after our expensive crop price support programs have been funded. With the real likelihood that these support program costs will not decrease significantly in the near future, we must reconcile ourselves to continued funding difficulties.

Yet we must develop agricultural science and technology to meet new demands. Farmers are seeking ways of lowering input costs in response to declining farm profitability. Water quality issues are becoming critical and demand more of our attention. Traditional methods of pest and disease control are being questioned and new materials and approaches must be developed. Biological breakthroughs promise a new age in agriculture, but also demand more research to adapt them to agriculture’s needs.

The only way to cope with this situation is for the various agricultural disciplines to seek common approaches to solving these problems. This is a task which the *Journal of Production Agriculture* can help achieve. But the agricultural research and extension community must also help government policymakers rank the importance of the various research needs so that funding can be properly directed. This communication link needs improvement.

A number of advisory bodies in the agriculture research and extension community are assigned to improve this communication link. They must do a better job! But the various agricultural scientific organizations and societies also must improve their effectiveness and understanding of the policy process in Washington and in the state capitals.

I urge the organizations involved in this journal to seek other ways of communicating with the forces which will move production agriculture in new directions. The initiation of a Congressional Fellowship program by the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA is a welcome step. This program provides Congress with in-house expertise from the agricultural research community and it provides the fellow with an understanding of the policy process in Washington. This effort leads to understanding between Congress and the agricultural research community. Over time, it will create within the research community a group of people trained in the ways of Washington. More agricultural organizations must enter into this fellowship process, and find other ways of building partnerships between scientists and policymakers.

In coming months, the House Agriculture Subcommittee, which I chair, will hold a series of hearings on research needs in agriculture. I hope that these hearings will provide a catalyst and a forum for discussion of some of the challenges facing production agriculture and the research and extension efforts needed to meet those challenges. And I hope that these hearings will involve a broad range of people involved in the scientific sector.

Times of change are times of stress, but they are also times of opportunity. With the initiation of the *Journal of Production Agriculture*, the organizations involved are preparing themselves, and the agriculture community, to take advantage of the changes before us. I hope that this effort continues and grows.

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