

*THE ARKLETON TRUST*

**INFORMATION AND  
INNOVATION ON FARMS IN  
CENTRAL ITALY**

*A Study in Lazio and Umbria  
by  
Colin Fraser*

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of David Moore, whose tragic and early death brought profound grief to his many friends.

From the time when this study was no more than the kernel of an idea, David Moore, as Secretary of the Arkleton Trust, encouraged me to develop it and generously gave of his advice. Later, even when valiantly fighting his fatal illness, he was continually interested in its progress.

It may be unusual for such a report to bear a dedication, but those who knew David as a friend will understand my wish to pay tribute to him as a person, and to the courage and indomitable spirit he showed right to the end of his foreshortened life.

As a professional, he is a loss to the cause of rural development; as a friend he is irreplaceable.

## FOREWORD

For some fifteen years Colin Fraser worked in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. Over this period he was involved in building up a unit of 'Development Support Communication' which is concerned with how to use media techniques to help motivate and train people in the rural areas of the Third World.

For over twenty years he has lived in Italy and for some time now has produced wine commercially from his farm in Lazio.

Colin Fraser is therefore uniquely qualified to carry out the present study both from the point of view of his professional experience and from the fact that he lives within a farming community. It should not however be thought that it is easy for a British national — or anybody other than an Italian — to penetrate below the very complex and highly politicized surface of Italian rural life. The extent to which he has succeeded is a measure of his skill and dedication to the problems of rural society. He has written many articles and papers on various aspects of communication in support of rural development. His first full length book written because of his interest in popularizing science was on snow avalanches. (*The Avalanche Enigma*, Murray, London: Rand McNally, New York, 1967 and updated as *Avalanche and Snow Safety*, Murray, London and Scribners, New York 1978). His second book was the authorised biography on the pioneer of modern farm mechanization, Harry Ferguson. (*Harry Ferguson — Inventor and Pioneer*, Murray, London and Ohio University Press, 1972).

For some years the Ernest Cook Trust has financed a number of fellowships awarded by the Arkleton Trust which enable people working in the rural sector to take time off for study or further work. Colin Fraser was the recipient of such a fellowship. It is the results of the work done during 1983-84 that are presented here.

John Higgs  
Chairman



## I SUMMARY

The objective of the study was to discover how farmers in Lazio and Umbria inform themselves about technical and economic matters, how they use existing agricultural information and extension services, and what opinions they hold about these services. In the course of the study, it was also hoped to explore ways of improving farmers' access to information and technical assistance.

The study began with detailed personal interviews with the suppliers of information and advisory services (radio and TV programme producers, farmers' organisations, farm input suppliers, national, provincial and regional agricultural authorities, etc.); following these discussions, 100 farmers over a wide geographic spread of Lazio and Umbria (see map in Annex 2) were interviewed with a questionnaire, (reproduced in Annex 1) which had been duly pretested. Four different types of channels were used to obtain introductions to farmers in order to ensure as representative a sample as possible among farmers with close to the average size of holding in Lazio and Umbria.

Well over half of Italy's large balance of trade deficit is now made up of agricultural-sector imports, and, even if there are some areas of very efficient agriculture, the overall situation in the country is one of stagnation, especially in the hill areas that make up most of the national territory. Industrial development has been the main priority since the second World War and agriculture is a low-prestige sector in the minds of most people. There are historical and psychological reasons for what is often termed the 'neglect' of agriculture, but there is much talk now about the need to revitalize this sector.

In this connection, an important role for the mass-media is certainly that of stimulating greater awareness among the population at large of the importance of agriculture, and of improving its prestige. These are pre-requisites for attracting trained and competent people, investment and, above all, for creating a climate favourable to the policy decisions required to develop the industry. This type of agricultural information, aimed mainly at the non-farming community, can be termed *information about agriculture*.

Farmers, however, need economic and technical information as a basis for their planning and day-to-day decisions. This

information *for* agriculture has different provider and user levels. At one extreme, there is information of a national type, for example, legislative and economic information that can be disseminated by national-coverage mass-media; at the other extreme, there is the specific on-farm advice of an economic or technical nature that only a farm visit by an appropriate specialist can provide. In between, of course, there are several gradations of regional, local, and farm-type information that can be provided by different media or personal channels. Italian agricultural conditions and production systems are so different from one part of the country to another, mainly because of climatic/altitudinal variations, that farm-type and on-farm information and advice must be strongly localized.

Italy was a world pioneer in the field of agricultural extension in the latter years of the last century and in the first years of this, but there are now virtually no extension or agricultural information services for farmers in many parts of the country. However, with help from the EEC (under Directive 270/79) there is now a 12-year-programme for the re-establishment of a functional extension system.

The need for good extension and information is made particularly important by the rather low educational level and lack of professional training typical among farming families. In the sample of this study, well over half had had only five years or less of schooling, and there were only five interviewees who were agricultural diploma holders.

Radio and TV could be extremely useful channels in such a situation but the national radio and TV authority, RAI, has in recent years been tending towards information *about* agriculture rather than information *for* agriculture. RAI's nationally broadcast weekly agricultural programme *Linea Verde* leans in this direction. Among the sample of this study it had a good following, but it came in for widespread criticism for its lack of technical content and local relevance — which is natural enough since it is a national broadcast. But even so, a significant number among the sample still named *Linea Verde* as the original source of information for technical innovations on their farm.

Agricultural radio broadcasts, such an important source of information for farmers in many countries, had no impact worthy of note among the sample. Only three respondents knew the name or time of broadcast of *any* of the three weekly *national*

programmes and of the additional fortnightly regional programme in Lazio. None of the numerous private, local stations were doing any farming programmes, to the knowledge of the interviewees.

A high proportion of the sample households received at least one of the truly enormous number of agricultural periodicals published in Italy. The majority of these are institutional-type publications emanating from public authorities, farmers' organizations and farm input manufacturers and vendors. They were widely criticized as being tendentious or lacking in practical and technical content.

Only about a quarter of the sample subscribed to any of the excellent, privately-published magazines (such as *Terra e Vita*, *L'Informatore Agrario*). When they did, interviewees invariably cited them as vital sources of information. Newspapers, although read in just under half of the sample households, were not considered to be of much use for agricultural subject matter.

Interviewees were almost unanimous in expressing the opinion that extension and information services were essential or necessary for their farming activities, but only about a quarter of these farmers considered that their access to these services was adequate. When they did consider their access adequate, they usually cited producers and vendors of farm inputs as their main source of information and advice.

The study revealed that even if almost all farmers asserted that information and technical advice were very important, about a quarter of them took no initiative to seek or adopt new ideas. They did not seem to perceive small but regular increments in income, brought about by improved production methods, as a way of resolving the basic problems of their miserable returns from farming. Instead, they appeared to be awaiting interventions from government to improve their lot.

On the other hand, the minority of farmers who considered they made a decent living out of agriculture were in the main the ones who showed the most initiative in actively seeking new ideas (i.e. by having regular contacts with a good agricultural technician or by subscribing to a technical journal). Thus, there would appear to be some correlation between successful farming and information seeking.

When interviewees were asked the hypothetical question of whom they would turn to to resolve a technical problem, the

staff of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates received the highest number of mentions. So, even if most of these Inspectorates gave up extension work some 10-15 years ago, they still enjoy considerable prestige in the minds of farmers as sources of technical expertise. This has important implications for the redevelopment of extension services in Italy.

In respect of innovations actually introduced on the farms in recent years, the most commonly cited original source of information leading to the adoption was another farmer. Written material was the next most commonly cited source, followed by suppliers of farm inputs, private sector sales representatives, television, and public-sector officials, in that order.

The study showed that a very high proportion of farmers wanted better access to technical and economic advice. They believed that more locally-specific radio, and especially TV, programmes could go a long way to meeting their needs. The present day and time of broadcast of *Linea Verde* suited only about a fifth of the sample; and in fact, the day and time of broadcast (whether radio or TV) would be a crucial element in providing a useful service to farmers. The study reports on farmers' preferences in this respect (Table on p. 72).

In the present agricultural information scene, there is a clear lack of distinction between what is information *about* agriculture and what is information *for* farmers. This applies to the mass-media as well as to institutional-type publications. Both types of information are important in Italy, but better audience definition would enable the media to make much more impact.

In a varied agricultural country like Italy, the technical, economic and practical advice via mass media desired by a very high proportion of the sample can only be sufficiently specific to time and place if regional and local media are used. Therefore, RAI should perhaps think of using its Third TV Channel — established precisely for regional programmes — to make regular, regional programmes *for* farmers. The RAI Channel 2 Radio — which also has regional programming — could make a short, regional, farmers bulletin daily. And if RAI is unable to undertake such programming, perhaps the private TV and radio services could attempt to do so with sponsorship and publicity revenue to meet the costs.

However, if RAI did want to improve its services to agriculture, an exchange of experience and knowledge with agricultural

broadcasters in other European countries, perhaps under EEC auspices, could help RAI on its way.

In respect of printed material, farmers' desire for technical and economic advice could perhaps be met by provincial-level bulletins published, say, every 2 weeks and distributed free. The language would need to be simple, and political content would have to be totally excluded. An experiment of this nature would be worth trying.

Greater availability of good and *disinterested* extensionists, and well-run training courses were also mentioned as necessary improvements by about three-quarters of the sample. A significant proportion of the interviewees stated they would be willing to pay something for an extensionist's availability. So the Italian authorities can be assured that the redevelopment of an extension service under EEC Directive 270/79 will be met with enthusiasm by the majority of farmers, but success will surely depend on the selection and training of the extensionists and, equally important, how they are fielded from an organisational point of view. Since each Italian Regional Administration holds responsibility for extension, and since each Region has to pass legislation governing how its extension system will function, there will be wide variations from one Region to another. Umbria has decided to make its extensionists responsible, on a day-to-day basis, to the farmers' organisations. These organisations are politicized and therefore the extensionists' credibility and image as providers of technical advice may be prejudiced. Lazio has still to finalise its law, and it would seem wise to ride on the prestige still enjoyed by the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates.

If agriculture in Italy is to resume its rightful place in the national economy and consciousness, information *about* agriculture, and information and extension *for* farmers will need to be intensified. Italy is a country capable of miracles and it can certainly revitalize its agriculture if a *united* will to do so is forthcoming.

## II PREFACE

This study was made possible by the Arkleton Trust and by the Ernest Cook Trust. The Rural Development Fellowship they awarded me constituted an important financial contribution. Then FAO, my employing organisation, with its enlightened policy of granting its staff time for special studies, gave me leave-of-absence on part pay, and made a contribution towards the travel and lodging costs incurred during this study.

No less important than these logistic matters was the moral support and advice received from so many people, beginning with the officers of the Arkleton Trust itself, particularly John Higgs, the late David Moore and John Bryden. Then, during my long rounds of discussions with officials of Italian institutions, I found people to be exceedingly generous, both with their time and with their opinions and ideas. I had never hoped that they would be so open in expressing their views and in taking me into their confidence. Many of their ideas and comments are quoted in this report and although their originators will certainly recognize them, they must remain anonymous for obvious reasons.

There were also many people, such as machinery or farm input salesmen, to whom I had a quite casual introduction but who then introduced me to farmers, often giving up many hours of their time to do so. And the farmers too gave of their time and invited me into their homes, often insisting that I share their meals. Their generosity and willingness to cooperate were remarkable, and that at a time when many were struggling to survive as farmers for reasons that will be explained later. Their indomitable spirit and peasant dignity were as profoundly moving as the warmth of the welcome into their home.

Many friends and colleagues assisted me in many ways, mainly by offering advice or useful contacts or, last but by no means least, by cheerfully shouldering my work in FAO. Without their loyal support, I could not have enjoyed the enriching experience of carrying out this study.

Professor Giuliano Cesarini was a sort of "god father" to the study. For many years, he was responsible for establishing agricultural cooperatives and technical assistance programmes in southern Italy under the aegis of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*. Under his responsibilities with the *Istituto di Estimo Rurale e Contabilita'*, University of Bologna, Prof. Cesarini provided me

with invaluable support and guidance.

Finally, Gerdy Hoefnagels put up with me during the gestation and birth of this report, cheered me up when it was not going well (including during the major surgery that interrupted it), and listened and offered advice as the ideas and impressions I was gathering began to form. She also picked her way through my impenetrable handwriting to type the first draft of this report.

To all the above institutions and people I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks.

Carrying out this study was professionally very rewarding for me, linked as it was to my specialized field of interest in agricultural information and extension. For I have spent the last 15 years working for FAO with the responsibility of building up a programme of so-called Development Support Communication. In effect, this is the use of communication media and techniques to assist in the informing, motivating and training of people in rural areas of the Third World. My colleagues and I have been producing training materials, assisting countries to improve their radio and TV services for farmers, and helping to establish audio-visual systems and facilities for training in rural areas.

As an agriculturalist and one-time farm machinery trainer, I have spent most of my working life on or close to farms and with farmers, but having been organizing agricultural information and development communication activities for so many years, I felt the need to do some in-depth audience research. However, I believe that a full knowledge of the culture and language are essential for such studies; after 20 years of residence in Italy and with close links to the rural areas, through being a small part-time farmer in the hills of Lazio myself, Italy was the obvious place for me to work among the farming community. I also knew that the agricultural information and extension services in many parts of Italy were weak, and I hoped that the study could be of some practical use in improving them.

Lazio and Umbria were chosen because Central Italy is not only a mid-way house in the geography of the country; it is also a mid-way house between the rather well-developed cooperatives and farming systems of northern Italy and the areas of the South, where for many years the State, through its *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South) has been intervening on a massive scale to promote development. Central Italy was therefore a

compromise, but it is probable that what the study revealed has implications for much of the rest of Italy too. However, I say this with some trepidation, because even if Italy is a delightful country, inhabited by delightful, mercurial people, it is also a country of rare complexity. The Italians themselves often criticize their own propensity for politicising anything that can possibly be politicized. The agricultural sector is as complex and political as any other, and so a foreigner could miss some of the nuances, even if he has lived over 20 years in the country.

Most of the statistics quoted in the report are drawn from an impeccable source, the National Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). However, it does no harm to remember the famous words of Trilussa, a popular Roman poet in the early part of this century: "If I eat two chickens and you eat none, we each on an average have eaten one!"

During my numerous contacts with Italian authorities and institutions before beginning the farmers' interviews, I was encouraged to make proposals for improvements in the agricultural information and extension field. Almost no on-farm research of the sort I was embarked on had been done. In addition, my FAO credentials, my foreigner's lack of political links, and my deep professional involvement caused many people in the various institutions to express keen interest in the results of the study and in any observations I might make. For this reason, there is a series of suggestions at the end of this report. They are offered without any official authority, but with a desire to see some improvement of the Italian farmer's lot. I trust that they will be accepted in the same spirit.



### **III BACKGROUND**

#### **1 The Italian Agricultural Scene**

Italy is essentially a mountainous country: indeed only 30% of its total area is flat. Most of the flat land is in the fertile Po Valley and in the coastal plains to the east and west of the Appenine Mountains which run like a backbone down the country. The areas in the Appenines and the Alps are normally divided into two categories: hill and mountain. The official altitude criterion set for these classifications is that hill areas normally extend up to 600 metres above sea level, and mountain areas are at higher elevations.

The plains, hills and mountains are, of course, suited to different types of farming. In general terms, the plains produce cereals, sugar beet, tobacco and forage for intensive livestock production; the hills are traditionally the home of olive groves, fruit orchards, vineyards and small scale livestock production, whereas the mountains provide grazing for sheep and cattle, and forestry activity.

Most of Italian land has a high clay component, and it may also be stony, particularly in the hills. In areas where it is loamy or sandy, market gardening and flower production can provide high income off small areas. In the flat areas, particularly in the Po Valley, average cereal yields per ha are often among the highest in Europe. In fact, there are some agricultural areas in Italy that are very advanced and bear comparison with any in the world.

Because of its long north-south axis — it is almost 800 miles or 1,250 km in a straight line from the Brenner Pass to the southern tip of Sicily — there are wide climatic variations, even at a given altitude. From the agricultural viewpoint, it is mainly the minimum winter temperatures that dictate what can be grown. Most of the country, apart from some coastal areas, gets frequent frost and snow in most winters.

The wide climatic variations call for different production techniques in different parts of the country. For example, vines grown in the relatively cooler and wetter north are planted with a different density per hectare and are trained and pruned quite differently from those in the hotter and drier south.

Until World War II, Italy was predominantly an agrarian

country. In fact, under Mussolini and mainly because of international sanctions placed on Italy following its invasion of Abyssinia, there was a tremendous drive for self-sufficiency. One of Mussolini's slogans was "*Dalla terra ogni bene. I popoli che abbandonano la terra saranno destinati al declino*". (From the land, all riches. People who abandon the land are doomed to decline).

At the end of World War II, Italy was still a predominantly agrarian country with about 43% of its population engaged in agriculture. Then, in the '50s, Italy's "economic miracle" gathered way, and with it a massive exodus from the land began too. Agriculture was seen as *i polmoni* (the lungs) for industrial development; agriculture would provide labour for industry, and if industry faltered, agriculture would reabsorb any excess labour, or so the reasoning went. Today, on the national level, some 14% of the population remains in agriculture, but of course the percentage is much higher in the South than it is in the industrialized North.

As a portion of GNP, agriculture accounts for about 7%, industry 41.5%, tertiary activities 41% and public administration 10.5%.<sup>1</sup>



It is common in Italy to hear town and country people say that agriculture has been "abandoned". Implicit in this statement is that a series of governments in post-war Italy have done the "abandoning".

It is certainly true that government emphasis has been very heavily on industrial development, even though the country has none of the raw materials required for large-scale industrial activity. But it is also true that agriculture was equated with misery in the minds of most Italians. And it still is to a large extent.

For Italy is not easy farming land, and many traditional crops and agricultural activities require tedious and gruelling labour for little return. This, coupled with a desire to start afresh after Fascism, to fling out its dogma and slogans, and build a modern industrial state, led to an understandable rejection of what was then the grind of rural life. The nation turned its back on agriculture, and all who could left for jobs in the cities and factories. Many emigrated too.

For a few years, the industrial boom flourished. Well-designed and well-built Italian products sold at highly competitive prices the world over. New factories and refineries sprouted throughout Italy. The refineries, in fact, were cracking petroleum far in excess of Italy's own requirements; for this drive for industrialization even extended to refining petroleum for other countries and pumping it northwards. No one cared about the attendant rape of the Italian countryside or the pollution of the air and waters. Italy lived as if there were to be no tomorrow, and few questioned the wisdom of its drive to become an industrialized state. But "tomorrow" crept up on the country. Firstly, the Italian labour unions became increasingly active in obtaining a bigger slice of the pie of prosperity for their members. Then the political parties saw flourishing parastatal industries — no longer flourishing today — as a way of creating job openings for their followers, thereby ensuring their grateful vote in the future. Thus, rising labour costs and featherbedding gradually cut at the competitiveness of Italian industry. Finally, "tomorrow" came, with vengeance: the oil crisis, spiralling fuel costs, the slowing world economy, bloated public spending, all contributed to throw Italy's economy into difficulty.

In the meantime, agriculture has regrettably become a Cinderella, as it has in so many countries that concentrate heavily on industrial development. Successive governments have certainly apportioned funds for agriculture, considerable sums in fact. Unfortunately, the various grants, low interest loans and the like are usually subjected to lengthy and frustrating bureaucratic procedures, and the funds have not always been used in their entirety. And some of the assistance schemes for agriculture sometimes turn out to be of as much, or even more, help to industry than they are to agriculture. One example is the loans for purchase of farm machinery, repayable in five years at reduced interest rates. These loans are only available for the purchase of *new* machinery, in accordance with EEC policy. Frequently, therefore, farmers with 6-8 ha of land, and with maybe 300-400 hours of tractor work a year, commit themselves to paying off the price of a new medium horsepower tractor (over Lit. 20 million or some £St 9,000) plus interest in five years. A second-hand tractor, guaranteed by the dealer at perhaps one third of the price, would make more economic sense, but no state credit is available to purchase it.

Another problem is that agricultural credit and subsidies have tended to be apportioned according to political rather than strictly economic criteria. For example, in some Regions with leftist administrations, virtually all the assistance available has gone to cooperatives, to the exclusion of the individual farmer, however efficient he may be. Large sums have been swallowed up by these cooperatives, the creation of which is frequently inspired by outside influences and motivations rather than by endogenous initiatives among the farmers concerned. Sadly, very many of these cooperatives fail. In the meantime, a farmer with maybe 25 ha, who is progressive and efficient, is unable to get a reduced interest mortgage to buy adjoining vacant land. Normal bank mortgages have carried interest rates of close to 25% p.a. in recent years, a rate that is, of course, totally prohibitive for farmers. Therefore, subsidized interest rates are of vital importance to Italian agriculture today.



The economic prosperity of the industrial boom had a major impact on Italian eating habits, which in turn affected agriculture: total meat consumption in the 20 years beginning 1962 grew from 15 to 42 million quintals<sup>2</sup> per year.<sup>3</sup> In the same 20-year-period, internal production of all types of meat rose from 12 million to about 31 million quintals, leaving some 11 million quintals to be imported annually. Beef and veal production has remained virtually static at the same level as in 1961/62 when it was 6.2 million quintals. But beef/veal consumption has risen from 6.5 million quintals to 14.3 million since 1961/62. The number of beef animals has dropped from 5 million to 3.7 million. Fortunately, increases in productivity have to some extent compensated for the drop in numbers of livestock.

Overall, Italy produces about one third of its beef requirements, and about two thirds of its requirements for other meats (pork, poultry, rabbit, horse, goat and mutton). The high point is poultry for which the country is virtually self-sufficient.

It is mainly imports in the meat sector (both on the hoof and already slaughtered) that account for the very large agricultural-sector balance of trade deficit. In 1982, Italy's *total* balance of trade deficit was Lit. 16.965 billion<sup>4</sup> (close to \$12 billion at an exchange rate of Lit. 1,450 to the dollar). Of this total deficit, Lit.

11,007 billion (about \$7.5 billion) were in the agro-food sector. This figure represented an increase in deficit of 29.5% over 1981. Livestock-sector imports increased 26.6% over 1981, and accounted for almost 30% of the total agricultural sector deficit. Other agricultural imports increased 9.7%. There was a 65% increase in imports of foodstuffs requiring further processing in Italy. Overall, the slow upward trend of national agricultural sector self-sufficiency, which had gone from 79.4% in 1973 to 85.2% in 1981, reversed itself in 1982, dropping back to 83.8%.

Journalists often describe the agricultural balance of trade deficit as a "*voragine valutaria*", roughly translated as an "abyss that swallows foreign exchange", and they decry the country's need to import so much, when much more could be produced nationally. The more sanguine brush off the deficit and say that it is largely made up of items such as timber that is re-exported as furniture. But a scrutiny of the figures shows that the timber deficit is only Lit. 1,773 billion out of the total deficit of Lit. 11,007 billion, ie about 16%. It is, however, true that if wheat imports went up 13.2% in 1982, the exports of pasta went up 25.2%. Overall, however, the country does have a serious agricultural deficit situation. It constitutes almost 65% of the total very large balance of trade deficit that Italy ran up in 1982, and the situation does not seem to be improving.

The "poverty of agriculture", as it is often termed, seems now to be entering increasingly into the public awareness, and with hindsight, many people now doubt the wisdom of the industrial drive of the post-war years with its concomitant neglect of agriculture and devastation of large areas of agricultural land. Unfortunately, the tendency has been to build factories in the fertile plains. And in some cases good land has been set aside for industrial development, subject to immediate compulsory purchase, and then never used for that purpose. One example is at Frosinone, in southern Lazio, where some ten years ago, when the economic crisis was beginning to bite, 6,000 ha of prime irrigable flat land were earmarked for industrial development. About 1,000 ha have been used for this purpose and the remaining 5,000 are today being farmed half-heartedly and without the owners being able to make improvements such as putting up farm buildings, because their land is considered "industrial" and could be taken over any day.

To the west of Terni, in Umbria, there is a flat area covered

with recently-built factories which in good part are now silent and shuttered. Their concrete covers an area that is highly fertile and used to provide all the horticultural produce required by Terni's 100,000 population, as well as that of neighbouring towns. To the east of Terni, there is the narrow flat-bottomed valley of the River Nera. Still today, local *communes* are issuing compulsory purchase orders for industrial plants on these irrigable flatlands. Frequently, the purchase order takes in parts of farms belonging to several families with the result that a reasonably viable unit of say 10-12 ha is cut back to an uneconomic unit of 4-5 ha. It would probably have been better to have fostered industrial development in the less productive hill areas, but this has not generally been the policy. Nor does it seem to make much sense to build new plants when so much factory space is lying idle.

Commonly expressed opinions about the Italian economic scene today are that Italy's emphasis on industrial development, in a country that has no raw materials for heavy industry, was a mistake. Italy could have become a sort of Florida, it is argued, a tourist area for Europe with efficient agriculture and high-technology light industry.



Whatever Italian national policy has or has not been towards agriculture, the infrastructural state of Italian agriculture makes it difficult to achieve real progress towards economic, rational farming. The inheritance law, under which property is divided between inheriting children, has led to very small farms. According to the census of agriculture carried out in 1970, there were then 3,607,262 farms with an average area of 6.94 ha. The most recent census of November 1982 has revealed that the number of farms has dropped to 3,297,976 (a loss of 9.1%), while the average size rose to only 7.2 ha. (It is noteworthy that of these 7.2 ha, on average only 4.8 ha are Utilized Agricultural Area — *Superficie Agricola Utilizzata*).

It can be seen from these figures that the number of farms is decreasing without there being a proportional increase in their size. (As a base for comparison, the average size holding in UK is about 65 ha and that in France 27 ha<sup>5</sup>. However, Italian statistics include even very small holdings — up to 1 ha, 1-2 ha and 2-3 ha

— under the category of farms. No doubt a high proportion of these are not really what most people would consider to be a farm, even if in some areas there are intensive horticultural small-holdings.

The period between the two censuses (1970-1982) showed a 6.2% loss of farm land. While it is certainly true that land is being continually lost to urbanisation and road building, land is also being abandoned. On a national level it is estimated that between 10% and 11% of potentially useful farm land is now idle. In Lazio, it is about 12%, taking into account only those areas that "could concretely be reconverted and give satisfactory results under a reclamation policy". These areas in Lazio amount to 115,000 ha.<sup>6</sup>

A law exists under which farmers, and especially cooperatives, can apply to have abandoned land assigned to them. Some cooperatives have succeeded in following the procedures to a conclusion, but several individual farmers stated, when complaining about the smallness of their own holding and abandoned land close to or adjoining their own: "I know the owner and if I start an application to have the land assigned to me, I'll make more enemies than it is worth". An additional factor is that recent legislation on renting of agricultural land has provided such water-tight guarantees of tenure to tenants, and such low rents, that landowners are reluctant to lease their land, preferring to leave it idle, or to sell the grazing seasonally.

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In recent years, there has been much talk of the plight of *la collina*, the hill areas. In fact 1982 was declared "*L'anno della collina*" (Year of the Hills). In the context of this "Year", Professor Stefano Wallner, at the time, the Vice President of the *Confederazione generale dell'agricoltura Italiana* (one of the main farmers' unions), and now its President, stated that hill lands make up 42% of the national territory and provide 49% of the utilised agricultural area. About 55% of the nation's grain and vine areas are in the hills, as are 69% of the olive area and 59% of the citrus area. Overall, about 40% of the nation's total saleable agricultural product comes from the hills. The main problem is that the saleable output per man-day of labour is only 50% of that in the plains.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the hills provide the classic environment for olives, wines, fruit trees and small-scale livestock production. As anyone with the slightest knowledge of viticulture knows, the best vines come from vineyards in the hills. There can be no doubt, therefore, that back in the '60s when the EEC was providing subsidies for planting of new vineyards, it would have been wise to stipulate, as a condition for obtaining a subsidy, that vines should be planted only in the hills. But this was not done and the result was many new vineyards in fertile flatlands producing vast quantities of inferior wine per hectare with low production costs. This, quite apart from being an important factor in creating the infamous EEC "wine lake", has meant that the hill areas now find themselves disadvantaged in one of the few agricultural activities for which they are ideally suited. However, this question of viticulture is just one of many factors that have left the hill areas in such difficulties.

The problems of the hills have, of course, been recognised and EEC Directive No. 268 of 28.6.75 was designed to help the farming population of hill and mountain areas. Under the Directive, many Italian regions are passing subsidies to hill and mountain farmers for a period of five years, the yearly sum being calculated on the basis of the size of holding and the type of farming activities. In addition, the Directive foresees assistance to agricultural investment in hill areas, especially for livestock and forage production. Though doubtless such investment is going on, it is not much in evidence as you travel the hill areas and talk to farmers. Certainly, the yearly subsidy payments are welcomed, but they are not going to resolve the situation long-term.

"The hills cannot be allowed to die" is a repeatedly heard cry in Italy, but the problems inherent in revitalizing them are enormous. And if they are not revitalized, not only will Italy continue to lose more and more agricultural output, but it will be unable to maintain the population in the hills.

Already, in many areas, it has fallen below the level required to make it possible to provide the necessary services economically. In addition, if the hill areas are not properly farmed, and water courses kept in good condition, erosion and flooding problems will be aggravated. They are serious even now.

Precisely because of the problems of the hill areas and the need to do something about their plight, this study was carried out



almost exclusively in these areas. For the hill areas represent the crux of Italy's agricultural and rural development problems.



During the period of the fieldwork for this study (April, September, October, November 1983), Italian farmers were — and in fact still are today — in very severe economic straits; many indeed were struggling to survive as farmers. The basic reason for the squeeze was that Italian inflation was running at about 15% p.a. while prices for farm produce were being increased at a rate closer to the inflation rate in other EEC countries. In addition, the progressive weakening of the Italian Lira, particularly against the US Dollar and the Deutschmark, is a serious negative factor for Italian farming. Many of the ingredients for animal feedingstuffs, particularly soya, are imported and are paid for in US dollars, with the result that feedingstuff costs are rising even faster than the inflation rate. And the Deutschmark exchange rate has been of great importance because, as a result of the EEC Monetary Compensatory Payments, German meat and milk exported to Italy have in effect been EEC subsidised. More than one farmer interviewed during 1983 was unable to sell his calves to butchers, for they could get carcasses imported from Germany cheaper. One farmer stated that in 1982, he was able to obtain just over Lit. 4,000 per kg liveweight for calves, whereas at the time of the interview (April 1983) he was only able to obtain Lit. 3,700 per kg — if he could find a buyer.

Several farmers interviewed for the study were articulate in illustrating the financial straits they are in. One pointed out that in 1963 he bought a 40 hp tractor for the equivalent of 20 tonnes of wheat; a 40 hp tractor today, which weighs less and should therefore be cheaper, now costs the equivalent of over 50 tonnes of wheat. Another pointed out the relationship between wheat and bread prices. About 20 years ago the price of bread was roughly 3 times the price of wheat, whereas today it is 5 times the price of wheat. And fertilizers too, like all high-energy input products, have increased in price out of all proportion to the price of farm produce. Even if farmers the world over are renowned for their tendency to complain, there can be no doubting the very

genuine cause for complaint among Italian farmers today.

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The matter of agricultural research should be briefly mentioned. Italy has 23 separate research institutions, each dealing with a different crop, group of crops, or livestock sector. Some of these research institutions have produced work of world renown, but it seems that in recent years many of them have been declining. One of the reasons is probably the limited funds now devoted to agricultural research. In 1980, for example, the total budget was Lit. 80.7 billion, a figure that represented about 2.5% of the funds devoted to *all* research by the Italian Government in the same year. Among EEC countries, Italy devotes the least resources to agricultural research, whether measured against population or against GNP.<sup>8</sup>

However effective or otherwise agricultural research may be in Italy today, it is worth recording that the almost unanimous opinion of all the officials interviewed was that the research institutions work too much in isolation and that the results of their efforts too seldom reach the farm level.

## **2 Farmers' Information Needs**

Information needs of farmers can be classified according to various types and according to the most appropriate providers of each type and/or the channel most appropriate for its dissemination. A general breakdown runs as follows, although the compartments are not, of course, watertight. However, it may be useful to have this breakdown as a framework for considering the Italian situation.

- a) International and national level information: this includes information on commodity tendencies and related economic issues, EEC and national legislative and fiscal matters, deadlines for submissions and declarations, etc. Much of this information is of a managerial or "basis-for-decision-making" type. Its main source is central government bodies, and a main channel for its diffusion can be the national coverage mass media, both electronic and print.
- b) Regional-level information: when there is a decentralized administration, as in Italy, there are often regional legisla-

tive and fiscal matters that farmers need to know about, in addition to the national and international ones mentioned under a). In the areas of managerial information at the regional level, farmers need market reports, economic information on particular farming systems in the region, information on bureaucratic procedures, farm input availability and costs, weather forecasts, etc. But they also need purely technical information on new production techniques, and research findings, suitable to their particular area. And in this connection we must remember the wide agro-climatic variations from one part of Italy to another. These make it of crucial importance that the information be localised in time and place if it is to be of value to farmers. This type of information can be delivered by local authorities through farmers' meetings and through locally produced and broadcast radio and TV programmes, and through local publications.

- c) On-farm information: finally, farmers need specific advice and technical assistance for their particular operations. This information may be of a managerial or of a technical nature, or both. It can only be satisfactorily provided by on-farm visits by good extensionists.

While it is quite possible for an extensionist to provide regional and national-level information, as well as local information, the larger-scale information providers cannot focus downwards: for example, national coverage TV cannot provide regional information. Only in the area of livestock production, in which agro-climatic conditions play a smaller role than they do in crop production, can national mass-media do *some* useful work in providing technical information.

#### Footnotes

- 1 After ISTAT figures from *Lazio Agricolo* 7-8 July/August, 1982.
- 2 1 Quintal = 100 Kgs.
- 3 *Terra e Vita* No. 18 1983. This and other statistics on meat production from the report on the XVIII *Simposio Internazionale di Zootecnia*.
- 4 ISTAT figures.
- 5 ISTAT.
- 6 Source of figures and quote *Lazio Agricolo* 7-8 July/August 1982. La situazione dell'agricoltura nel Lazio — Gironi e Marrocco.
- 7 *Mondo Agricolo* 26 September 1982.
- 8 *Luci e speranze nella ricerca agricola italiana* Gabriele Goldanich. *Terra e Vita* No. 38 1983.

## IV AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN ITALY

### 1 The Past

Italy can boast of having been a world leader in the field of agricultural extension, even if today it has several Regions in which there is virtually no extension activity at all, and many other Regions in which it is weak, to say the least. According to a recent survey carried out by the *Confederazione generale dell'agricoltura Italiana (Confagricoltura)*, extension is graded "excellent" in one Region, "good" in two, "sufficient" in three, "mediocre" in eight, and "non-existent" in six. (The Provinces of Bolzano and Trento were considered separately in the survey, even if they are actually one Region (Trentino-Alto Adige), and Val d'Aosta was left out. The total of 20 of the survey is however the same as the number of Regions).

But almost 150 years ago, even before Italy was a single country, the need for some sort of extension service had been recognised. The matter was discussed by a meeting of agriculturists in Pisa in 1839. Following that meeting, individual provinces (especially Ascoli Piceno in the Marche Region and Rovigo in the Veneto Region) tried short experiments in providing non-formal education and technical assistance to farmers.

As experience was built up, a name was coined for these services: *Cattedra Ambulante di Agricoltura*, literally Itinerant Cathedra (or Chair) of Agriculture. The first of these was formally created in the Province of Rovigo in 1890.

These *Cattedre Ambulanti* grouped a few agricultural specialists and technicians at the local, or more usually provincial level. The task of these specialists was to go out into the countryside and offer advice to farmers, run practical training courses and generally provide technical assistance.

Following Rovigo's example, Parma started a *Cattedra Ambulante* in 1892, Bologna followed in 1893, Mantova and Novara in 1895, Cremona and Rimini in 1896 and L'Aquila, Cuneo, Macerata, Piacenza, Venezia and Vicenza in 1897. Southern Italy followed suit with the province of Potenza among the leaders.

These early *Cattedre Ambulanti* were mainly private and supported by local institutions. Large farmers and landowners, farmers' associations, banks and other local institutions provided the finance. A committee was formed to run each *Cattedra*

*Ambulante*, which was independent. In 1901 the process of institutionalising them began. All provinces started to set them up and the Ministry of Agriculture and provincial authorities began to help in their financing. Some specialised sections of *Cattedra Ambulante* (ie to deal with special crops or problems) were also set up in 1901. In 1906, the government began to intervene more fully in order to create some order and to institutionalise the *Cattedre* properly. In 1907, they were given legal status, and by 1916 they were largely coordinated and managed with Ministry of Agriculture assistance.

By 1930 there were 92 *Cattedre Ambulanti* at the provincial level with 550 outpost sections. The director of each *Cattedra* was a university graduate in agricultural sciences and he had a staff of several agricultural diploma holders and technicians working with him. There were almost 800 graduates and diploma holders with the *Cattedre Ambulanti* by 1930.

There can be no doubt that the *Cattedre Ambulanti* were an enormous success. Farmers came to rely on them heavily and they were a real stimulus to agricultural development. It is said that the US Extension Service, which was formally established in 1914, even though the first County Extension Agent had been appointed in Texas in 1906, drew heavily on the experience of the Italian *Cattedre Ambulanti* in formulating its methodology and practical approach.

Alas, the *Cattedre Ambulanti* were effectively institutionalised to death by Mussolini. He turned them into *Ispettorati Provinciali dell' Agricoltura* (Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates), under the direct control of the Ministry of Agriculture. As their title implies, he gave them an administrative character, thereby detracting from the essentially technical assistance function that had been their life blood and the root of their success. Of course, their technical assistance function did not die overnight; up until the 1960s, many of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates were still running some farmer training courses, but these had become secondary to their administrative functions. With the advent of the European Economic Community, a plethora of paperwork was added to that already abundantly existing in the Italian administration and so, by the late 1960s, the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates were unable to cope with anything but administrative matters — checking applications for loans or subsidies, ear-tagging calves, and similar duties.

It would be incorrect to leave the impression that the gradual bogging down in paperwork of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates, and the parallel dying out of extension activities, went unnoticed or that no attempts were made to rectify the situation. For example, in 1959 a law was passed creating Zonal Agricultural Offices in each Province, under the Agricultural Inspectorate. Their purpose was to decentralise the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate and provide the presence of a technician at the local level. Furthermore, many of the agrarian reform and reclamation agencies of the pre and post World War II period, such as the one that drained the Pontine Marshes south of Rome, were given extension and technical assistance functions. The *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* established a network of 250 Centres for Technical Assistance (*Centro di Assistenza Tecnica*, usually abbreviated as CAT).

But none of these initiatives did much to arrest the decline of extension, though some of the CATs reportedly worked very well. Then in 1972, a law was passed which was, and is, of fundamental importance to the way Italy is administered; the Italian Regions were made responsible for handling their own affairs. The devolution of power from central government in Rome to Regional Councils had a profound effect in almost every sector of activity, agriculture included. For example, the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates, previously responsible to the Ministry of Agriculture, were turned over to the Regional administrations; Regional Development Agencies (*Enti Regionali di Sviluppo Agricolo* or ERSAs) were created. (Some were actually established in the mid '60s as a result of an earlier law that began the process of "regionalization" before the principal and sweeping law of 1972). In the south, the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* handed over operational responsibility for its CATs and other agricultural development activities to the Regions.

We must therefore note that agricultural extension is now basically a Regional responsibility, and this is bound to influence policy and even operating modalities from one Region to another. At the time of writing (late 1983), the various Regions are drafting and discussing the decrees that will formally create their extension services.

## **2 The Present**

In recent years, the question of recreating an extension and

technical assistance service in Italy has been under discussion, both in Italy itself as well as in the halls of the EEC. The upshot of these discussions was EEC Directive 270/79 for the Development of Agricultural Extension in Italy.<sup>1</sup> In brief, the EEC is providing 66 million ECU to help Italy establish an extension service, over a 12-year period. The aim is ultimately to provide one extensionist for a maximum of 400 farms. (The average for the EEC countries is about 250 farms per extensionist). This will involve fielding some 5,500-6,000 extensionists, of which 4,500-5,000 will be newly recruited, while about 1,000 existing agronomists will be retrained as extensionists. Presumably, the latter will be from among the 1,668 agronomists that Italy at present considers it has operating as technical assistants. However, most of them are staff of Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates or of Regional Agencies for Agricultural Development and, as we have seen, their extension role has been seriously curtailed by their administrative duties.

The Italian State is to provide some Lit. 2,859 million per annum.

Most of the funds, both Italian and EEC, are to be spent on training-the-trainers of extensionists, on training of extensionists, and on their salaries. The EEC will subsidise up to 40% of these salaries, or even 50% if they are working in the South. The new extensionists are to be kept free of administrative and bureaucratic functions. They will work from units comprised of 2-3 extensionists, and at least 60% of them are to work in the South.

Getting the programme under way has been proving very complex. Since extension work has become the responsibility of the various Italian Regional administrations, an inter-regional Committee had to be created to plan and organise the various phases of the project. This Committee consists of 40 members and it groups representatives from farmers' organisations, cooperative movements, Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Treasury and Regional Affairs, as well as representatives from the Regions themselves.

Final approval from the EEC for its financial contribution was contingent upon Italy's presentation of a "Master Plan" (*Piano-quadro*) governing the modalities for establishing the extension service, the training system for extensionists, its Regional and Inter-regional administration, its legislative aspects, the estab-

lishment of training centres and the development and working methodology of the new extensionists.

Because of Italy's varied types of agriculture, it has been decided that training of extensionists will be done in different parts of the country. To achieve this, Regional Consortiums have been created and each Consortium is to set up a suitable Inter-regional Extension Training Centre — mainly using existing agricultural schools. There are to be five such Training Centres (Minoprio, Province of Como in the North; Foligno, Province of Perugia in the Centre; in the South, Eboli, Province of Salerno; Bernalda, Province of Matera; and Oristano in Sardinia). This pattern ensures a greater concentration of effort in the problem areas of the South.

At the time of writing, the 22 extension trainers who will be working in the 5 centres are being trained by FORMEZ at its Naples centre. (FORMEZ is an agency responsible in the main for training in Southern Italy. Though it is not institutionally a part of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, it is funded to a certain extent by it, as well as by other statal and parastatal organisations. FORMEZ directly trains 4,000–4,500 people a year, for both industry and agriculture, and also promotes training by other, existing, institutions in the South).

Once the 5 Inter-regional Extension Training Centres become operational, it is planned to train some 200 extensionists per annum. They will be agricultural degree or diploma holders and their basic extension course will last 9 months. The first 5 months will cover classroom training in such fields as: economics of agricultural development, regional planning, the role of adult education in economic development, farm economics and book-keeping, rural sociology and psychology, adult education, audio-visual media, extension and technical assistance strategies and methodologies, etc. Classroom sessions will be interspersed with practical work in that groups of trainees will be assigned a small territory in which to get to know the farming economy, do extension work with farmers, and generally learn to apply in practice what they are learning in theory.

During a second phase of the training, lasting two months, the trainees will visit farms, research centres, cooperatives, regional planning offices, and technical assistance units in order to obtain a wide and up-to-date orientation in agricultural production, processing and marketing matters. The final two months of the



course will be spent in allowing the trainees to deepen their knowledge of some particular aspect(s) of extension revealed during their practical work, and in producing a thesis.

The Inter-regional Extension Training Centres will also provide refresher training for extensionists.

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Looking to the future, it became clear during the study that a crucial issue is how the new extensionists will be deployed and to whom they will be responsible. Certainly, they will be responsible overall to the Regional administrations. On a day-to-day basis, however, they could work out of the offices of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates<sup>2</sup>, or work under the control of farmers' organisations. One director of an Inspectorate expressed the view that they should form a separate group in his office, in effect creating two services in the Inspectorate: one for extension and technical assistance, and the other for administrative matters concerned with grants, subsidies, etc.

Such a solution would appear to be logical; however, it will almost certainly be contested by the three main farmers' organisations or "professional organisations" as they are called in Italian. These organisations are: the *Confederazione Generale dell' Agricoltura Italiana* (abbreviated as *Confagricoltura*, which represents mainly larger farmers and has right-of-centre political affiliations); the *Confederazione Nazionale Coltivatori Diretti* (abbreviated as *Coldiretti*, the main small farmers' union, which is linked with the Christian Democratic party), and the *Confederazione Italiana Coltivatori*, (*Confcoltivatori*, again a small farmers' union, but one with socialist/communist affiliations). All these farmers' organisations have been and still are, to a limited extent, active in farmer training. The costs of such training have usually, and in recent years, been met by grants from the Regions. The creation of Regional extension services in future is bound to affect the availability of such Regional grants to the farmers' organisations.

Another factor is that the farmers' organisations claim that they have more credibility among farmers than any Regional administration can ever have, thereby implying that the new extensionists should work under their auspices. Also voiced by the farmers' organisations is the notion that the Regional admini-

and Umbria where this research was carried out.

The local offices of farmers' organisations often have agricultural technicians available for extension work among their members. In the Rieti Province of Lazio, for example, the *Coldiretti* have two and the *Confcoltivatori* have three. They tend to specialise in one particular area; for example, milk quality was the main concern of two of these technicians who were working with 500 farmers in an attempt to bring about improvements.

- b) *The Federazione Italiana dei Consorzi Agrari*. This institution, which goes back to 1892, is "a second-level limited-liability cooperative society made up of first-level coöperatives (*Consorzi Agrari*) whose membership consists of agricultural producers".<sup>3</sup> *The Federconsorzi*, as it is usually called, grew from a series of farmers' cooperatives in northern Italy that had been promoted by the *Cattedre Ambulanti*. During Fascism, it acquired statal characteristics, but according to one of its spokesmen, at present it is reverting to its original private and cooperative nature. Be that as it may, it is certainly a sprawling conglomerate of agricultural interests. The backbone of these interests are the agricultural supply stores scattered all over Italy. The *Federconsorzi* claims that it has 3,600 of these sales outlets for farm supplies, but the recent decade has seen the closure of a number of the smaller ones, and financial problems and bankruptcy among about a quarter of the provincial branches. (When formally bankrupt, they usually continue to operate under centralised and state-controlled management).

However, in addition to these sales outlets, the *Federconsorzi* is involved in fertilizer, pesticide and plastics manufacture, and in processing, drying, conservation and sale of agricultural produce such as cereals, seeds, concentrates, feedstuffs, wine, olive oil, milk, meat, fruit and vegetables. Its agricultural chemical company is SIAPA (*Società Italo-Americana Prodotti Antiparassitari*); despite its name, there is no American capital involved.

The *Federconsorzi* also distributes FIAT tractors and other equipment made by the FIATAGRI group; and, to give an even sharper impression of its varied interests, it should be mentioned that it organises hail and other insurance for farmers, and that it also publishes agricultural magazines

nistrations are becoming as bureaucratised as the State and that they can never work effectively at the field level. There may be an element of truth in this, for one Regional functionary expressed the view that extension activities should be made a *provincial* responsibility in order to overcome the already ponderous and politicised working of the Regions.

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One of the added complexities of the extension and farmer training scene in Italy is that so many institutions and organisations *claim* operational responsibilities in the field. Discussions were held with all the institutions claiming such extension/training functions in Lazio and Umbria before beginning the farmer interviews, although in respect of agricultural-chemical and similar commercial interests, it seemed that talks with representatives of 3-4 typical companies would be sufficient. What follows is a very brief outline of the institutions visited and of their extension activities.

- a) *The Farmers' Organisations*: as mentioned earlier, these are all involved to a certain extent in farmer training and extension. The largest and most active of these organisations is the *Coldiretti* which claims over a million members, farming more than 70% of all Italian farmland and producing over 75% of the total national saleable agricultural product. It also has some 60 members of parliament. In 1981, the *Coldiretti's* training wing INIPA (*Istituto Nazionale Istruzione Professionale Agricola*) held 1,276 courses nationwide with 23,663 trainees. In Lazio and Umbria, there were 51 courses for 775 trainees. Not all of these courses were for actual farmers: many were for *Coldiretti* staff and covered such issues as cooperative formation, farm bookkeeping and the like. The courses for farmers were mainly on one or more aspects of farm management, rather than on purely technical matters.

*The Confcoltivatori*, with approximately 500,000 members, states that its training wing CIPA-AT (*Centro Istruzione Professionale Agricola e Assistenza Tecnica*) organises some 500 courses per year with a duration of 130,000 hours. The training activities of both organisations seem to have been declining in recent years, at least in the parts of Lazio

and books on a large scale.

It will be understood from what has gone before that the *Federconsorzi* constitutes an agro-industrial empire. Its cooperative nature is not always as easy to detect as are its political affiliations: it is linked with the *Coldiretti*, and hence the Christian Democratic party. For example, operationally it provides staff and premises for INIPA, the training wing of the *Coldiretti*.

The *Federconsorzi* states that it probably has the largest number of agricultural technicians of any organisation operating in Italian farming. In 1979, there were 3,001, mainly degree and diploma holders in agriculture of which 1,471 were working with farmers in one way or another, but mainly in connection with sales of farm inputs. 124 technicians were specifically assigned to technical assistance work, some in the *Federconsorzi's* own *Ufficio Tecnico Agrario* (Technical Agricultural Office), others in INIPA, and a few in agricultural publishing.

At the field level, at least in the parts of Italy covered by this study, the technical assistance or extension work of the *Federconsorzi* mainly translates itself into the availability of a SIAPA technician-cum-salesman in the local *Consorzio Agrario* whose advice can be sought if required.

The *Federconsorzi* is now actively planning an expansion in the extension field by recruiting 2-3 agricultural technicians for each provincial *Consorzio*. The proposal is that they should be extensionists rather than salesmen, but they can hardly be expected to disassociate themselves from the range of farm inputs sold by the *Consorzi Agrari*, their employers.

- c) *The Private Sector*: Numerous multinational agro-industrial companies operate in Italy, especially in the area of pesticides. Most of these companies seem to have at least one technician/salesman per province. Generally, these technicians are very competent and willing to give advice if it is requested. Some of them organise farmers' meetings to talk about new products. They are well aware (as confirmed by the farmers' interviews) that their advice is often considered to be based purely on their own need to sell products, and that therefore the advice may not always be considered reliable.

Although only of marginal bearing on this study, it should be mentioned that *all* of the pesticide company representatives spoken to were deeply concerned by most Italian farmers' lack of respect for the safety period stipulated between the last spraying and crop harvest. One had even been severely poisoned by some bought spinach and he claimed to know exactly what pesticide had been used. He, particularly, urged that the mass-media should make regular appeals to farmers to observe the safety periods in the instructions for the use of pesticides.

It emerged from the series of talks with pesticide companies that some of them match their fielding of technicians to the size of the market. Thus, one large multinational has one agricultural degree holder based in Rome to cover both Lazio and Sardinia, relatively poor farming areas, whereas the same company has no less than 13 degree holders in the field in the Region of Reggio Emilia, where agriculture and fruit growing are very intensive. While this is an understandable commercial policy, it does tend to make the richer agricultural areas even richer, while the poorer continue to stagnate.

- d) *The ERSAs (Enti Regionali di Sviluppo Agricolo ie Regional Agricultural Development Agencies):* As mentioned earlier, these institutions have been mainly set up since the devolution of power to the Regions in 1972. In Lazio, the *Ente Maremma*, a post-war, land-reform agency became ERSAL in 1978 (*Ente Regionale di Sviluppo Agricolo nel Lazio*). ERSAL has an extension responsibility, especially among the cooperatives it has been promoting, but ERSAL is seriously understaffed. No new staff have been recruited since 1962. Understandably, morale among remaining staff has suffered.

ERSAL, however, has recently launched a new initiative: the creation of six agricultural Demonstration Centres. These Centres will deal with the many different fruits and vegetables that can be grown in Lazio, plus hazel and chestnuts, forage, olives, cereals and flowers. The Centres will do applied research and hold open days and seminars. Some people are critical of this initiative on the basis that demonstrations on farmers' fields would be less expensive and more effective.

In Umbria, the ESAU (*Ente di Sviluppo dell' Agricoltura in Umbria*) was created in 1967 on the basis of a preliminary "regionalisation" law of 1964. Umbria is generally better organised in the agricultural sector than Lazio. Its economy is more dependent on agriculture and it doesn't have the proximity of a large city such as Rome to distort its essentially rural character. Many parts of Lazio have suffered great loss of population to Rome, with whole villages becoming mainly weekend and holiday places, while the surrounding agricultural land remains abandoned. Umbria has a famous agricultural faculty in the University of Perugia, and this too has been a stimulus to agricultural development. ESAU cooperates closely with the university staff and has done some useful extension work.

As mentioned earlier, each Italian Region is in the process of drawing up its law governing the agricultural extension initiative launched under EEC Directive 270/79. Umbria has decided that, in the main, the new extensionists will work out of a new series of CATAs (*Centri di Assistenza Tecnica per l'Agricoltura* or Agricultural Technical Assistance Centres) being set up by the farmers' organisations. In the Province of Perugia alone, 17 CATAs are being set up by the *Coldiretti* at the time of writing. Nothing prevents either of the other main farmers' organisations from doing the same, but the *Coldiretti* have caught the ball and are running with it. The new extensionists, though paid for by ESAU (using EEC funds too) will take their day-to-day orders from the farmers' organisations sponsoring the CATAs. Each CATA, in the initial phase, is to look after about 300 farms. ESAU will retain the right to step in and take over the running of any CATA which it feels is not being properly managed.

In Lazio, at the time of writing, no decision had yet been taken as to how the new extensionists will be fielded.

- e) *The Comuni Montani* (literally Mountain Municipalities): These institutions date back to a law of 1952.<sup>4</sup> The law recognised the economic and physical difficulties in farming mountain and hill areas, and opened the way for state financing to help groups of individuals or local authorities carry out development activities designed to raise productivity, income and living standards. The law laid down

provisions for census taking and listing of *Communi Montani*, which, among other criteria, must be *communes*<sup>5</sup> with at least 80% of their territory at over 600 metres altitude.

Further laws, notably that of 1971,<sup>6</sup> were more specific in listing the type of development activity that the State would finance in a drive to even out the differences in social and economic conditions of those living in *Communi Montani* (which were grouped under the collective name of *Comunità Montane*) and in the rest of the national territory. Planning of integrated mountain development schemes, public works, provisions of services, and improving the "cultural and professional" level of mountain people were among the initiatives foreseen. There are about 330 *Comunità Montane* in Italy. Each operates independently under its own council and draws up long-term development plans which are approved by the Regional administration. These plans are then broken down into yearly action plans and State and Regional funds are applied for to pay for the programme. A number of *Comunità Montane* have agricultural diploma holders or graduates working with them to provide extension and technical assistance.

- f) *Cooperatives and Production Associations*: The final piece in the extension jig-saw puzzle in Lazio and Umbria is the work carried out by some service cooperatives and associations of producers. This is particularly so in Umbria where several service cooperatives have a technician available to provide advice when requested. One particular livestock producers' association had a very active technician who had been the instigator of much development. Assisted and advised by him, one pig raiser interviewed had built up the quality of his Large White herd to the point where he had won several international prizes.

#### Footnotes

- 1 The outline of EEC Regulation 270/79 and of the provisions of the project to establish an extension service in Italy which begins at this point, was drawn from *Agricoltura Comunicazione* No. 11 of March 1982, published by the *Istituto di Tecnica e Propaganda Agraria* (ITPA) of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- 2 During the course of 1983, the name of these Inspectorates has *de facto* been changing to *Settori decentrati dell'agricoltura*, loosely translated as Decentralised Agricultural Offices. Since the new nomenclature has not been legally introduced, or entered into the public awareness yet, the old title will be used

throughout the report for the sake of clarity.

3 Definition drawn from its own descriptive booklet in English entitled *Federazione Italiana dei Consorzi Agrari*. (No publication date mentioned).

4 No. 991 of 25 July, 1952.

5 Italy is administratively divided into Regions, Provinces and Municipalities.

6 No. 1002 of 3 December 1971.



## V AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION IN ITALY

### 1 The Past

In common with several other countries, farm radio broadcasting began in Italy in the 1930s. The Fascist government — and it is said that Mussolini in person was the instigator of the idea — was particularly keen to reach farmers with information. An *Ente Radio Rurale* (a Rural Radio Agency) was therefore created. Radio receivers were distributed, especially within the context of land reclamation and settlement programmes for World War I veterans, such as the one in the Pontine Marshes.

At that time, electrification was limited in rural areas, and so the Ministry of Agriculture fixed the time of the weekly broadcast at around midday on Sundays. This allowed people to listen in the village square, after attending Mass. Loudspeakers were often used to relay the programme. The 30-minute programme included a certain amount of Fascist Party-line material, but it also included a humorous sketch between a mentor and a farmer who knew little, a sketch designed to impart technical information. Agricultural news items rounded up the programme. The presenter was *Signor Ente* (Mr Agency — for rural radio), and one of Italy's best radio voices was used for the part.

The *Ente Radio Rurale* petered out during World War II, and after the liberation of the country from Fascism, there was a short gap before rural radio was started again. When it did, the producers reinforced its technical assistance character, and programmes of the early 1950s, such as *Voci dei campi* (Voices of the Fields) and *Vita nei campi* (Life in the Fields) had a journalistic and documentary slant designed to provide farmers with useful information. The tendency in more recent times has been to drift away from such an approach, as we shall see when describing today's agricultural radio programmes.

Agricultural television began in 1955 with *TV degli Agricoltori* (Farmers' TV) on Sundays. (The pattern for Sunday morning farming broadcasts had been set by the 1930s experience and it still exists today).

*TV degli Agricoltori* went on air at 10.15. The character of the programme, which was produced by one of Italy's post-war agricultural radio pioneers, followed that of his previous radio programmes, ie it aimed to provide useful and technical informa-

tion to farmers.

In 1969, the Sunday TV farming programme became *A come Agricoltura*, (A like Agriculture), a title derived from the way Italian children learn the alphabet in kindergarten, except that the phrase actually used is "A like Automobile", perhaps denoting where the nation's priorities lie!

In 1975, RAI (The Italian state radio and TV service) underwent a reform in which it was decided to eliminate all sectorial programmes, like *A come Agricoltura*, and instead insert sectorial interests where they would naturally fit, ie in news items. During this reform, the industrial sector also lost its special TV programme *Turno C* (Shift C). But the unions and industry in general were able to generate ample attention and space for themselves in other programmes, as intended under the reform. Agriculture, on the contrary, found itself abandoned almost entirely by TV, and so, after a period of time, RAI restarted an agricultural programme on Sundays called *Agricoltura Domani* (Agriculture Tomorrow). Then, in 1979, the present programme *Linea Verde* (Green Line) was launched. It will be described further on.

With regard to written material for farmers, it should be remembered that illiteracy in rural areas was still a significant factor in the years before World War II. In addition, it is often claimed that Italians, as a people, read little, and that the farming population hardly reads at all. Like most such sweeping generalisations, there is limited truth in it. For even if Italians read newspapers less than many other European nations, they read more magazines.

As for reading by the farming population, this study proved that they read rather more than is generally thought, and an enormous agricultural press — in terms of numbers of publications — has been built up since World War II. More details will be provided in the next section.

## 2 The Present

Before beginning the farmers' interviews, meetings were held with those responsible in RAI (Italian State Radio and TV) for today's agricultural radio and TV programmes, and with some public-sector agricultural information units. Discussions were also held with some of the many agricultural publishing enterprises. Since there are close on 500 separate magazines related to

agriculture published in Italy, visits could not be made to more than a representative sample of the better known publishing houses.

The following is an outline of the agricultural information output available to farmers in the area of the study, Lazio and Umbria.

- a) *RAI — Agricultural Radio Programmes*: RAI has three national radio networks and each one has a weekly agricultural programme.
  - (i) Network One carries a 12-minute programme on Sunday mornings, *La Vostra Terra* (Your Land) at 09.20 hours. The programme had 25 minutes of air time until quite recently.
  - (ii) Network Two's national programme is called *Speciale GR2 Agricoltura* (Network Two News Service — Special for Agriculture). It goes on the air at 16.37 hours on Saturday afternoons and lasts about 25 minutes.
  - (iii) Network Three puts out its 15-minute programme *Agricoltura Tre* (Agriculture Three) on Sundays at 11.45.
  - (iv) Network Two devotes part of its daily air-time to regional broadcasting. In this context there is a 30-minute agricultural programme called *Lazio Agricoltura* which is broadcast on alternate Tuesdays at 14.30 hours.

The first three of these programmes, the national ones, mainly provide information *on* agriculture rather than *for* agriculture — a distinction put in these words by one of the producers. Their content is mainly socio-economic, with emphasis too on attracting urban audiences by including items on food and nutrition, ecology, etc.

On the other hand, *Lazio Agricoltura*, the regional programme on Network Two has more technical content and deliberately sets out to provide information *for* agriculture. (This is in part because its producer, now fairly close to retirement age, was a postwar farm radio and TV pioneer who has stuck to the basic technical assistance/extension tenets that characterised broadcasts of those earlier years).

- b) *RAI TV Programme, Linea Verde* (Green Line): This programme is broadcast on Sundays at 12.15 and lasts 45 minutes. Its producer aims to make an attractive programme that will also draw urban audiences, for he believes that agriculture's lack of prestige in the national awareness is a serious problem. He also believes that a *nationwide* TV programme cannot do much in the way of technical assistance/extension in a country with such varied types of agriculture.

The programme is normally made up of agricultural news items, a weather forecast for the coming week, coverage of a farming personality, and of meetings and seminars, debates on the agricultural situation in the country, broad coverage of technically advanced farming methods, etc. The last 10 minutes are usually aimed specifically at urban audiences and cover ecological and rural themes, often using well-known actresses or singers as an added attraction. When *Linea Verde* began in 1979, its audience was 800,000. It is now said to have an audience of over 2.5 million.

- c) *RAI's Dipartimento Scuola Educazione* (Schools and Education Department): This department, created in 1975, has the same hierarchical status as the three TV and three radio networks, but it has no transmission facilities of its own. Instead it makes radio and TV programmes for the others to broadcast. The Department is divided into sections dealing with infant level, primary-school level, secondary/technical education and adult education. Contacts for this study were with the adult section because approximately 10% of its output is concerned with agriculture.

The section has made series of TV programmes on farm mechanisation and agricultural chemistry, and is at present making another on meat production of all kinds in Italy. A series normally consists of 10-15 programmes of 27 minutes each. They are broadcast once, and then the video tapes are made available for loan or purchase by agricultural training institutions and the like. The Department is also tending towards the production of multi-media packs (audio and video cassettes, books) for sale and distribution, but so far this has not been done for the agricultural sector.

- d) *The Private Radio and TV Stations*: No private radio station in Lazio or Umbria does anything for agriculture, it seems.

But in Lazio one private TV station — *TeleLazio* did a programme at 12 noon on Sundays for about 3 years up to early 1983. In Umbria, *TeleUmbria* puts out twice-weekly bulletins on farm prices. These bulletins are sponsored by two important feedingstuff manufacturers.

- e) *The Agricultural Press*: There are almost 500 different agricultural publications in Italy. It is impossible to give a precise figure because publications come and go almost from day to day, but 475 was the figure most frequently quoted in mid-1983. This welter of publications emanates from agro-industrial companies, from farmers' organisations and unions, from central, regional and provincial authorities, and from private publishing houses. It was not, of course, possible to obtain copies of all these publications, but all of those easily available to farmers in Lazio and Umbria were studied.

The most widely circulated are those put out by the farmers' organisations. It seems fair to say that not more than 10% of their content has a technical or extension slant. The predominant impression is one of the sound of axes being ground as you turn the pages.

The publications put out by the Regional authorities are also low in technical and economic content; most of their emphasis seems to be on providing general information on the agriculture of the Region in question, not in itself a bad aim, but of limited use to farmers. On the other hand, a fair amount of space is dedicated to agricultural legislative matters, and these are of considerable importance to farmers.

There are two main agricultural publishing houses. Edagricole of Bologna and REDA of Rome. Edagricole produces the well-known weekly magazine *Terra e Vita* (Land and Life). This publication covers a broad spectrum of matters concerned with agriculture and the rural scene, including economic and political issues, technical matters, legislation (both national and EEC), news items, agricultural prices, a readers' letter service, etc. It provides well-balanced coverage and has five different issues: most of the magazine is the same in each issue, but 4 pages are devoted to regional/local matters in the area in which the subscriber lives. The magazine, started 23 years ago, has a circulation of about 140,000 (by subscription only) at an annual cost in 1983 of

Lit. 35,000 (about £20).

The Edagricole group also publishes 23 other agricultural periodicals, some pitched at specialised farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs, others at various sectors of agro-industry or scientific research. In addition, it puts out a very wide range of books and booklets on agricultural production techniques. It claims to have close to 1,500 titles in print.

The Edagricole group states that it is free of all political control and that it determines its editorial policy solely on what will best promote the interests of Italian agriculture and farmers. It makes a profit.

The REDA group belongs to the *Federazione Italiana dei Consorzi Agrari*, which as mentioned earlier, has political affiliations with the Christian Democratic Party and thence the largest farmers' organisation, the *Coldiretti*. REDA's main periodical is a weekly called *Giornale di Agricoltura* which is mainly distributed through the *Consorzi Agrari*. It has a print run of between 80-100,000 and costs Lit. 30,000 for a year's subscription. It carries balanced coverage of agricultural/rural matters with, according to its editor, some 60% of technical content, though 40% would seem a more accurate estimate. Naturally, it is also expected to promote the interest of the *Consorzi Agrari*.

Like Edagricole, REDA also publishes many books and booklets of a technical nature on agriculture.

Another well-known nationally distributed periodical is *L'Informatore Agrario* (The Agricultural Informer), a weekly published in Verona, with a circulation of about 50,000. Then there is *Terra e Sole* (Land and Sun), a monthly published in Rome. They are both, like *Terra e Vita*, independent, broad-coverage periodicals with much technical content. *Terra e Sole* is pitched at a rather higher scientific level than the other two.

- f) *Istituto di Tecnica e Propaganda Agraria (ITPA)* "Institute for Agricultural Technology and Propaganda" would be an approximate translation of the title of ITPA. This Institute was founded in 1926 and is part of the Ministry of Agriculture. Originally, ITPA was set up to carry out agricultural information, and particularly to disseminate research findings; market studies were later added to its responsibilities.

In the field of agricultural information, it used to do more than it does now, especially in the production of audio-visual materials, an activity which has been dropped. The recently deceased Minister of Agriculture, Giovanni Marcora, widely praised as the best Italian Minister of Agriculture in many years, was particularly aware of the agricultural information/extension failings in Italy and wanted to rebuild ITPA. At his instigation in 1979, it launched a quarterly review called *Agricoltura Comunicazione*. Its main aim was to promote serious discussion about agricultural information, extension and training matters and thereby create better understanding of the issues, especially among agricultural-sector functionaries and technicians. Marcora's successor stopped the publication.<sup>1</sup>

ITPA's main activity now is the publication of a monthly called *Agricoltura* aimed at agricultural-sector cadres generally (20,000 circulation) and *Agricoltura Ricerca* a review of research matters aimed primarily at technicians (20,000 circulation). It has also launched a review called *Agricoltura Ambiente* (10,000 circulation) covering agricultural and environmental matters.

The market study responsibilities that ITPA held at one time were hived off to the *Istituto per le Ricerche e l'Informazione di Mercato e la Valorizzazione della Produzione Agricola* (Institute for Market Research and Information and for Valorizing Agricultural Production) usually known as IRVAM. IRVAM is in a parlous state at the time of writing. It is understaffed and underbudgeted and has even teetered on the brink of closing down. This weakness in IRVAM is serious for two reasons: firstly, it may not have the resources it needs to be able to provide accurate and up-to-date market price bulletins (and many people in fact doubt the reliability of IRVAM's market reports); secondly, and graver still, is that without good market studies to identify trends and potential opportunities for Italian farming, it is difficult or impossible to establish national agricultural development plans and to provide meaningful economic guidance to farmers.

#### Footnote

- 1 Towards the ends of 1984, a decision to publish 6 more issues of *Agricoltura Comunicazione* was undertaken. The main findings of this study are to appear in the second issue.

## **VI SOME COMMENTS ON THE STATE OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND INFORMATION**

During the gathering of the information presented so far in this report, some illuminating comments were made by many of the people contacted. Some of their viewpoints are quoted here to illustrate the type of attitude found among those working in agricultural information, extension and in agricultural development generally.

All with whom conversations were held stated that, in their view, agricultural information and extension were essential for improving Italy's agriculture. Words like "disastrous" and "catastrophic" were used by a few in describing the present situation in this field, as they saw it. Many mentioned "politicization" of information as being a major problem, ie much of the media, whether electronic or print, sees adding power to the elbow of its political sponsors as its main objective, rather than providing useful information.

One agricultural journalist was very critical of his whole sector, stating that as a group, agricultural journalists had never confronted the issue of whether they should be providing general information *about* agriculture or technical information *for* farmers, or both, and if so, in what proportion. Many, he said, had never even bothered to make the distinction, between the two types in their own minds, and the Association of Agricultural Journalists should have hammered out this issue years ago. Whereas other kinds of journalism had made enormous strides towards a serious opinion-leading role, he said, agricultural journalism complacently allowed itself to be used for promoting the products of agro-industry and for politicking, especially, in favour of what he termed the "Caliphs of agriculture", ie the political personalities connected with agriculture through the farmers' organisations.

With regard to TV and radio, RAI (Italian State radio and TV), is going through a difficult time, for it is battling the numerous private radio and TV stations that have sprung up in recent years in Italy. Since RAI takes advertising both on its radio and TV networks, it can ill afford to lose audience to the "privateers", but that is exactly what is happening, and to a very serious degree. (A recent estimate put the "privateers" advertising revenue as now



almost matching that of RAI). This is one reason for the tendency of RAI agricultural programme producers to aim towards "information *about* agriculture rather than *for* agriculture". By being rather general about agriculture, by introducing themes on nutrition, ecology, etc the programmes are more likely to appeal to urban audiences as well, whereas if the programme became involved in farming technicalities, the city audience would be bored. This also explains why *Linea Verde*, the Sunday agricultural TV programme, goes out of its way to feature prominent personalities from show business, an approach dismissed by one journalist as "attempting to attract the distracted".

RAI's producers of agricultural TV and radio programmes, with one exception, are not formally trained in agriculture, but the radio-programme producers in particular do have long experience in this type of work. However, they are usually expected to cover other topics in addition to agriculture, eg trade union matters. Many of them feel that they are not doing the job *for* agriculture that they would like, mainly because of the time pressure they are under, for it is easier to do rather general pieces *about* agriculture in the small amount of production time and air time available.

In the field, the outposted Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate officials met had, in the main, been working in their locality for a number of years. Almost all of them had been involved in the past in true extension and training work, and they deplored the present situation in which they are mainly desk-bound by administrative form filling.

One topic of particular interest, and which was discussed with agricultural publishing groups, was that of linguistic style. More than most European languages, Italian tends to use different styles for its written and verbal forms: Italian speech is generally quite simple and direct, whereas written Italian is often convoluted and uses a vocabulary that is broader than that used in day-to-day speech. From personal observation it had seemed that typical farmers find the style of the major agricultural magazines too complex, and many of the articles too long, to encourage easy reading.

The editorial staff of several of the main magazines had given serious thought to this issue. In one case, the staff of the magazine had concluded that the typical, elderly farmer seldom if ever reads and that he is therefore a lost cause. The style of the

magazine and its use of technical words should therefore be tailored to the younger, more progressive and better prepared people in farming, as well as to agricultural technicians.

The staff of another major magazine said that they were deeply concerned about the relatively complex style of their magazine and its technical language. They said that they would prefer to simplify and synthesize the information they print. Unfortunately, however, almost all of their articles were written by specialists (university professors more often than not) and there are a constant battle during the editing of their pieces. No self-respecting professor, they said, would let his prose be simplified beyond a certain level, lest the result reflect on his erudition. In fact, the authors of almost all the technical articles printed in Italian agricultural journals are researchers or professors, and this certainly is at the root of the rather complex language generally used. One solution to the problem would be to follow the advice of a now deceased but famous Italian educationist who said: "Keep rigid scientific accuracy in whatever you write, but whenever you use a difficult term follow it with ' . . . that is to say' and explain it. In that way, you'll make yourself clearer and educate people at the same time".

A gem of common-sense advice, and one that earned her the nickname of Signora Cioe' (Mrs That-is-to-say), so hard did she plead her cause.

## VII METHODOLOGY OF THE FARMER SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

**The Questionnaire And Its Use:** The questionnaire (which is reproduced in Annex 1) was of course formulated in such a way as to gather factual information about the interviewees' access to, and use of, information and extension services; but in addition, other questions were included to attempt to determine the interviewees' *attitude* to innovation and progress. Such questions as whether the interviewee had recently restructured his production activities, or intended to do so; what innovations had been introduced on the farm; what would happen to the holding in the future; and whether it is possible to live well in agriculture, did in fact prove valuable. Firstly, they were revealing of interviewees' motivations, and secondly they provided some parameters for judging the answers to other questions. For example, farmers who were firmly bogged down in their grandfathers' way of doing things and showed no inclination to change anything were quite capable of stating that the extension and information services needed all manner of improvements.

The questionnaire in its draft form was tested with five farmers and modified as necessary before beginning the main block of 100 interviews. Ninety-six of the interviews were carried out actually on the farm. Four interviews were carried out in the offices of farmers' organisations.

In about a third of the cases, the farm operator only was interviewed, while in two thirds, one or more members of his immediate family were also present. Insofar as possible, the opinions of the *effective* operator were recorded. For example, in many cases an old farmer and his adult son were together. On paper, the head of the family and the farm operator was the father, but it soon emerged that the majority of the work and decisions were the responsibility of the son, and in such a case, what he had to say was of most interest. The women of the household were often very articulate in expressing their views, especially about the Sunday agricultural TV programme *Linea Verde* which they often saw while preparing lunch, when their husbands were out working or seeing other farmers.

### Footnote

1 For further details see also Annexe 3.

## VIII CHOOSING AND REACHING THE SAMPLE

One hundred farmers is not very many (until you have to find them and interview them!), so it was extremely important for them to be as representative as possible. But there could be numerous criteria for who are "typical" farmers: age, educational level, type of farm, etc could all be used. Size of holding seemed a sensible criterion from which to begin, but even this had its pitfalls. The 1970 Agricultural Census showed that in Umbria the average size of all holdings was 6.75 ha, whereas in Lazio it was 5.9 ha. (The November 1982 Agricultural Census figures for Lazio and Umbria had still not been computed when this field work was begun). However, the 1970 Census takes into account the tiniest of holdings, and calls them "farms", beginning with those below 1 ha, then 1.01 to 2 ha, and so on. In Lazio, for example, the 1971 Census recorded 143,450 farms, out of a total of 240,122 as being below 2 ha. In Umbria, it recorded 25,367 farms out of a total of 62,267 as being below 2 ha.

Although holdings of below 2 ha are viable under intensive horticulture or small livestock production — and without doubt there are many such holdings — it seems that a large number of tiny holdings recorded as "farms" are not really worthy of that name. For example, planning permission for a house is virtually automatic in many areas if the owner has 1 ha or more of land, for it is considered an "agricultural" dwelling. In other areas, after division among children of an already small property into even smaller plots, each carries out a little crop growing or livestock rearing as a very minor sideline to another job. Frequent also is that parents split up their land long before they die and keep a tiny piece for subsistence purposes and to eke out their pensions. But they remain registered as farmers (*Coltivatori diretti*) because of the social benefits that accrue to that sector.

Many EEC countries do not consider holdings below 3 ha as "farms" in their statistics; this might be too limiting for Italy, where farms are indeed small, but by eliminating "farms" of below 2 ha from the calculations, the average holding for Lazio works out at 13.4 ha and for Umbria 18.2 ha.<sup>1</sup>

It was therefore decided to seek out mainly farmers, even if part time, who were working holdings in the 10 to 20 ha range, unless they were highly specialised fruit, horticultural or small livestock operators, in which case even a 2 ha farmer could be a

valid interviewee. Farmers with larger holdings were also interviewed when they were working extensive upland livestock units, or extensive dryland grain areas.

One major criterion in selecting the interviewees was that their operation should be essentially a family one, for in 1970, 84.4% of all Italian farms were family concerns. The emphasis was therefore on this type of farm rather than on the cooperative or the holding run by a manager. In any case, the latter type of holding usually has different approaches and access to information and extension from that of a "typical" family farm. There was, however, one farm manager in the sample who also had a small farm of his own.

The channels for reaching farmers were also important. In the interest of representivity, four different channels were used to obtain the introductions to farmers. These channels were: local offices of farmers' organisations (for 21 interviews); farm inputs and machinery dealers (for 23 interviews); offices of the Regional, Provincial and local agricultural authorities (for 21 interviews) and finally, private channels (for 35 interviews). (Private channels were introductions through friends and acquaintances. These were often people resident in Rome but who still had connections in their rural area of origin).

From the point of view of geographical location and spread, 59 interviews were in Lazio and 41 in Umbria (Umbria is considerably smaller than Lazio). A principal was to avoid interviewing close neighbours, or too many people in one locality. A glance at the map (Annex 2) will show that interviews were carried out from the extreme south of Lazio to the extreme north of Umbria. Very few were carried out, however, in rich flatland farming areas, for the emphasis was on those farming in the hills.

#### Footnote

- 1 Attention is drawn to the article *Quante sono le aziende agricole Italiane?* by Giuseppe Barbero. (*Revista di Economia Agraria* No. 2 1982). In this brilliantly argued piece, Barbero seeks to prove that the Agricultural Census figures of 1970 and those of the Structural Surveys of 1975 and 1977 came nowhere near to reflecting the true situation in Italy. The 1977 Survey reported 2,622,794 farms with an average Utilized Agricultural Area of 7.4 ha each. However, Barbero plausibly concludes that the true number in 1979 was about 1,425,000 farms with an average area of 11.5 ha. It is also significant, as Barbero points out, that in the ongoing farm economic survey carried out by the *Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria*, the average size of holding is 14.9 ha.

## IX CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

### 1 Farm Size

The average size of holding owned by the interviewees was 17.7 ha, while the average size of holding being farmed (ie including rented land) was 19 ha. (The figure of 17.7 is in fairly close approximation to the aforementioned average sized holdings for Lazio and Umbria — 13.4 ha and 18.2 ha — after eliminating “farms” of less than 2 ha from the calculation.

Including rented land, or land belonging to others being worked with the owned land, the breakdown by size and numbers of the interviewees’ farms was as follows.

Size in ha:	<5	5.01-10	10.01-20	20.01-40	40.01-60	60.01-100	Over 100
Interviewees:	26	34	18	9	4	7	2

(Mountain grazing rights are not included). The smallest farm was a 2 ha horticultural holding, the largest a 140 ha cash crop farm (mainly dryland grain) run efficiently by two brothers in their 30’s and their wives. The brothers were of peasant stock and had a minimum of formal education.

### 2 Farm Type

Most farms were mixed to a certain extent, and some were truly mixed, without any particular dominant activity. The following

Type	Numbers
Mixed farms	38
Mainly livestock (cattle for meat and/or milk, sheep, pigs, horses)	33
Mainly cash crops (grains, beet, tobacco)	6
Mainly tree crops (vines, fruit, olives)	17
Mainly horticulture and small livestock (poultry, rabbits, etc)	6
Total:	100

necessarily arbitrary classification of the interviewees' farms does not take into consideration poultry, pigs and other animals kept purely for household consumption.

### 3 Tenure Pattern

As background, it should be known that sharecropping has been a feature of Italian farming since time immemorial. The traditional split was 50/50 between landowner and farmer, but over the years, legislation has shifted the proportion in favour of the farmer. From 1962, it has been fixed at 52% for the farmer and 48% for the owner. Legislation has also moved towards providing increased security of tenure.

According to an EEC survey of 1977<sup>1</sup>, there were still 71,293 sharecropping holdings in Italy, of which 8,522 were in Lazio and Umbria. National policy has been to eliminate sharecropping and Law No. 203 of 3 May, 1982 "Norms for agricultural contracts" allows either side of a sharecropping partnership to request the obligatory conversion of the contract into a rental (subject to certain conditions). The same law lays the basis for calculating rents and stipulates security of tenure conditions. Both rent rates and tenure conditions are considered to be very favourable to farmers with the result that landowners are now extremely reluctant to enter into rental contracts. The result has been that many farmers in Lazio and Umbria now have unwritten arrangements (which are technically illegal) under which they farm quite large areas in addition to their own land, on a 50/50 co-partnership (*compartecipazione*) basis with the land owner. One of the sample of the study was the owner of 2 ha and was farming a further 38 ha on a 50/50 basis. Another owned 15 ha and had another 85 in co-partnership. The problem is that these arrangements have no stability beyond a year-to-year basis. However, it does seem that in most cases it is a genuine 50/50 operation with the owner paying half of the input costs, including machinery hours provided by the farmer. It cannot be said, however, that the latest legislation has eliminated sharecropping; it has merely driven it underground and the proportional share between owner and farmer has returned to the traditional 50/50.

Among the sample, there was one sharecropper formally recognised as such. Among the remaining 99 of the sample, all owned some land and 44 were cultivating land in addition to their

own. Many of them were understandably vague about the precise arrangements under which they had access to the extra land, but about 10 had informal co-partnership arrangements or verbal agreements for renting or grazing for the summer.

#### **4 The Influence of Fractioned Holdings**

The sample farms were usually split into several separate pieces of land. Only 17 interviewees held their land in one block. In one case, a farm of 30 ha was split into 40 pieces; in another, 4 ha were split into 7 pieces; in another 7.5 ha into 11 pieces; in yet another 6 ha into 12 pieces. *The average for all the farms was 5.9 pieces per holding.*

This scattered nature of the holdings has an important influence on farmers' working habits and their availability to receive agricultural information via mass media, especially TV; many, with a considerable distance to travel to their plots, do not return home for lunch but take it with them instead. One farmer with 8 ha of land in 8 plots, the farthest more than 6 km from his home, said: "If my 8 ha were in one block around my house, I'd live like a king. The amount of time and fuel I am forced to waste running from one plot to another is a disaster." Many interviewees made similar comments.

#### **5 Part-time or Full-time Farming Families**

The now commonly accepted definition of part-time farming is when one or more members of the family actually resident on the farm engage in off-farm or non-farm activities. *By this standard, there were 53 part-time farming families in the sample, and 47 full-time farming families.* Of the 53 part-time farming families, 15 (28%) were still engaged in the agricultural sector either as vendors of farm inputs, contractors, managers of farms in addition to their own, or dealers in farm produce. The remaining 38 families (72%) had at least one member working in industry, in public services such as railways or telephones, or as teachers, watchmen, truck or bus drivers, mechanics, etc.

#### **6 Age**

*The average age of the interviewees, who were nominally the farm operators, was between 50 and 51 years.* The youngest interviewee



was 24 years old, the oldest 73.

**The Division by Age Groups of the Sample**

23-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 70
6	15	25	35	15	4

In the case of operators over 51 years old (totalling 54), 18 (33%) had sons, or occasionally sons-in-law, living and working on the farm full-time, and 14 (26%) had sons or sons-in-law living on the farm, working elsewhere but helping part-time on the farm. In every case, the interviewee believed that the son or son-in-law would continue to run the farm after his death, so 59% of these farms run by elderly farmers today will probably continue as farms for the foreseeable future.

## **7 Sex**

There was only one woman who figured as the farm operator.

## **8 Educational Level**

During the life-span of the interviewees, there have been several changes in the Italian schooling system. For example, during the childhood of several of the older interviewees, it was common to do only 3 years of primary schooling. Later, 5 years became more usual, but none of this was compulsory. Then in 1964, 3 years of secondary schooling was made obligatory, thus making 8 years of compulsory schooling from the age of 6 to 14 years.

Secondary schooling with a vocational or technical slant and leading to diplomas has always existed. In the past it began straight after 5 years of primary schooling; now it begins after the 3 years of normal and compulsory secondary schooling, and is called upper secondary education. A student who chooses agriculture as his upper secondary subject and who qualifies after 5 years is known as a *perito agrario*, literally an "agricultural expert", but he is in fact similar to the agricultural diploma holder in most countries. Tertiary education in universities is as in most other countries, with 4 years as the usual study period for a degree.<sup>2</sup>

## Educational Breakdown of the Farm Operators of the Sample

Level	No. of Interviewees (also %)
Elementary schooling of five years or less	58
Some secondary/technical/vocational education (not to diploma level) in subjects other than agriculture	11
Complete normal secondary education (8 years schooling as introduced in 1964)	15
Upper secondary education to diploma level (not agriculture)	4
Some (uncompleted) vocational education in agriculture	5
Upper secondary to diploma level in agriculture ( <i>perito agrario</i> )	5
Degree holders (law and engineering)	2

The rather low educational level among farm operators of the sample is almost certainly typical of the country as a whole. It will be noted that no degree holders in agricultural sciences were among the sample; the law graduate was a retired school teacher who had gone back to farm his family land, while the engineering graduate was a young man with access to 40 ha of family land and the desire to make dairy farming his way of life. *Only 10% of the operators had any formal training in agriculture at all* (5 diploma holders and 5 who had done some years of the diploma course).

An examination of the educational achievements or aspirations of the offspring of the farm operators is interesting. One operator in his mid-fifties, with only five years of elementary schooling, had two graduate sons working with him, one a veterinary surgeon, the other an agronomist. In his life-time, and starting with 6-7 ha of land of his own, this operator had built up an efficient livestock enterprise, mainly on rented land. He had also bought a vineyard. His sons were happy to return home after university and work with him. Another interviewee, also with only 5 years of schooling, had created an intensive pig and beef unit on only 4 ha of land. His 25-year-old son with a degree in agricultural sciences was working with him, but had additional employment as a representative for a feedingstuffs company.

Including those just mentioned, among the 100 interviewees there were 6 with offspring or close relatives living with them who had either graduated or were still at university (2 agronom-

ists, 3 veterinarians and 1 engineer). There were 8 interviewees with offspring (and in one case a nephew) who had completed or were still doing the agricultural diploma course. Leaving out the engineering student, *there were thus 13% of farm families who had a member actually qualified in agriculture or veterinary sciences or studying for such a qualification.*

Even if the veterinarians go back to their family farms and become part-time farmers/vets, the farm operators of the next generation who *have a formal technical training in agriculture will be scarcely more numerous than those of today* (13% against 10%). It is of course possible that some of the children of the younger interviewees, who were still in primary and secondary school at the time of the study, will choose agriculture as their upper secondary or tertiary education subject. But there seems to be no reason to expect a sudden surge in the numbers of farm children who choose to study agriculture: in fact the numbers may go down if Italian agriculture continues in the dire straits affecting it today.

If it proves true that there is to be little progress towards farm operators with a formal training in agriculture in the next generation, then there are obvious implications for extension and agricultural information; *for if tomorrow's farm operators continue to be professionally under-educated, then it will be even more important to intensify reaching them through non-formal channels if Italian agriculture is to progress.*

## **9 Special Access to Agricultural Information through Members of the Family Resident Off-farm**

The purpose of the question (question No.10 of the questionnaire) was to ascertain whether farm families with members working and living elsewhere, but visiting the farm regularly, had used these circumstances to develop special, but informal, channels for obtaining technical advice. For example, would a father with a son working and living in Perugia ask him to seek advice at the University there; or ask him to go to a specialist oenological supply store with a wine-making query? And would families with a degree or diploma holder in agriculture, but working elsewhere, use this in-family expertise?

The question revealed that *14% of the sample had potential special access to agricultural information.* Of these, 13 had relatives who

were studying for (2), or had already acquired qualifications (11) in agriculture or in the related fields of forestry, horticulture and oenology. Of these 13 relatives with such a background, 7 (including 2 students) were still actively engaged in the agricultural sector.

The frequency of visits to the interviewees' farms by these relatives ranged from 4 to 40 times per year. However, *only 3 interviewees seemed to exploit these visits as a source of useful advice; the remainder were rather unenthusiastic about their relatives as a source of information.*

None of the interviewees used the mere fact of the residence of a family member in a town, with the consequent proximity of offices, universities, etc., as a means of obtaining information. One interviewee, however, was *intensively using* the services of a cousin who was a worker with the agricultural research team of the University of Perugia. This cousin, although only a secondary school graduate himself, had learned a great deal from his close contact with researchers; and if he could not answer a question, he would refer it to his better-qualified colleagues. The interviewee, a progressive and efficient farmer with pedigree, prize-winning livestock, was enthusiastic about the advice he got through this channel.

*In general, however, it seems that non-resident members of the farm family are not an important channel for information.*

## 10 Membership of Cooperatives

Among the interviewees, 51% belonged to at least one cooperative. (Some belonged to as many as four). The majority of these were marketing cooperatives dealing with commodities such as milk, meat, tobacco, grain, fruit, and tomatoes. Others were servicing cooperatives for the processing of olives and grapes; a smaller number were servicing cooperatives of a broader nature, dealing not only with the marketing of produce but also with the supply of inputs.

Only one interviewee was a member of a cooperative to purchase and use farm machinery jointly. This is doubtless a reflection of the widespread reluctance, at least in Central Italy, to share such services. (A machinery salesman said that he was never happier than when he sold a tractor to two brothers: within a couple of years he always sold two more, because one brother

would come along and say he could not go on sharing the first tractor, and would buy one for himself; then the other brother, unhappy with the old tractor and seeing his brother's new one, would also trade in the old for a new model).

No interviewees were members of production cooperatives involving the grouping of land resources.

## **11 Membership of a Farmers' Organisation or Association**

Eighty-three (83%) of the sample were members of a farmers' organisation or association. Of these, 75 were members of the *Coltivatori Diretti*, the organisation with links to the centrist Christian Democrat party. However, membership of the *Coltivatori Diretti* does not necessarily denote political allegiance to the Christian Democrats, for many farmers, even if they vote for other parties, join the *Coltivatori Diretti* because it has a widespread network of offices, and provides farm accounting and other services at low prices. It is also very well organised in giving advice on what is called *Il patronato* ie social services such as pensions and sickness benefits.

### **Footnotes**

1 *La legge sui contratti agrari — guida all'applicazione*. Published by *Confederazione Italiana Coltivatori* 1982.

2 Recently raised to 5 years for agriculture.

## X FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL TELEVISION

The questionnaire concentrated on the RAI Channel 1 programme *Linea Verde* broadcast on Sundays at 12.15. During the field work it emerged that two of the numerous small private TV stations, one in Lazio and one in Umbria, were also doing a very limited amount of agricultural programming. Some information about farmers' reactions to these programmes is included at the end of this section, but it is not based on as systematic an enquiry as that done for *Linea Verde*.

### 1 Distribution of TV Receivers

All interviewees had TV sets in their homes; in two, the sets were broken down and had been for "about 12 days" in one case and "over a month" in the other. In both cases, the intention was to have them repaired shortly.

### 2 Knowledge of Linea Verde

% of Respondents who knew:

<i>Title of Linea Verde</i>	<i>Day of Broadcast</i>	<i>Time of Broadcast</i>
45%	79%	74%

Those who could not remember the title of *Linea Verde* often cited "*A come Agricoltura*" instead. (This programme, a predecessor of *Linea Verde* was also broadcast before lunch on Sundays, but went off the air in the mid-70's). Other interviewees mentioned *Onda Verde*, the name used for a road and traffic report broadcast by RAI radio at intervals during the day, for a system of synchronized traffic lights, and also for the TeleLazio agricultural programme which went off the air in early 1983. (It seems that the traffic programme on radio was the one that, in the main, conditioned the response).

With regard to the time, many did not state the precisely correct answer, but such replies as "after midday" were taken as valid. (Italian farmers, though very time-conscious in respect of the work to be done in the hours of daylight, are not clock-watchers).

### 3 Frequency of Viewing of Linea Verde

A	B	C	D	E	F
3-4 Times Month	2-3 Times Month	1-2 Times Month	6-12 Times Year	6 Times Year	Never
30%	24%	9%	8%	12%	17%

The figures for those who watch *Linea Verde* more or less regularly are certainly more reliable than those with lower frequencies of viewing. The latter often had trouble stating a frequency of viewing, and preferred to stay with phrases like "very rarely", "occasionally", "when I happen to see it", etc. The category of never (17%) is almost certainly accurate, however.

Reasons for not watching *Linea Verde*, when they were forthcoming, were interesting. In categories D, E and F in the table above (ie these 37 people who stated they saw 12 programmes a year or less) 26 used "*shortage of time*", or "*time of broadcast*" as their reason for not watching *Linea Verde* more often. The part-time farm operators especially, but some of the full-time farmers too, could not afford the time on Sunday morning to watch TV; some of the full-time farmers said that Sunday morning before lunch was the time they went to see neighbours, livestock dealers, butchers, etc in order to discuss purchase or sale of animals. One farmer said he went to 11.30 Mass and was not home in time for *Linea Verde*.

Two interviewees stated they did not know of the existence of *Linea Verde*; three others said they could not watch it because their children monopolised the TV to watch one of the private channels. Only three stated that they did not like the programme and so did not watch it. One of these had followed it very regularly until about 4 months before the interview and then gave up because he was "fed up with it" ("*mi sono stufato*"). Another said "the programme goes too fast for me: I can't follow it properly with my limited education". The third, who had followed *A come Agricoltura* assiduously years ago, said that *Linea Verde* was "not practical enough".

### 4 The Interviewees' Opinion of Linea Verde

Opinions about the programme were expressed by 71% of the

interviewees; the remaining 29% were (apart from 1%) the farmers in categories E and F of the table on p. 62 who see the programme less than six times a year and were unwilling or unable to pass judgement on it.

As can be seen in the table that follows, there was both praise and criticism for the programme from those who watched it more or less regularly. "I like seeing what is happening in agriculture in other parts of Italy" was one comment of praise. Several described it as a "good programme" (*un bel programma*). Another said simply, "I like it and I'm always sitting waiting in front of the TV when it begins". "I like the debates" was yet another comment. One said: "A programme like that should be broadcast every day". Others mentioned very favourably the weekly weather forecast included in the programme, and when this was dropped, at a point when the interviews were almost finished, two farmers were very irritated by its demise. (It has since been restored).

#### Summary of Opinions of Linea Verde

Classification	Number of Respondents	% of those Responding
1 Interesting and practical (ie useful for their needs)	23	32%
2 Interesting but not practical (ie not useful for their needs)	46	65%
3 Useless	2 <sup>1</sup>	3%
4 Favourable comments independent of Nos. 1 and 2 above	10	14%
5 Critical of time and day of broadcast	28	28%
6 Critical of lack of technical content	31	43%
7 Critical of lack of relevance to farmers' needs	21	29.5%
8 Critical of credibility	12	17%
9 Miscellaneous criticism (see para. 5 on page 65)	9	13%

On the critical side, the comments fell into broad categories as detailed below:

- (i) *Time of Broadcast*: As already mentioned, 26% of interviewees gave the time of broadcast as their reason for never

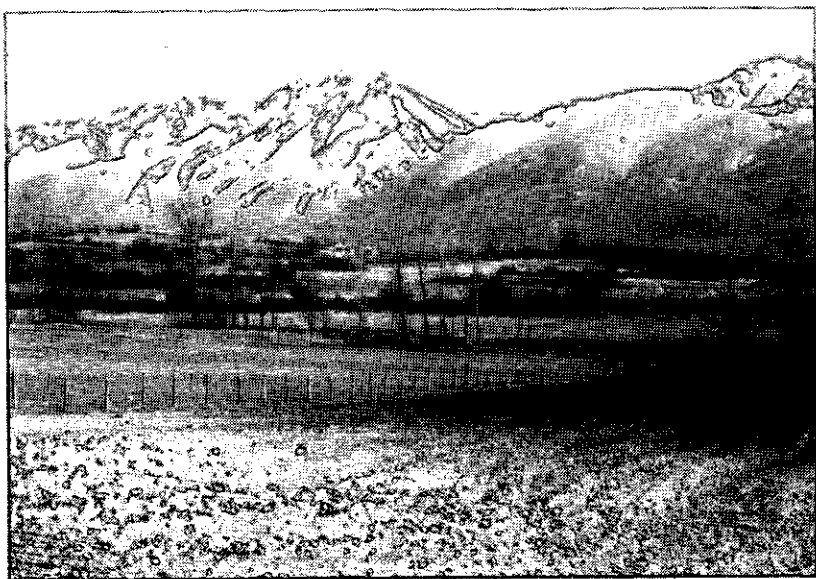


or seldom watching *Linea Verde*. But among those who do watch it fairly regularly, two more complained that the time was not very convenient, bringing the total of those who expressed criticism of the time of broadcast to 28%.

- (ii) *Insufficient Technical Content in the Programme*: This was summed up by statements such as: "It should be more technical"; "It should tell us more about machinery and fertilizers, for example"; "There should be more filming on farms"; "It should explain things in detail"; "It's not practical enough"; "It doesn't try to explain anything. It's a sort of news"; "Farmers need information on everything from production to processing and marketing. *Linea Verde* doesn't provide it, because the producers know nothing about agriculture"; "It's not detailed enough"; "It should be more concrete".
- (iii) *Lack of Relevance to many Farmers Needs*: This category of complaint, closely linked to the question of technical content, was summarised by comments such as:  
"They only show big farmers"; "What we see are cow-stalls of the year 2000, and we can never hope to have a stall like that"; "They should show us farmers only a little better than we are, so that we can try to follow them"; "We see beautiful stalls but they never show us the reality of cleaning them out".

The issue of geographical and subject matter relevance was also raised frequently in one form or another. While usually appreciating that *Linea Verde* is a national programme in a country of very varied agriculture, interviewees complained that their particular farming systems received insufficient attention. Typical comments were: "The programme doesn't show farming in hill areas often enough"; "I don't see enough about the problems of poultry raising"; "We want to see what is going on in this area, not in Veneto or Sicily"; "Why do we have to see all those extraneous activities like raising of pigeons, snails, earth-worms, horses and trout when we need information about the main agricultural activities?"

- (iv) *Credibility*: A common complaint was that people in the programme, usually politicians, made numerous promises about what was to be done for Italian agriculture, but that there was no follow-up. Typical comments were:



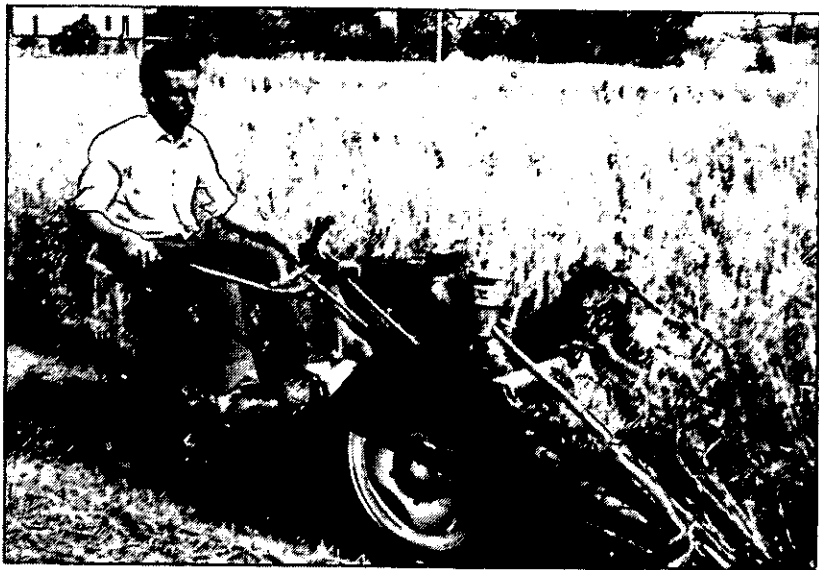
*Typical upland area of livestock in North East Lazio; despite the open expanses, holdings are severely fractioned.*



*Most holdings of a subsistence nature have a variety of production activities — a few vines to produce wine for home consumption, livestock and grain crops.*



*Many farming families are multiple-job-holding. Here the farmer (left) is helped by his son who has an office job from which he is free in the afternoons. Large tractors, often more powerful than really necessary, are also a feature of the farming scene.*



*In contrast to the overly powerful tractors often seen the self-propelled mower is ideally suited to the conditions and is found on many farms.*



*The patchwork nature of the medium-altitude rolling countryside, at about 300 to 500 metres, makes rational farming difficult.*



*Planting out tobacco in South Lazio. This is a profitable crop for which there is extension assistance from the State Tobacco Monopole. Such extension barely exists for food crops.*



*In some flat lands of Lazio and Umbria, irrigation infrastructures have been constructed and allow for profitable cash crops.*

"They make too many promises"; "Too much futile chatter (*chiacchiere*) and nothing concrete"; "They tell us about some new grant so we go and apply for it and nothing happens".

- (v) *Less Commonly-expressed Criticisms*: These were in the following areas: language and style of presentation (4% said *Linea Verde* was too fast or too complex); about over-politicization of the programme (almost 3% claimed that the programme was "remote controlled by politicians", or designed "to draw water to their mills"); about the programme showing only the positive sides of agriculture (1%); and about too much EEC material (1%).

## 5 Useful Ideas Transmitted by TV

Despite the avowed aim of *Linea Verde*'s producer to make a programme of wide general appeal, rather than of a technical assistance nature, and of the high number of complaints about the lack of technical content in the programme, some farmers nevertheless stated that they had first picked up a technical innovation from seeing it on *Linea Verde*.

*Twenty-seven respondents (38% of those who commented on Linea Verde) said they had picked up useful ideas from the programme.* 21 interviewees were able to recall actual ideas. They were as follows: modern cowstalls, livestock management systems, beef breeds and artificial insemination (10 cases); maize silage (6 cases); modern vineyard layout and spraying techniques (3 cases); irrigation, cultivation and fertilizer use (4 cases). A number of interviewees added a comment to the effect that the ideas presented by *Linea Verde* were very general. Of the 21 who could remember specific ideas, 17 stated that they had applied them on their farms.

## 6 Programmes cited as having made a Special Impression

In addition to the 21 programme items which were said to have been "useful ideas", there were 23 other replies to the effect that a certain programme had made a "special impression". Thus, 44 respondents were able to recall programme items out of a total of 83 people among the sample who see *Linea Verde*, even if very seldom. This represents 54%.

What type of programme they recalled as having made a special impression could be revealing — if one agrees with the assumption that people tend to remember what interests them. Out of the 23 people who recalled a “special impression” programme, 16 particularly remembered programmes of a basically practical and technical nature; modern livestock rearing methods (10); apiculture (2); pigeons (1); fruit growing (1); olive picking devices (1); biogas (1). Socio-economic programmes made a special impression on 5 interviewees; Italian farmers’ protest at the Brenner Pass (1); the film tribute to the ex-Minister of Agriculture Marcora when he died (1); coverage of agricultural fairs at Paris and Verona (2); an item about young people returning to the land (1).

Films about farming in other countries (Denmark, Holland), were especially remembered by 2 interviewees.

*Since the 21 “useful ideas” picked up from Linea Verde were also of a technical nature, we have a total of 37 technical items that lodged in people’s minds, out of a total of 44 programme items that interviewees could recall.*



The last part of the questionnaire (questions 23-29), dealing with agricultural information via TV, was more general and designed to elicit the sample’s opinion about possible improvement in the existing services in respect of type of programme, day and time of broadcasting, duration, frequency, etc.

## **7 Interviewees’ Opinions as to whether TV could be used better for Agricultural Information**

Could TV be better used for agricultural information? This question produced the following answers.

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
89%	3%	8%

The comments among those replying “yes” were varied. Some were emphatic in stating that there should be a “robust agricultural programme” or words to that effect. Other people re-raised the question of the day and time of broadcast. Another commented that TV enters every home and *must* be used more

intensively for agricultural information. "TV gives too much time to sport", he said "but you cannot eat sport!" Several interviewees said there should be many *more* agricultural TV programmes.

Those 3 answering "no" said either that they had no time to watch TV, or that there were too many variations in Italian agriculture for TV to be a useful medium.

The 8 "don't know" respondents said that TV lacked credibility, that it was better to call a specialist for advice, or that they preferred to let their children watch whatever they wanted rather than insist that the channel be changed for an agricultural programme.

## 8 Interviewees' Opinions on the Type of Programme Content that would be Useful

As was to be expected, many of the opinions expressed were direct follow-up from criticisms voiced about *Linea Verde*, that is to say farmers said what they would *like* to see, in *contrast* with what *Linea Verde* offers.

### Suggested Improvements for Agricultural Television Programme Content

Requirements Cited	Number of Respondents	% of those Responding
More technical content	86	97%
More relevance to typical farmers	17	19%
More economic information	9	10%
Simpler language	7	8%
More honesty	7	7%

The large number of farmers who said they needed more technical content used words and phrases such as: "concrete, instructional, technical, detailed, and updating of knowledge" in describing what they wanted in this connection.

Those talking about relevance of programmes mentioned the issue of typicality of farms shown, as well as the need to make locally-specific programmes.

Those who raised the matter of economic guidance specifically



mentioned the need for information on market tendencies, and what crops and produce to concentrate on in view of likely profitability. The need for regular information on market prices was also stressed by these respondents.

Miscellaneous but nevertheless interesting comments were that there should be: programmes to bolster the prestige of Italian agricultural produce in the eyes of the Italian housewife; programmes about agri-tourism (for some years thought to be a potential, if partial, solution to the problems of farming in the hill areas); question and answer sessions; programmes about agricultural legislation; and detailed programmes about pesticide use, because Italian farmers tended "to go by eye and that is dangerous". One farmer mentioned the very important point that there should be *two* types of programmes: one *about* agriculture and one *for* farmers. (He did not use that terminology but that is what his statement amounted to). Several farmers mentioned the need to link the programmes to the agricultural calendar.

## **9 Opinions Expressed about the Ideal Time of Broadcast, Frequency and Duration of Programmes**

These are summarised in the chart that follows on page 72 but there were some additional comments.

- a) *Frequency of Broadcasts:* Several interviewees said that to repeat a programme at a different time during the week might be useful to allow people a better chance of seeing it.
- b) *Duration of Programme:* The 8% who would prefer short 30-45 minute programmes usually linked this requirement with more than one programme per week.
- c) *Day of Broadcast:* About 6% of respondents said that Sunday was all right as the day of broadcast, but that the programme should go on air after 13.00 when everybody really was at home for lunch. A few said that Sunday was a family day and not suitable for a serious programme concerning their profession.

With the exception of 2 who opted for Saturday instead of Sunday, the rest had no preference for day, in effect saying that any day would be all right.

- d) *Time of Broadcast:* The question of the time of broadcast was more difficult, and nearly all considered that the ideal

arrangement would be different times for summer and winter, as detailed in the table on page 72.

The 29 respondents (31%) who said that, during summer, a programme after the 13.00 news would be convenient did so because, owing to the heat, they usually spent from 1 o'clock to 3 o'clock in the relative cool of their homes before returning to the fields for the long evening hours. The remaining 3 (3%) of the interviewees unhappy with the *Linea Verde* hour found difficulty in fixing a time for the summer in view of their very heavy workload. They would prefer more programmes in winter, they said.

In respect of *winter*, the 20.00 First Channel news was cited as the central programme before or after which the agricultural one should be broadcast, ie at about 19.00 hours or 20.30 hours.

#### **10 Interviewees' Opinions on the Usefulness or Otherwise of a Regionalized Agricultural TV Programme**

When the Italian State radio and TV services (RAI) underwent a reform in 1975, a Third TV Channel was set up with a major objective of providing regional programming. The production and transmission facilities for regional programming now exist, but they have not, up to the present, been used for agricultural broadcasting.

The possibility of making locally-specific TV programmes, and of broadcasting them to limited regions, is the ideal in the minds of most agricultural information specialists. In a varied agricultural country like Italy, it is an essential prerequisite for providing valid technical information to farmers. The producer of *Linea Verde* said that he believed that the Third Channel should be doing this, so the questionnaire included questions 28-29 to find out what interviewees' reaction would be to a regional TV programme and what proportion of them at present are able to receive the Third Network.

*No less than 83% of the sample said they would certainly watch a Regional programme; 11% said they would probably watch one; 4% gave ambiguous replies, and 2% said they would not watch one. (They didn't believe that TV had any potential usefulness to farmers).*

With regard to reception of the Third Channel, 64% of

farmers interviewed received it, but 9 said that they received it badly. The Third Network was *not* received by 31% of the sample, but 4 among these said that the fault definitely lay with their own antenna, and it could well be that many others could not receive it for the same reason. 5% of the interviewees were unable to say whether they could tune in to the Third Channel or not.

## 11 Other Agricultural Programmes Broadcast by TV Channels in Lazio and Umbria

The study was concerned primarily with the *main* and *regular* purveyors of agricultural information via TV, radio and press; it had seemed, when beginning the work, that any other media attention to agriculture was very rare, and at best spasmodic. Therefore no systematic enquiry into this minor sector was included in the already rather long questionnaire. However, once the farmer interviews were begun, reference to TV programmes other than *Linea Verde* or its RAI predecessors did occasionally arise.

In Lazio, *one* interviewee mentioned that he had seen some of the programmes on agricultural mechanisation produced by the Schools and Education Dept. of RAI (see p. 43). Two other interviewees had seen some of the programmes put out by *TeleLazio* (see p. 44). The respondent who had seen the agricultural mechanisation programmes, more by chance than anything else, said he found them very good. The people who had seen the *TeleLazio* programmes could not remember them well enough to comment on them.

In Umbria, the price bulletins put out twice a week by *TeleUmbria* (see p. 44) were favourably mentioned by a number of respondents. Most interesting, however, was the effect these bulletins seem to have during negotiations between farmers and the butchers purchasing their livestock, particularly pigs. In Lazio, where no such market information is available on TV, there is a constant struggle between farmers and butchers in respect of prices, with the farmers feeling that the butchers always get the best of the struggle. Price information in newspapers and magazines is dismissed as being out of date or inaccurate — or both. But in Umbria, where *TeleUmbria's* price bulletins are received, they have become, in most cases, the basis

for price fixing. The Modena pig price, for example, is accepted as valid and is generally paid. When this phenomenon of argument-free price agreement was first encountered, it seemed that it might be due to specific attitudes and experiences of Umbrian farmers and butchers compared to those in the less-agricultural Region of Lazio. Then it was found that in a valley of Northern Umbria, where the *TeleUmbria* broadcast pattern does not reach, the same fights about prices go on as they do in Lazio.

This leads to the conclusion that *price information can become a real basis for dealing only when it is provided by electronic media such as TV or radio, and is simultaneously available to both sides of the transaction. Printed information, with the inevitable delays in its availability to the average farmer or butcher, lacks credibility; and in good part this is also because it is normally in the hands of one side of a transaction only, and the other side dismisses it as invalid.*

It is curious, however, that no farmer who stated that he took the *TeleUmbria* price bulletins as valid expressed any query as to how the prices were established. In fact, they are provided via the chambers of commerce in the towns where the markets are held; any farmer seriously considering this could easily come to the conclusion that farmers' representation in chambers of commerce is usually less powerful than that of merchants, and that therefore the prices quoted could be deliberately low.

#### Footnote

- 1 One of the interviewees who classified it as "useless" was the farmer who had watched it very regularly and then stopped; the other was in category D, those who watch it only 6-12 a year and his opinion is therefore of little value.

**SUMMARY CHART OF FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF PREFERRED FREQUENCY, DURATION AND  
TIMING OF AGRICULTURAL TV PROGRAMMES**

FREQUENCY <sup>1</sup>			DURATION <sup>2</sup>				TIME OF BROADCAST PREFERRED <sup>3</sup>						
Preference for:			Preference for:				Summer			Winter			
Once a Week	Twice a Week	More Than Twice a Week	30 Mins	45 Mins	60 Mins	Over 60 Mins	Satis- fied With 12.15 Sunday	ca 21.30 Hrs	ca 13.30 Hrs	ca Don't Know	ca 19.00 or 20.30	ca 13.30	ca 18.00
63%	29%	7%	8%	53%	34%	5%	18%	48%	31%	3%	70%	10%	2%

1 95 respondents. 2 87 respondents. 3 94 respondents.

*N.B.* Percentages do not always add to exactly 100 due to rounding off of fractions to nearest whole percentage point. The percentages are in relation to the number of respondents.

## XI FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL RADIO PROGRAMMES

### 1 The Unimportance of Radio

This part of the enquiry produced the greatest surprise: whereas in many industrialised countries radio is the backbone of timely agricultural information, providing farmers with market intelligence, weather forecasts, farming news, ideas about new technology, and so on, *among the sample in Central Italy radio played virtually no such role.*

Radio receivers were fairly widespread, as detailed below.

**Radio Ownership Among Sample \***

Functioning Radios	Non-functional Radios	No Radios
82%	2%	16%

\* Does not include car radios

For Lazio farmers, there are *four* radio programmes on agriculture broadcast by RAI (3 national *weekly* programmes plus 1 regional programme *every two weeks* — see pp. 42-44); in Umbria, farmers have access to the 3 national weekly programmes only.

*Only 3 interviewees knew the name, day, and time of broadcast of any of the programmes.*

Two of them knew *La Nostra Terra* broadcast by the First Channel at 09.15 on Sunday morning. They both commented that it was a good time because it coincided with their breakfast and they listened to it 2-3 times a month. They both classified it as "interesting but not practical", but said they liked it. The other interviewee knew the Second Channel programme at 16.37 on Saturday afternoon because he was always milking at that time and had the radio in the cowstall. He heard the programme 4 times a month and classified it as "interesting and practical".

None of the three could remember any useful ideas they had picked up from the programmes. Two would have liked more technical content; the third thought that improvement should be mainly in TV services for farmers since, in his view, TV was a

better medium than radio.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Some general comments about radio emerged during the discussions on it. Firstly, it was very clear that the important medium in the minds of most interviewees was TV. Radio, it was often said, was to provide light music for the young. To this end, the young — and the housewives too — often listened to local private FM stations. *None of these FM stations ever did anything for agriculture as far as the sample knew.*

With regard to listening habits, 18 interviewees (22% of those with functioning radios “frequently” took them to the fields or the cowstall. A further 20 (24% of these with functioning radio) took their radios with them “sometimes”. The pattern was that fruit farmers, especially, seemed to take radios with them and hung them on a branch while pruning or picking. Others whose land was fractioned into many far-flung pieces and who usually took their lunch to the field, often had a radio with them and listened to it while eating and resting. Others regularly had a radio in the cowstall.

*When asked whether they thought radio could be better used for agricultural information, 78% of interviewees answered “yes”. The remaining 22% were divided almost equally between those who said “no” because radio was of no importance in their lives and those who responded that they did not know. In this latter category, some commented that they thought that TV was a better medium.*

## **2 The Daily Farm Bulletin Idea**

The part of the interview concerned with radio was the most difficult to administer. Respondents, perhaps slightly ill at ease at not knowing about *any* of the agricultural programmes on radio, often shrugged or looked blank as the questioning proceeded. They evidently found it difficult to answer in what they considered a meaningful way, because few of them had given any serious thought to radio as a source of agricultural information.

After 33 interviews (a third of the planned sample), a superficial analysis was made of the findings that were emerging. When it was seen how meager the information about radio was turning out to be, it was decided that the objective of trying never to lead

interviewees by suggesting answers would probably be inappropriate when dealing with radio during the remaining 67 interviews. After all, one purpose of the study was to ascertain what might be useful for the future, and if the interviewees had no experience or concept of what agricultural radio programmes could provide, they could not make constructive suggestions.

During the first 33 interviews, 7 farmers had spontaneously mentioned the potential usefulness of a daily farmers' bulletin, thus in effect mentioning what has been found useful in many other countries. It was therefore decided that, when faced with an interviewee who obviously had no idea as to how radio could be helpful, the idea of a daily bulletin, of regional character, would be proposed to elicit the farmer's response and ideas as to the most appropriate time and content for such a broadcast. No less than 52 of the remaining 67 interviewees thought the idea of a daily bulletin to be very useful. This, with the 7 from among the first 33 interviewees who had mentioned a daily bulletin, brings the proportion to 59% of all interviewees.

A further 11 from among the first 33 interviewees had proposed some sort of more regular farmers' radio programmes, but without specifying a daily bulletin. *Thus, we have a total of 70% of the whole sample who would like a more regular radio programme.*

The duration suggested for the programme by the majority of respondents was 10-15 minutes. Daily, or 6 times a week, was thought best by most because such regularity would encourage the *habit* of listening; yet, at the same time, if a programme was missed because of other commitments, the loss would not be too serious.

The question of the time of broadcast invariably caused discussions. Among the 70 respondents in favour of a more frequent radio programme, the breakdown was as follows:

**Preferred Time for Regular Radio Bulletin**

Early Morning ca 6.30-7.00	Midday ca 13.15-14.15	Late Evening ca 21.30-22.30	No preference from among times on left
14 20%*	34 49%*	20 28%*	2 3%*

\* Percentage of 70 respondents interested in more radio programmes.



With regard to content, the respondents all wanted a mixed or magazine-type programme made up of weather, technical notes linked to the agricultural calendar, market prices, agricultural news items, discussions among farmers, reminders of deadlines for submissions of requests, tax returns, and the like, information on agricultural legislation, etc.

*There was unanimity among the respondents that such a programme would have to be regional in scope, not national.*

## XII FARMERS AND THE PRINTED WORD

### 1 Magazines and Journals

We have already seen, on pages 44-46, that Italy has numerous agricultural publications. Many of these are of course not distributed nationally, so could not be known to all farmers. The farmers in the sample were asked how many titles they could name, independently of whether or not they read the magazines named.

#### Interviewees' Knowledge/Recall of Agricultural Magazines by Title

Farmers knowing:	4 or more titles	1-3 titles	None
	23%	71%	6%

By far the most frequently mentioned title was *Il Coltivatore Italiano*, the monthly distributed by the *Coltivati Diretti*, the largest farmers' organisation. It was actually named by 80% of the sample, compared with the 75% of the sample who actually belonged to that organisation. In the case of 24% of the sample, *Il Coltivatore Italiano* was the *only* title remembered.

The readership of agricultural magazines was found to be as in the following table:

Numbers of magazines read	Percentage of Households
None	19%
1	40%
2	30%
3	9%
4	2%

It should be noted that respondents frequently made the point they did not read the magazine(s) thoroughly, tending only to pick out items of special interest. It was not always easy to find out whether the farm operator was the actual reader; he would frequently evade the question by saying "It's mainly my son who reads it". And so the table above is based on *at least one person resident in the household* reading the magazine(s).

In addition to *Il Coltivatore Italiano*, a number of other institutional-type journals were often being received by the sample households. These were, in the main, regional or provincial-level publications. Some were produced by the local *Coltivatori Diretti* networks; others by provincial or regional administrations.

Magazines produced by feedingstuff and other farm input manufacturers were also being received in many households.

With regard to privately produced magazines, available only by paying a subscription for them, 26% of the interviewees subscribed to at least one; in a few cases, two such magazines were being received as, for example, when the son(s) with a special love of farm machinery would subscribe to *Il Trattorista* (The Tractor Driver). And some very information-minded farmers subscribed to two magazines for themselves. The magazines subscribed to in the main were: *Informatore Agrario*, *Terra e Vita*, and *Informatore Zootecnico*.

**Breakdown Between Diffusion of Institutional-type Magazines  
(often distributed free) and Magazines available through  
Subscription only from Private Publishers.**

Households Receiving Private Subscription Magazines	Households Receiving Institutional-type Magazines	Households Receiving No Magazines
26%	75%	19%

N.B. Does not add to 100% because 20 households received institutional magazines and subscribed to private ones.

Where both institutional and subscription magazines arrived in a household, it was the subscription one that was invariably the most read.

Comments on *Il Coltivatore Italiano* revealed that most readers looked upon it as a source of information on questions of social rights and services, (*il patronato*) though a few readers also said that they had picked up some useful ideas from it. Many considered the magazine "too political" or "tendentious" and said that it should have more technical content.

The magazines produced by the feedingstuff and other input manufacturers were frequently cited as a source of useful information, though some readers treated them with caution

"because their main interest is to sell".

*Those who read privately published, subscription-only magazines all stated that they had been a source of numerous useful ideas. (Only 3% of the whole sample had once been readers of such magazines and had given them up). It was evident from the conversations with the 26 households reading these magazines that in most cases they were considered a vital source of information. The main complaint was that livestock market prices quoted were for Northern Italy only and that they were not accurate for Central Italy.*

*In respect of the language used in agricultural magazines, only 14% of the sample complained that it was too complex. (In the main, of course, they were referring to *Il Coltivatore Italiano*, the most widely read).*

The 26 subscribers to privately published magazines tended to be better educated than the rest of the sample, and it is interesting that several of them said that the style and presentation of agricultural magazines should be simpler and more "synthetical".

## **2 Handout Pamphlets Describing New Farm Chemicals, Seed Varieties, etc.**

Some of these pamphlets are distributed through direct mailings, but the majority are displayed on the sales counter in the premises of vendors of farm inputs. 80% of the sample had seen such leaflets in the last year or so, and 67% of the sample (84% of those who had seen them) considered them "clear and useful". One farmer made a rather interesting favourable comment. "They give me information which is not conditioned by what the vendor has in stock or wants to sell off".

Several farmers said that the leaflets dealing with farm chemicals should put the main local or dialect names for weeds, insects and diseases in brackets after the Italian and/or Latin name. Those with really negative opinions on these leaflets, 6% of those who had seen them, either dismissed them as mere publicity or otherwise implied that they could not be relied on for objective information. One farmer said that they used "long words I don't understand". The remainder of the sample who had *seen* them had not read them (10%).

*Overall, 69% of the whole sample said they wanted to see more of these leaflets. (Some sample leaflets were being carried and two*

farmers who had not seen such leaflets before put themselves in this category, in addition to the 67% of the sample who considered them "clear and useful"). 4% *were not interested in receiving them, and 29% didn't know.*

### **3 Instruction Labels on Agricultural Chemicals**

The question on "instructions for use" of farm chemicals was prompted by personal observation of some deficiencies in this area. Legislation requires that labels include detailed information on safety precautions, the risks to human and animal health, and symptoms in the event of poisoning etc. Once this information has been provided, there is often little space left for "instructions for use".

Somewhat unexpectedly, *of the total sample, only 14% said they had found labels "unclear and inadequate", but a further 9% expressed some reservation in choosing the "clear and adequate" option.*

The few complaints expressed came under the category of print being too small or information on doses being incomplete. One farmer wryly remarked that with the farming population getting older all the time, eyesight levels were declining, and that he and most of his friends of a similar age could certainly not read the small print on a typical label.

With regard to doses, especially for weedkillers, a common complaint was that only a dose per hectare was provided and that there was no information on the concentration to use for spot treatment with a knapsack sprayer. (None of the interviewees had worked out the correct dose by calibrating their knapsack sprayer and calculating the concentration equivalent to, say 8 kg per ha and many appeared perplexed at the idea of such an operation).

*Obviously, a leaflet in addition to the label would help overcome these problems and some farmers suggested this solution.*

*There were 4% of the sample who said they never read the label, preferring to rely on verbal instructions from the vendor.*

### **4 Books on Agricultural Subjects**

As mentioned on page 44, both Edagricole and REDA, and a number of other publishers too, bring out numerous books on different aspects of agriculture.

## Farm Families with Books on Agricultural Subjects in their Homes

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Households with Books on Agriculture — 44% of Sample

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Of these:

More than 10 books

57%

5-9 books

16%

1-4 books

27%

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There was rather a clear pattern in respect of book ownership: those with more than 10 titles had either studied agriculture themselves or had offspring who had done so, or were still doing so; alternatively, they were the better educated with regular contacts with larger cities, an important consideration because books on agriculture are not usually on sale in villages and small towns. Those with 1-4 books in the home had usually been given them in conjunction with a training course they had attended during the time when the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates still organised such activities — up to about 10 years ago in most areas visited. Those with 5-9 books in the house were often the more progressive farmers who had specialised in some field, like intensive poultry raising, and had bought some books on the subject.

### 5 Daily Newspapers

Despite the generally rather low readership of newspapers in Italy, 38% of the interviewees or their immediate family read a newspaper more or less regularly, ie about four times a week or more. Since there is no newspaper delivery service, and papers can only be bought in the villages or towns, this was a rather higher percentage than expected. Among those 38% of the sample who read newspapers, 19 (or exactly half) could not remember having seen anything useful on agriculture. The other half said they had seen information on agriculture, but it was usually of a socio-political-economic nature, and certainly not technical. Just two farmers mentioned the market prices published by *24 Ore*, a financial and economic newspaper.

### XIII THE VIDEOTEX EXPERIMENT

Although it is not operational at the time of writing, the EEC is financing an experimental Videotex project for farmers in Ireland and Italy, the two EEC countries with the biggest agricultural problems. A London-based company, Aregon, was contracted to draw up the project plan, working in Italy with SARIN, a group specialised in data transmission systems and belonging to the national telephone organisation STET/SIP.

For Ireland, there was little problem in drawing up a detailed operation plan because the national extension system, universities and research centres were all able, in a short space of time, to state what their contribution to the data-base could be. And in Ireland, there are no great variations in agro-ecological conditions.

Italy, however, was much more complex, basically because of its varied agro-ecological conditions, coupled with the devolution of responsibility to Regional administrations, which have not all organised themselves properly yet. Aregon, having dealt with central authorities in Ireland, found itself frustrated by the Regional structure in Italy, with even the central Ministry of Agriculture unable to speak with final authority on behalf of the Regions. Nor does the Ministry of Agriculture have a clear idea regarding the precise type of information to make available to farmers. And SARIN too, although highly competent in information sciences and data transmission, had not worked in the agricultural sector previously.

However, at the time of writing, it seems that the project will go ahead during late 1984. Videotex services will be set up in 9 different areas, with a total of 300 users, of which half will be farmers; the remainder will be agricultural consultants, functionaries and the like. Five of the areas will be around the 5 extension training centres already mentioned.

The technical problems of installing the screen and control console and connecting the necessary telephone links are minimal. The real problem is going to be the preparation of the data that the farmer can call up on the screen. For *national* matters such as agricultural legislation, global and national agricultural statistics, and market tendencies, etc., the problems should not be too difficult. But farmers will also need local information on weather, market prices, availability of farm inputs, pest and disease

outbreaks, recommended fertilizer use, etc. Logically, each Regional administration will have to set up a group to prepare and update this information continuously, but certainly in Lazio and Umbria, this will need time.



#### XIV FARMERS ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION, EXTENSION AND TRAINING

This is, of course, the hardest part of the study to quantify, and inevitably what follows is impressionistic to a certain extent. These impressions are often based on answers to several questions in the questionnaire. For example, when it is stated that some farmers do not even look for agricultural information or technical assistance, this assertion is based on the responses they gave in respect of TV, radio and written press, plus their responses to questions about what innovations they had introduced on to their farm in recent years, where the ideas came from, what future plans they had for modernisation, whom they would go to for advice in the event of a problem, etc. Some interviewees revealed themselves to be extremely conservative through the way they answered these questions, even without going to the point of saying, as one did: "I don't need advice. I've been a farmer all my life, and I learnt from my father. I do things according to my own ideas. (*Faccio di testa mia*)".

However, when asked whether, for their farming activities, they considered agricultural information and technical assistance as "very necessary", "necessary", or "unnecessary", the sample replied as in the following table:

**Interviewees' Opinion regarding Importance of Agricultural Information and Technical Assistance for Their Activities:**

Very Necessary	Necessary	Unnecessary	Don't Know
41%	54%	3%	2%

Some in the "very necessary" category used words like "essential", "fundamental" etc and one said that "a farmer without technical information is like a driver without a licence".

In the "unnecessary" category, one said that "there are much more serious problems than technical information; experience is the only thing that really counts". Others implied or baldly stated that they knew all they needed to know; but it was precisely one of these who, at the end of the interview and while we were standing by his small piece of vineyard, began to ask

very systematic questions on the subject of weedkillers suitable for use among vines.

In response to the question regarding their present access to agricultural information and technical assistance, the sample responded as follows:

**Interviewees' Replies Concerning Their Present Access to  
Agricultural Information and Technical Assistance**

Abundant Access	Adequate Access	Inadequate Access	Don't know - No Opinion
3%	21%	71%	5%

It is interesting to examine where those 24 farmers with "abundant" or "adequate" access were obtaining most of their advice.

**Main Sources of Advice Cited by 24 Farmers who had "Abundant"  
or "Adequate" Access to Agricultural Information and Technical  
Assistance**

Source Cited	Number of Mentions	As % of all Mentions
Private sector chemical & seed companies (including <i>Consorti Agrari</i> )	9	38%
Staff from public sector (Prov. Agricultural Inspectorates, Regional Agricultural Development Agencies, State Tobacco Monopoly)	6	25%
Friends/relatives with job or training in agriculture	5	21%
Universities and Research Centres	2	8%
Service Cooperatives/Producers' Associations	2	8%
Total:	24	

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate staff are normally so busy with administrative and procedural matters that they do not have time for extension

work. In the few cases where they were doing such work, it was usually on the basis of a special friendship with the farmer. In Southern Lazio, where tobacco is an important crop, the Italian State Tobacco Monopoly was providing good technical assistance. (It seemed curious that tobacco was supported by such a service while food crops were not).

Farmers' attitudes to private-sector representatives were interesting. Many farmers would have nothing to do with them because of their interest in selling products; but in some cases, that initial diffidence had been overcome by one piece of advice put to successful use, and from then on a relationship of confidence and trust, and in many cases friendship too, had developed. These farmers usually spoke very highly of the representative's competence and availability and relied heavily on the advice given.

There was, however, one fruit farmer who bitterly complained that he had been told to use a certain fungicide by a company representative but that it had ruined his peach crop while the trees were in flower. Detailed discussion with him revealed that he had relied only on the verbal instructions of the representative which had been incomplete; for on reading the instructions on the package, which had not been read by the farmer, it was stated that the product could be poorly tolerated by a few varieties of peaches and that therefore a trial spraying on a single tree should be carried out before spraying the whole orchard.

Several of the 24 who said that they had "abundant" or "adequate" access to information and technical assistance qualified the statement by saying that "they are only available if you go and look for them".

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At the opposite end of the scale from those who actively looked for information and tried to keep abreast of developments, *the study revealed that about 27% of the interviewees were almost totally uninterested in innovations and made no effort to keep themselves informed.* They had introduced virtually no innovations on their farms in the last five years and seemed to be in a rut so deep that they could not even see out of it.

What did these farmers have in common? One might easily

assume that most of them were elderly, and in fact 10 were over 55 years old; but there was also five in their 20s and three in their 30s, so age can hardly be considered a determining factor. Education could play a part, for only five of them had more than primary schooling.

However, what really stood out was that 14 of them were part-time farm operators (not part-time farming families who made up 53% of the sample, as mentioned on p. 55). One actually said "Agriculture is only my second job and I don't have the time to update my knowledge or make improvements to the farm". He was the only one who actually voiced his reduced commitment to the farm because of his other work, but a strong impression remained that some part-time farm operators looked upon their holdings as a means of providing somewhere rent-free to live, and as a source of "genuine" food and drink. (Italians use the word "genuine" to describe pure food produced in a traditional way with a minimum of technology, such as pesticides or intensive animal rearing methods. It is a highly-prized food characteristic for many people). If these part-time farm operators made money too, so much the better, but a sound, economic enterprise was not their main concern.

Obviously, we should not make a sweeping deduction that part-time farmers are less interested in innovations; indeed, other studies seem to have proven otherwise. And doubtless there are many other psychological and personality factors that determine whether any farmer is progressive or not. But it does seem that being a part-time farmer operator can play a role. The whole question of what makes farmers progressive or otherwise is an important area for some in-depth study.

It will have been noticed that *only 5% of the sample said that agricultural information and technical assistance was "unnecessary" or had no opinion on the subject, whereas 27% appear in practice to put no store by it.* This contradiction was mentioned on p. 50, and there seems to be no logical explanation for it; it is perhaps a quirk of human behaviour.

It was clear, however, that the least progressive farmers were the ones who complained the most bitterly about the present difficulties facing Italian agriculture, "lack of government help", etc. This leads to the speculation that, in some cases, farmers are so oppressed by their problems that they do not perceive technical innovations as a solution. For example, a 10% higher wheat

yield gained by using a new seed variety, which they would have to buy (quite a number use their own wheat as seed several years in a row) is hardly the manna from heaven that they think they need to resolve their problems.

The manna from heaven would, of course, be Government grants and, no doubt, the history of the last 30 years has helped to make farmers think that only State help will give them a decent income. Beginning back in the 1950s and '60s, the Christian Democrats used a policy of winning support in the countryside by helping farmers through the *Coltivatori Diretti* farmers' organisation. This help took the form of gifts of pasta, small quantities of vegetable seeds, seed potatoes, etc; it also took the form of particularly favourable social benefits for small farmers. This approach is dubbed *assistenzialismo* in Italian and it continues today, especially in respect of social services.

One young, progressive farmer, a local president of the *Coltivatori Diretti*, actually said: "Just imagine what all that money spent on gifts and social services, which people often manage to obtain by falsifying their requests, would have done had it been made available for productive investment. Buying abandoned land, building modern livestock units, and so on".

And so, perhaps, some farmers have had their values of self-reliance warped by *assistenzialismo*; and with the enormous problems facing them today, they do not see continuous — even if small — increases in production and efficiency through adopting innovations as being of much relevance.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The survey did not set out specifically to make a breakdown between farmers' expressed needs in terms of straightforward technical information (ie new agricultural chemicals, cultivation techniques, fertilizer use etc) on the one hand, and managerial and "basis-for-decision-making" information on the other. However, an examination of the completed questionnaires with this breakdown in mind showed that the minority of farmers who specifically mentioned a need for economic advice, market intelligence and similar matters, had a number of factors in common. They were usually better educated than the average of the sample, but more important probably was that they usually had specialised production activities. In other words, they had

become, both in attitude and action, agricultural entrepreneurs. They were usually involved in cash crops such as tobacco, sunflower and sugarbeet, or had built up intensive livestock units on their farms. Most, although not all of them, were in the slightly better farming areas covered by the study. In contrast with these were the majority who still had a subsistence mentality and approach to farming, involving themselves in numerous, varied and small-scale production activities. These farmers were more interested in technical information *per se*. In the main, they were in the more difficult areas. Since they were following traditional farming practices, it seems logical that managerial or decisional information was seldom a perceived need.

This observation is offered in rather general terms, but it may have implications for the most suitable types of extensionists to field according to the levels of farming in a given area.

## XV WHERE THE SAMPLE FARMERS GET THEIR INFORMATION ON TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS

Innovations adopted by farmers ranged from relatively simple things like new seed varieties and livestock breeds through to some quite advanced technology such as use of plant growth regulators. Maize for silage, green sorghum as forage, different animal feeding methods, modern stalls and milking parlour layouts, different fertilizer treatments, new herbicides and pesticides, new types of machinery, sunflowers and fruit varieties were among the successfully adopted innovations cited.

Some farmers had carried out drastic restructuring of their farming systems by, for example; throwing out 10 general-purpose cows and building up a 51-head high-quality Friesian

### Source of Information Cited as Basis for Introduction of Innovations

Source	Number of Mentions
Neighbour or other farmer	51*
Written material	49
Supplier of farm inputs (including <i>Consorti Agrari</i> , tree nurseries)	39
Private sector Sales Reps/Extensionists	25
Television	21
Public sector Technician/Extensionist	20
Technician from Service Cooperative	7
Research Centre/University	6
Friend Agriculturist	5
Technician from Farmers' Organisations or Producers Association	3
Agricultural Fair	3
Slaughter House Manager	1
Sugar Beet Factory	1
Cheese Factory Owner	1
Veterinary Surgeon	1
Training Course	1

\* 7 Farmers had made trips to distant parts of the country to see new technology on farms.

herd on only 10 ha; starting intensive poultry or pigeon rearing enterprises; replanting vineyards using modern criteria; establishing intensive strawberry cultivation under plastic tunnels, and so on. Question 72 in the questionnaire was aimed at finding out where farmers obtained information on such new ideas. Many, of course, named more than one source, and the table page 90 quantifies the number of times each source was mentioned. (It should be noted that the table refers to the *whole sample* as opposed to the data on page 85, which covers information/advice sources only for those stating that their access to such inputs was "abundant" or "adequate").

If we take the private sector sales representatives/extensionists together with the suppliers of farm inputs, those with commercial interests in agriculture become the most frequently mentioned source of information (64 mentions as opposed to the 51 for "other farmers").

In fact, these two sources of information often complement each other. For example, around Amatrice, a livestock area at about 1000 m elevation in north-east Lazio, an important innovation of the last 6 years has been maize growing for silage. Its original introduction was by a sales representative from a very active seed company. One farmer tried it with the sales representative's help, and from there the idea of growing maize for silage had passed from farmer to farmer, to the point where it had been adopted by virtually all of them.

Opinions of the competence of vendors of farm inputs to give technical advice naturally varied according to the particular vendor, but overall, the opinions expressed were fair to good. The representatives of the large companies were highly spoken of, with the exception of one who gave incomplete advice regarding a fungicide for peach trees (see page 86).



## XVI TO WHOM WOULD FARMERS TURN FOR HELP IN RESOLVING A TECHNICAL PROBLEM?

This hypothetical question (No. 79) was put in respect of crop production only, for had it been more general, the farmer might have thought in terms of his animals and would therefore have answered that he would call the vet. The responses laid out below are some indication of the degree of confidence and credibility enjoyed by the various sources of advice and could perhaps, therefore, have a bearing on the future fielding of extensionists under EEC Directive 270/79 (see pp. 29-33).

### Responses to "Who would you ask for advice if an insect pest unknown to you was seriously damaging your crop?"

Source of Advice	Number of Mentions	% of Total Mentions
Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate Staff	44	38%
Vendor of Farm Inputs (including <i>Consorti Agrari</i> )	32	28%
Agriculturally Qualified Friend	9	8%
Representative of Private Farm Chemical Company	8	7%
University or Research Centre	7	6%
Another Farmer	6	5%
Farmers' Organisation	5	4%
Agronomist from Service Cooperative	5	4%
Total:	116	100%

#### Notes:

- 1 3 Farmers were unable to identify a potential source of advice.
- 2 Many farmers mentioned more than one potential source of advice.
- 3 Those specifically mentioning the *Consortio Agrario* often mentioned also the SIAPA (pesticide company) representative, who is available through the *Consortio Agrario* rather than the staff behind the *Consortio* sales counter.

Interviewees were then asked whether they had in fact ever used the source(s) of advice they mentioned and, if so, whether

the results had been good, satisfactory, or poor. The responses were nearly all in the "good" category (56 mentions), or "satisfactory" category (14 mentions). There was only 1 response of "poor" for Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate staff, but since that group also obtained 30 "good" and 5 "satisfactory" ratings, their average performance remains very high.

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates have been able to do little extension work in the last 10 years or so, their prestige and their image as a source of sound advice is still very good. This is, no doubt, in recognition of the fact that these Inspectorates do have some excellent and technically well-trained staff. More is the pity that so much of their time is taken up with clerical work that does not really require their specialised knowledge. However, when planning how best to field the new extensionists under EEC Directive 270/79, this existing prestige of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates should be taken into account. They still have considerable credibility in many farmers' minds, and it might be wise to exploit this.

## XVII FARMERS' OPINIONS ON EXTENSION REQUIREMENTS

The need for competent agricultural specialists who could easily be called upon when required, or who would visit farmers on a regular basis, was frequently raised by farmers. *In fact, 72% of interviewees said, in one way or another, that there should be more availability of agricultural specialists to give on-farm advice.* "Availability" is the important word, because even farmers who had good working relationships with Provincial Agricultural Inspectorate staff often said that these functionaries, even when very competent, were too rushed to be able to discuss a problem properly.

It would seem then that the new extension service to be launched in Italy will be especially welcomed by farmers. But some interviewees qualified their desire for more locally-available specialists by saying that "they *must* be good, practical people". A story was recounted about a young — and presumably just qualified agriculturist — working for a regional administration who was too frightened of a heifer tied in its stall to get close enough to read its ear-tag. This and other similar stories were told with scorn rather than hilarity, and they denote a serious underlying conviction that theoretical knowledge is only of use if it is backed up by practical competence.

The questionnaire did not include a specific question as to who, in the interviewees' opinion, should supply the services of the agricultural technicians they said they needed. 4 interviewees volunteered the idea that they should belong to the *Coldiretti* farmers' organisation; 6 respondents specifically mentioned the State, or more specifically the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates. And, incidentally, some older farmers spoke nostalgically of "the days when the Inspectorates really did give advice". "People used to queue up with their questions", said one interviewee.

Several respondents commented to the effect that extensionists should have no commercial or political interests. One was more overt in criticising the Umbrian decision to attach extensionists to the farmers' organisations — with the evident political implications of such a move. "They'll be used for political purposes", he said, "and what about farmers who are known not to vote for the party that backs the farmers' organisation that has the

extensionists? They'll probably get no help at all!"

During the discussions about extensionists, 17 respondents said that they would be prepared to pay something for the services of a good one. (This particular question was not systematically asked but it sometimes came up when talking about CATAs (Technical Assistance Centres for Agriculture), and how, in some regions of northern Italy, experiments are in progress with CATAs that are jointly financed by farmers and the Region).

The desire to have more readily available technical assistance is understandable when we see how few *unpaid* technicians' visits to farms are for the prime purpose of providing advice. Only 26% of the sample could remember having had such visits in the last few years. However, the total number of farmers who could

#### Visits to Farms by Agricultural Specialists (for all purposes)

Farmers who had received visits with frequency of:				
Twice or More in Last Year	Less than Twice in Last Year	More than Two Years Ago	Never	Can't Remember
59%	12%	9%	17%	3%

An analysis of where these specialists came from, and of the main purpose of their visits, produced the following result:

Source/Type of Agricultural Specialist	Number of Mentions	Main purpose of visit:		
		Admin	Sales	Tech Advice
Public sector official	38	31		7
Sales representative (including <i>Conzorzi Agrari</i> )	32		30	2
Coop/Producers' Association	11		6	5
Agriculturist friend	6			6
Farmers' Organisation	4			4
Research Centre	1			1
Sugarbeet Factory	1			1
	93	31	36	26

remember having had agriculturists on the farm for *all* purposes (sale of products, administrative matters, and extension) was fairly high. (See table page 95.)

Several interviewees made the point that the public sector staff only came to help solve a problem if you called them.

*Despite the relatively low proportion of technicians' visits with the prime purpose of providing technical advice (26 as against a total of 67 for sales and administrative matters), many farmers said they often managed to exploit these sales and administrative visits to get at least some technical advice.*

## XVIII TRAINING COURSES

These do not, strictly speaking, fall under the category of information and extension. However, they are an important element in updating farmers' technical and managerial knowledge. For this reason, and because of the training activities of the main farmers' organisations (see p. 33) a question on training was included in the questionnaire.

*It emerged that 26% of interviewees had participated in a training course within the last five years.* Many other respondents had participated in courses up to about 12 years ago, when the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates were still active in organising farmer training. Most of the 26% volunteered the information that the training courses they had participated in were useful. And some said that the discussion between farmers that took place around the course was also very useful. Some complained about the quality of the training given, especially commenting on the fact that the trainers were "often youngsters with no practical experience".

Nevertheless, despite the critical comments, all of the 26% would participate in more courses. *Indeed, no less than 76% of all interviewees said they would participate in training courses if they were laid on.* There were some provisos, however: the time must be right (ie evenings in winter *after* work in the cowstalls had finished, not as with some previous courses at 18.00 hours); and the instructors must be competent, experienced people.

## **XIX THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL FAIRS AND MARKETS**

**Attendance at Agricultural Fairs and Markets**

Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
40%	38%	20%	2%

The majority of farmers (75% of the sample) going to fairs use the occasion to visit stands and talk to company representatives. 44% said they also talked to other farmers and exchanged information, especially on prices of farm commodities.

*The fairs, of course, provide a good opportunity to look at machinery and 48% of the sample quoted this as a source of information when deciding what make and model to buy. However, advice from neighbours also influenced these decisions for 56% of the sample, and machinery vendors were cited by 54%. Nearly all farmers quoted at least two sources of information used before deciding what machine to buy, but it was evident from the way the questioning went that only about 15% of interviewees did real, in-depth research before making their decision. Incidentally, this question had specifically to exclude tractors, for large numbers of interviewees stayed loyal to one make and would not even consider changing to another.*

## XX IS INFORMATION REALLY POWER?

This part of the report, which has covered the interviewees' responses to the questionnaire, must end on a speculative note. Question 85 was "Do you make a satisfactory living out of agriculture, without resorting to other activities?" Such a question is bound to produce some subjective answers; what is "satisfactory" for example? In fact, the question was not meant to do more than try to get an idea of what respondents *felt* about their economic situation and way of life in agriculture. Several interviewees who complained about low remuneration for very long hours worked often followed up their complaint with a comment about the quality of life being good. "We don't make much money but the life is good", said one. "We live tranquilly", said another.

*However, overall, only 16% answered "yes" to the question about making a satisfactory living; a further 32% answered "marginally".* An examination of the completed questionnaires of the 16% who answered "yes" showed that almost all of them are very information/extension/technology minded. 12 of the 16 subscribed to a specialised agricultural magazine; 2 were agricultural diploma holders; 2 had agricultural graduate sons working with them on the farm, and 15 out of the 16 had regular and close working relationships with visiting agricultural technicians. Only 1 of the 16 appeared to have no special information and extension channels, but he was a fairly large sheep farmer and sheep pay better than other branches of agriculture in Italy at present.

There can, of course, be a number of reasons why some farmers make a decent living and others do not: entrepreneurial spirit is certainly one, and size of holding is another, though the 16 farmers in the study who said they did make a decent living had very varied sizes of farms. And among the respondents answering that they made a "marginally" satisfactory living, there were a number of regular information and advice seekers who commented that if they had more land they could certainly live well. (Since many of these had about 4-5 ha, the comment was probably valid). In contrast, however, among the farmers who stated that they could *not* make a satisfactory living, there were none who had regular contacts with technicians or who made any real effort to keep up-to-date or seek out new ideas. There seems, therefore, to be a correlation between information



and advice seeking on the one hand and the ability to make a success in farming on the other. But what makes some farmers seek information and innovation, while others do not, is beyond the scope of this study, unfortunately.

## XXI OBSERVATIONS AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

### 1 Agricultural Information and the Communication Media in the future

At the national and general public level, there is an undoubted need to provide information *about* agriculture, to arouse greater awareness of the importance of the industry, and to raise its prestige. In this aspect of agricultural information, there is cause for optimism for the future, because RAI's national coverage media has, for a number of compelling reasons, been increasingly swinging towards information of that type.

This tendency was confirmed by a recent special programme of *Linea Verde* on the subject of agricultural information. Although the film looked at both the question of technical information *for* farmers, and the question of information *about* agriculture for the general public, the emphasis was very much on the latter.

However, before this special *Linea Verde* programme was broadcast, there was a showing of the film to some 200 agricultural journalists, farmers' organisation officials, and anyone else interested in the subject. During the debate following the showing, there was an interesting statement by one of the leading figures in the sphere of farmers' organisations. He praised the *Linea Verde* film for its stress on what he termed "cultural information about agriculture" and went on to say that "farmers are doing well and no longer need to be taught anything by TV". It therefore seems that at least one of the main farmers' organisations has decided that TV should be used for the prestige of agriculture, rather than for helping farmers with technical and economic advice. However, this position appears paradoxical when Italy is spending so much of its own and of the EEC's money to re-establish an extension service. Nor does the position tally with the results of this study which revealed that 86% of farmers want more advice through TV. (One farmer actually said: "You know, at least 70% of farmers around here don't know enough about correct fertilizer use on their land, about the best varieties to grow, or about proper crop treatments.")

If, however, we consider the *national* coverage networks of TV and radio, by force of circumstance, their main function must be that of prestige-raising. If they set out concertedly to do only

that, they could probably do it better than at present, although *Linea Verde's* growing following is impressive. It is also possible that the three nationally broadcast RAI radio programmes on agriculture have a following in the cities, despite the fact that hardly any of the farmers in this survey even knew that they existed.

However, a decision by RAI to bring all its media to bear on this objective of prestige-raising would certainly involve different or additional programmes too. *For example, a carefully created radio serial about the daily life and events of a farming family could bridge the information abyss between town and country in an attractive way, arousing interest in the agricultural scene among non-farmers and at the same time serving as a vehicle for some generalized but limited guidance to farmers. Many countries with advanced agriculture have done this very successfully and still do it. RAI certainly has the creative talent to do the same if it wished.*

*Another possibility would be to produce a monthly TV programme in which a really well-known and articulate celebrity from the world of sport or the performing arts visited rural areas and discussed the rural scene, farming progress and other matters (such as ecology) in an intelligent and interesting way with farmers and other rural figures. If produced with care, such a programme would certainly arouse interest in the agricultural scene and, at the same time, the involvement of the celebrity in their affairs, would raise morale among rural people.*

The role of the national-coverage media in providing specific information for Italian farmers is problematic, and it should perhaps not even attempt to do so, except perhaps in connection with national and international economic issues concerned with agriculture, legislation, etc. But even this would be best done by regionally produced and broadcast TV and radio programmes, because such programmes could link the information to local conditions and to regional administrative matters, thereby giving it far more significance to farmers. *In fact when we examine the question of economic and technical information for farm types and specific areas of a country as agriculturally varied as Italy, there is no escaping the need to localize the information. In no other way can the 86% of farmers who want this type of information by TV, and the 70% who would also welcome such information by radio, be satisfied.*

Fortunately, RAI has the technical infrastructure for regional programme production and broadcasting, both in TV and radio. If a favourable policy decision were to be made, its Third

Channel could produce a weekly agricultural TV programme, catering to farmers' needs on a regional basis, and broadcast it at a convenient time. No less than 83% of the sample of this study said they would "certainly" watch such a programme.

With regard to radio the Second Network could be an ideal vehicle for a daily, regional farmers' bulletin. Its best time for broadcast would be in the lunch hour, since 49% of the 70 respondents in favour of such a bulletin expressed a preference for that time of day. If the time were chosen carefully, it would be convenient to both farmers in their homes and to those eating their lunch on one of their many plots far from home, because they could of course have a transistor receiver with them. The precisely best time would seem to be 13.50, replacing a quiz show that occupies that space at the time of writing. It would immediately precede the regional news bulletin broadcast by the Second Network; it would not conflict with the Channel I TV news which nearly all farming families seem to watch; and it would be certain to catch almost all farmers at lunch. (They tend to eat rather late, conditioned by the fact that they take breakfast around 09.00 and that children come home from school after 13.00). An experiment in one or two Regions with proper prior publicity to announce the programme's existence, and proper follow-up and evaluation could lead to replication for other Regions and to some marked improvements in information flow to farmers.

From discussions held with RAI agricultural programme producers, it became evident that they thought that other countries were doing a better job in this field, and that they felt themselves isolated. From this emerged the idea of promoting exchanges of experience in agricultural broadcasting (both TV and radio) between EEC countries. A first step could be an EEC-sponsored seminar on the subject of agricultural information which, with proper preparation, would be designed to pool experience and knowledge and establish future cooperation links and exchanges between agriculture information specialists (and especially farm TV and radio producers) in Europe.

If, however, RAI is really unable to do more for agriculture, for budgetary or any other compelling reasons, then perhaps some of the large private TV and radio syndicates with national coverage and the possibility of broadcasting regionally should look into the matter. It would require a detailed feasibility study, but it is possible that advertising and sponsorship could cover most or all of the cost of programme production. And the private networks would probably gain some

prestige from doing a nationally important public service.

In respect of printed material, it is unfortunate that readership of the excellent, privately-published magazines is relatively low, for in all cases where they were read, they were cited as a very important source of information and guidance. One problem in increasing their circulation is that so many farmers get so much institutional material free that they are loath to pay for a magazine, however good it may be. And it does not seem that there would be much chance of changing the basic propaganda nature of the existing institutional publications.

*A solution would be to try, probably at the Provincial level, to produce a purely technical and economic monthly or fortnightly extension bulletin. (One Provincial counsellor for agriculture said that he had Lit. 500 million — over U.S. \$300,000 — a year, but was not sure of the best way to spend the sum, so finance need not be a major problem. The editor would have to fight off political advances and produce a simple publication in simple language, strictly linked to the agricultural calendar, and distributed free by post, placed in bars and shops in villages, and in agricultural stores. An experiment of this nature, with proper evaluation, would be well worth trying. And as the national extension programme builds up, it will need support from materials of this sort.*

## **2 Extension in the Future**

It is well known that communication media, however creatively and well used they may be, can never displace the extensionist or provide the personal on-farm advice that farmers need, both for planning and management and for technical innovations.

And this study has pointed to a real desire among a large majority of farmers for more availability of well-qualified extensionists (see p. 94). The project to build up an extension service in the coming years under EEC Directive 270/79 is therefore timely; and the extensionists will probably meet with a favourable reception if they are competent. This means, in effect, that they will have to be carefully selected and trained, because extension work should never be thought of as a job that *anybody* can do. While it requires sound theoretical and practical knowledge of agriculture, which can be imbued through training, it also requires personality characteristics that are innate and seldom acquired. A good extensionist must have the gifts of patience and empathy and the self-confidence to be humble.

Nothing upsets farmers more than young extensionists who mask their uncertainties by assuming the arrogance of the state functionary who knows it all. When asked a difficult question, extensionists must have the courage to say "I don't know. I'll find out and let you know soon". And then they must have the sense of responsibility to do so.

Farmers usually realise that no general extensionist can know *all* the answers to *all* aspects of agriculture. But they *do* expect him to know where to get the answer, and to give it to them quickly. He will gain their confidence and affection just as much by being a good channel of information as he will be glibly answering every question the moment they raise it. In fact, woe betide him if it is discovered later that he gave the wrong answer in his desire to prove his knowledge!

Good extensionists should have a real love for the countryside and for rural people, and a deep-felt desire to help them. And they should not look upon extension work as the bottom rung of a career ladder; for in effect they are the front-line troops in the fight for agricultural development. Their employers should realize this too, pay them accordingly, and recognize extension as a vital professional field with its own career structure.

The foregoing are, of course, general remarks about what makes a good extensionist, but there was a chance during this study to discuss them with a group of farmers in Todi (Umbria). They had met to plan the CATA (Centre for Technical Assistance) that they were going to establish, and they echoed these views.

The training planned for Italy's new extensionists appears well conceived (see pp. 31-32); but how the trainee extensionists will be tested for aptitude and selected remains to be seen. And this selection is very important, because a good extensionist is to a large extent born rather than made.

*Since the trainee extensionists are to do practical work with farmers during their training period, it might perhaps be a good idea to seek the farmers' evaluation as to the trainees' competence and capacity as extensionists after they have worked with them for a period of time. Those without the proper aptitude could be diverted into other areas of agricultural development, rather than be allowed to become bad extensionists.*

The thorny problem of how the new extensionists will be fielded in each region, that is to say under whose responsibility,

requires careful thought. This study involved lengthy discussions with farmers, functionaries, and staff of the farmers' organisations. *As a result it appears that, overall, the extensionists would be most effective if attached to the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates, but as a totally separate section dealing only with technical assistance, and not with any administrative matters.* (This latter point is a proviso of EEC Directive 270/79 anyway). As has already been foreseen in the "Master Plan" (*Piano Quadro*), they should work out of local offices in teams of 2-3.

The point of view of the farmers' organisations, mentioned earlier, to the effect that only they have credibility in the eyes of the farmers is not true, at least according to this study which clearly showed the prestige and credibility of the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates (see table on p. 92). That this prestige still remains so high after at least 10 years during which their extension role has been minimal is remarkable; in area after area, farmers commented that there were "some good technicians at the Inspectorate". Not all of them earned this praise, but enough did to make one think that the Inspectorates are the logical base for the new extensionists. *To attach them to the farmers' organisations opens the immediate possibility of preferential treatment for some farmers, and the even greater probability of the extensionists being used for political purposes too. These risks were pointed out by farmers; they are not an invention.*

The risk of attaching the extensionists to the Provincial Agricultural Inspectorates is that they could become bureaucratized, especially since these Inspectorates are now responsible to the Regions, which are themselves already becoming bureaucratized, according to a regional functionary already quoted. *A solution might be to create extension units at the Provincial level, responsible to the Provincial administration, but with the overall control from the Region.*

Another issue which will have to be tackled in due course is whether farmers should pay something towards the cost of having an extensionist available. From experience in many countries, it seems that when the farmer makes a financial contribution, extension works better. In some regions of Italy 20-40 farmers with the same basic type of agriculture can jointly form a CATA. The region pays a proportion (about 60%) of the technician's salary and expenses, and the farmers pay the rest. The system seems to work rather well.

The crux of the issue is surely that when farmers make a financial contribution, even a small one, it gives them the right to expect certain services in return, and to complain if they do not get them. This helps to keep the extensionist on his toes.

Just how much each farmer pays should probably be according to the size of his holding, or to the area he crops each year. In parts of China, farmers pay a fixed amount per area of crop, so if a farmer takes three crops a year off 3,000 sq.m., he pays for 9,000 sq.m. The system is voluntary and the peasant technician who provides the advice is elected and can be dismissed in favour of another if he does not perform well. The system works brilliantly and the State is left financing only the overall control and policy-setting, the original training, and the regular refresher courses for the peasant technicians. Obviously, such a system could not be used in its entirety in Italy, but it does provide some interesting pointers.

Finally with regard to extension, as the new services get under way, *thought should be given to producing the relevant training materials for use in farmers' meetings. The Coldiretti's audio visual production service is now defunct, and some thought will have to be given by the Regions to this issue. The most economical solution would probably be to give the responsibility to the Inter Regional Extension Training Centres who could contract out the production to private groups.* (Institutional audio-visual services tend to become expensive, and even RAI contracts out much of its production of educational materials.)



## XXII AN APPEAL FOR FARMING

The problems mentioned in this report, can all be solved if there is the united will to do so. But only if agriculture — the first and foremost industry without which we cannot live — is promoted to its just place in Italian political thinking and action, and if it is recognized by all that a prosperous agriculture is the *sine qua non* of a balanced economy and an equitable society, will any progress be made.

It will require national policies and action programmes to build up this neglected sector, a sector which despite that neglect has in many cases progressed very well due to the ingenuity, toil and steadfastness of so many farmers. If the political will to revitalize agriculture is forthcoming, and if political power-plays can be set aside to achieve this objective, everything else will fall into place: appropriate legislation, credit, advisory services, marketing structures to ensure that the producer gets a fair price rather than having his margin cut to the bone by a series of middlemen, appropriate TV and radio programmes, and even a useful Videotex service. All these can easily follow once a government and its people decide that agriculture really is vital. The genius of Italians is such that they can pull off miracles when they want to. So it is not a question of whether Italy's agriculture *can* be revitalized: it is a question of whether there is the real *will* to do it. This is the view of a foreigner admittedly, but of one who is passionately involved in Italian agriculture and yearns to see it achieve its proper place in the national economy and mentality.

# Annex 1

## FARMER QUESTIONNAIRE

(Agricultural Information/Extension in Lazio and Umbria)

Date: .....

### GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1 Name of Farmer (Head of Family): ..... Age .....

2 Address: .....

3 Size of Holding in Ha: Total ☐ Arable ☐ Rented Area ☐  
No of Pieces ☐

4 Type of Production: Field Crops ☐ Livestock ☐ Fruit ☐  
Other ☐

5 Numbers of Livestock: Bovines ☐ Pigs ☐ Sheep/Goats ☐  
Rabbits/Poultry ☐ Other (specify) .....

6 Tenure: Tenant ☐ Sharecropper ☐ Owner ☐  
Mixture ☐ (specify) .....

7 Full Time Farmer ☐ Part Time ☐

If part time, works in other industry ☐

If part time, works for other farmers ☐

8 Members of Family Resident on Farm: Spouse ☐ Parents ☐  
Sons ☐ (Ages ..... ) Daughters ☐ (Ages ..... )  
Other ☐ (Specify) .....

9 Educational Levels:

Less than lic. elem.	Lic. Elem.	Lic. Med.	Sec. Sup.	Type of Seconda Superiora	Tertiary/ Type	Remarks
----------------------------	---------------	--------------	--------------	---------------------------------	-------------------	---------

Head of family .....

Spouse .....

Offspring\* .....

Other residents  
(identify) .....

\*Asterisk against those still studying

- 10 Members of Family *not* Resident, but who visit farm frequently and have special access to agricultural information.

Relationship to Head of Family.....

Occupation .....

Where Resident .....

Education Level .....

Frequency of Visits .....

- 11 Is the farmer working as member of production cooperative?

Yes ☐

No ☐

- 12 Is the farmer a member of an association or producers' union?

Yes ☐ (specify) ..... No ☐

### TELEVISION

- 13 Do you have a TV Receiver?

Yes ☐ No

- 14 What is the agricultural TV

Right Answer ☐ Wrong Answer

programme called?

- 15 What day of the week is it broadcast?

Right Answer ☐ Wrong Answer

- 16 What time does it go out?

Right Answer ☐ Wrong Answer

- 17 Do you watch the TV programme? 3-4 times per month? ☐

2-3 times per month? ☐

Less often? ☐ (specify frequency .....

- 18 What is your general opinion of the programme? Interesting & practical

Interesting but not practical

Useless

- 19 Any detailed comments of praise or criticism: (incl. reasons for not watching "Linea Verde" if applicable)

.....  
.....  
.....

- 20 Can you remember, over the last few years, any useful idea(s) you picked up from TV

Yes ☐ How many ☐ No ☐ Don't know

- 21 Did you actually apply, or are you actively considering applying, any of the ideas?

Yes ☐ How many ☐ None ☐

Details: .....  
.....

22 Do you remember any particular agricultural TV programme you saw which especially impressed you?

Yes ☐ Details .....

.....

.....

No ☐

23 Could television be better used for agricultural information?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Comment: .....

.....

24 If yes, what type of programme content would be useful?

.....

.....

.....

25 How often? ..... 26 How long? .....

27 On what day(s) and at what time in summer ..... in winter .....

28 If there were a regional programme, would you watch it?

Certainly ☐ Probably ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

29 Are you able to receive the Rete 3 properly here?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

# **RADIO**

30 Do you have a receiver?

Yes ☐

No ☐

31 What agricultural programmes does RAI radio broadcast?

	TITLE		DAY		TIME	
	known	not known	known	not known	known	not known
Radio 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAI 2 Lazio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32 Which programme is listened to most often?

.....

33 Why? .....

- 34 Do you listen to the programme you like best?
- 3-4 times per month ☐
- 2-3 times per month ☐
- Less often ☐ (specify .....)
- 35 If you listen regularly to more than one programme, approximately how many a month do you hear?
- ☐
- 36 (For Lazio) If this is the first time you had heard about "Lazio Agricoltura", do you think you will listen to it at 14.30 on alternate Tuesdays?
- Yes ☐ Perhaps ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
- Comment (such as reasons for a "NO" answer) .....
- .....
- 37 Do any private FM stations in your area broadcast on agriculture, as far as you know?
- Yes ☐ (specify ..... ) No ☐
- 38 Which members of the family usually listen? .....
- 39 Do you take the radio with you to the cowstall or fields?
- Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐
- 40 What is your general opinion of the programme you listen to most?
- (Name of Programme ..... ) Interesting and practical ☐
- Interesting but not practical ☐
- Useless ☐
- No opinion ☐
- 41 Any detailed comments on this programme and/or on any of the others, including reasons for not following ag. radio if applicable.
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- 42 Can you remember any useful ideas you picked up from radio?
- Yes ☐ How many ☐ No ☐

43 Did you actually apply any of the ideas, or are you still considering doing so?

Yes ☐ How many ☐ None ☐

Examples .....

.....

44 Do you remember any particular agricultural radio programme you heard which especially impressed you?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Details .....

.....

45 Could radio be better used for agricultural information?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Comment .....

.....

46 If yes, what type of programme content would be useful?

.....

.....

.....

.....

47 What programme format would you like?

Technical talks ☐ Agric. News & Weather ☐ Prices ☐

Drama Serial ☐ Farmers' discussions ☐

48 How often? .....

49 On what day(s) and at what time? ..... 50 How long? .....

51 (For Umbria) Would you listen to a regional programme if there was one?

Certainly ☐ Probably ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

## WRITTEN MATERIAL

52 What agricultural magazines do you know (by title)?

4 or more ☐ 3 or less ☐ None ☐

53 Titles: .....

.....

.....

- 54 How many are read regularly in the family? ☐ By whom? .....  
 (If none are read, insert reasons here) .....  
 .....  
 .....
- 55 Is the magazine read most frequently and fully  
 Interesting & practical? ☐ Interesting only? ☐ Useless? ☐
- 56 Can you remember any useful ideas you have picked up from magazines?  
 Yes ☐ How many? ☐ No ☐
- 57 Could agricultural magazines be improved?  
 Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
- .....  
 .....
- 58 If yes, how? More coverage of legal/contractual/social services ☐  
 More coverage of economic/political issues ☐  
 More coverage of technical subjects ☐  
 Other (specify) .....
- 59 Is the style of the magazines you read  
 Too complex ☐ Too simple ☐ Just right ☐
- 60 In the last year or so, have you seen any handout pamphlets produced by, say,  
 chemical companies?  
 Yes ☐ No ☐
- 61 If yes, were they: Clear and useful ☐  
 Not clear or useful ☐  
 Didn't read/Don't know ☐
- 62 Would you like to receive more of such leaflets?  
 Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
- 63 When you first buy a new chemical product, do you find that the instructions on  
 the label are usually:  
 Clear and adequate ☐ Unclear and inadequate ☐ Don't know ☐
- 64 Could labels be improved, if so how? .....  
 .....  
 .....
- 65 Do you have any books on agricultural subjects in the house?  
 Yes ☐ 10 or more ☐ 5-9 ☐ 1-4 ☐ None ☐

66 Does anyone in the family read a daily newspaper?

Yes ☐ No ☐

67 Can you remember seeing anything useful on agriculture?

Yes ☐ No ☐

#### GENERAL MATTERS OF INFORMATION FLOW/EXTENSION

68 For your farming activities, do you rate agricultural information and technical assistance as:

Very necessary ☐ Necessary ☐ Unnecessary ☐  
Don't know ☐

69 Do you have - Abundant access to ag. information and technical assistance? ☐

Adequate access to ag. information and technical assistance? ☐

Inadequate access to ag. information and technical assistance? ☐

Don't Know ☐

Comments: .....

.....

.....

70 Can you think of anything new you have successfully introduced into your farming system in the last five years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

71 If yes, what was it? .....

.....

72 Where did the idea(s) come from? Neighbour/Other Farmer ☐

Extensionist ☐

Agricultural Supplier ☐

Research Centre ☐

Written Material ☐

Radio ☐ TV ☐

Other (specify) .....

73 If a neighbour/other farmer, who was he?

Name/Address .....

.....

74 Where did he get the idea? .....

.....



- 75 Have you implemented any major restructuring of your production activities in the last few years? (ie built commercial piggery/poultry unit; switched from olives to fruit, renewed olive prod. system; dropped viticulture for other crops, etc)

Yes ☐ Details .....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
No ☐

- 76 Are you considering any such major restructuring?

Yes ☐ Details, comments impediments etc .....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
No ☐ Why not? Have not really thought about it ☐  
No finance available ☐ Would not be economical ☐  
Don't know how to get help/advice ☐  
Owner of land won't cooperate ☐

Other comments .....

- 77 If an agricultural supplier regularly gives you advice and sells you a product, do you get satisfactory results?

Always ☐ Usually ☐ Seldom ☐

- 78 Do you go mainly to the "Consorzio"?

Yes ☐ Other Supplier ☐

- 79 Whom would you ask for advice if an insect pest you did not recognise was seriously damaging your crop?

.....  
.....

- 80 In the past, if you've used this source of advice, has it given results that were

Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Poor ☐

- 81 What improvements would you like to see in agricultural information and extension services?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

82 Are there times when you have had trouble marketing produce/livestock?

Yes ☐ No ☐

83 If yes, how do you find out how to market your excess?

Friends/Neighbours ☐

Town source ☐

Other (specify) .....

84 Are there other ways you could find out where to market your produce/livestock at higher prices?

.....

85 Do you make a satisfactory living out of agriculture, without resorting to other activities?

Yes ☐

Marginally ☐

No, but it is the only activity engaged in ☐

No, resort to other activities to supplement ☐

No, income supplemented from other source (other members of family, pension, etc) ☐

Comment .....

.....

86 What will happen to this holding in future?

Offspring will take over and run it ☐

Offspring will inherit but probably not farm ☐

Intend to sell ☐

Don't know ☐

Not applicable ☐

Additional comments: .....

.....

.....

87 What was the last time you had an *unpaid* agricultural technician on the farm? (ie not the veterinarian)

Twice or more in the last year ☐

Less than twice in last year ☐ (specify .....

Never ☐

Can't remember ☐

88 From what organisation/group was he?

.....

89 Was the main purpose of his visit to provide technical assistance? ☐  
to carry out administrative/bureaucratic procedures? ☐

90 If the main purpose of the visit was administrative, did he also provide some technical assistance?

Yes ☐ No ☐

91 Where do you hear about agricultural subsidies, grants etc?

92 Do you go to agricultural fairs?

Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Hardly ever ☐

93 If yes, do you obtain useful information at fairs from:

Stands and Commercial Reps. ☐

Other farmers ☐

94 The last time you bought a new piece of machinery, how did you choose the make and type most suitable for your farm?

Advised by neighbour ☐

Advised by machinery salesman ☐

Research at a fair ☐

Other .....

95 Do you know about any farmer training courses that have been organised in this area?

Yes ☐ No ☐

96 Have you participated in such courses in the last five years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

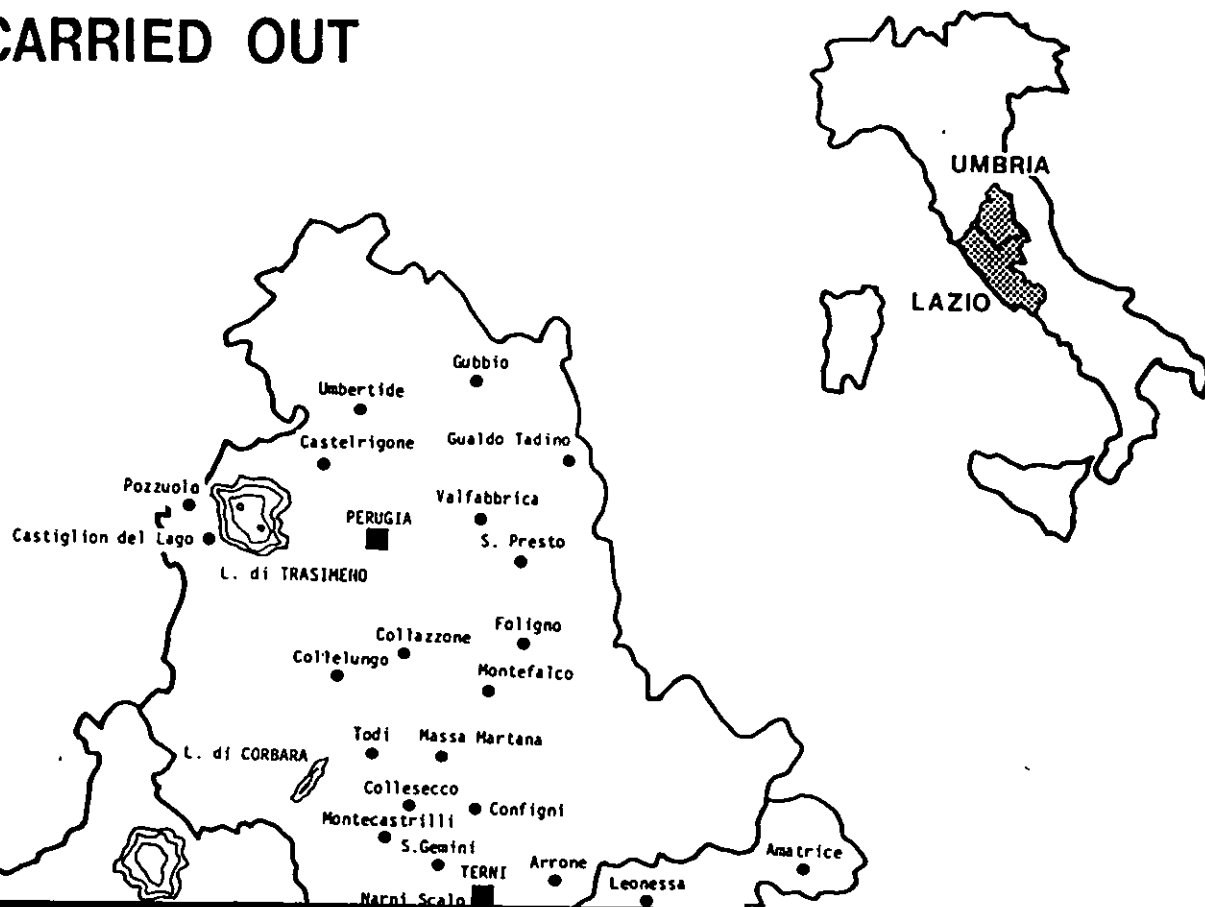
97 Are you interested in attending such courses?

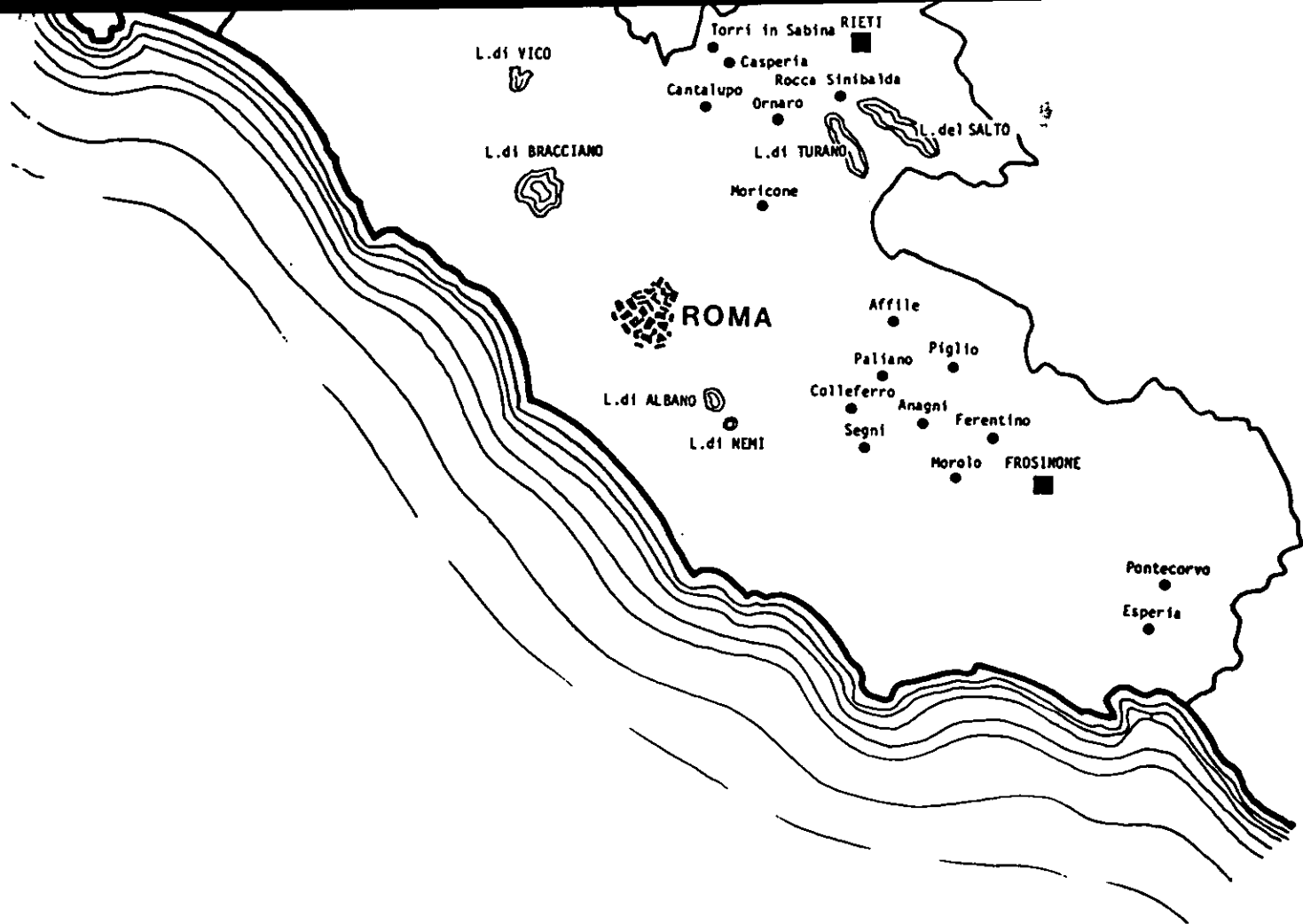
Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

98 Any general but pertinent comments raised during the interview (such as traditional values, cultivation/farm practices by moon phases etc):

Annex 2

# LOCALITIES OF LAZIO AND UMBRIA WHERE INTERVIEWS WERE CARRIED OUT





## **Annex 3**

### **SOME PRACTICAL DETAILS CONCERNING THE FARMERS SURVEY**

It may be of interest, particularly to evaluation and social research specialists, to have some extra information regarding how, in practice, the farmer survey was carried out.

As mentioned in Section VIII, pp. 51-52, four different channels were used to obtain an introduction to farmers. In about 70 cases the go-between merely made a telephone call to his farmer friend to say that he would be contacted by me for an appointment and that the study was important, and would he therefore help with it. In some 15 cases, the go-between made a quick visit to the farmers with me to make a personal introduction and to allow an appointment to be made for later. In the remaining 15 cases, the go-between actually travelled from interview to interview and was present during each — properly briefed not to lead the interviewee, of course.

It was clear from the start that the questionnaire, like any paperwork, might be daunting to farmers, and in many cases it seemed to be so: answering questions informally is one thing, but having your answers recorded is another. So a point was made of never turning up on a farm with questionnaire and pen actually in hand. After a few minutes of introductory chat, and when it seemed that the farmers had warmed up sufficiently, the questionnaire was mentioned for the first time, and one was fetched from my vehicle. (The vehicle was an Italian motorcycle in the case of 85 interviewees. Many Italians have a deep love of motorcycles and to arrive on one proved an excellent ice-breaker). It was stressed that the questionnaire was needed for statistical analysis only, that the farmer's name would never be quoted, and that only I would ever see it. The farmers were also shown that the questionnaire was in English, and therefore of little use to anyone likely to impinge on their affairs. (It had never been translated into Italian precisely to help overcome any possible unease among interviewees when they saw it).

Talking about the farmer's crops, pigs or whatever, or even one one occasion helping to calve a heifer, was an excellent way of creating a rapport before the interview. When those numerous and often intangible factors that go to create a quick rapport

worked favourably, the interview took place in the farm kitchen, and these were the easiest and most productive. An invitation into the formal and seldom-used parlour meant that further work was needed to relax the interviewee more. The hardest interviews, which fortunately were only 8, were the ones that took place leaning on the fender of a just-stopped tractor, when it was clear that the farmer was anxious to finish the job in hand. These interviews, probably too because of my own anxiety on the farmer's behalf, seldom got beyond the formal question-and-answer type sessions, whereas the more relaxed and discursive interviews were more revealing.

The four interviews carried out in the offices of the farmers' organizations, and without actually seeing the farm, left a feeling of incomplete information, even if the actual compilation of the questionnaire had gone well.

Administering the questionnaire took a minimum of 40 minutes and a maximum of 2 hours. The time depended on whether the farm operator only was present or whether others were present too, thus leading to longer discussions. Moreover, farmers everywhere have a reputation for complaining, and listening also helped to create the necessary rapport; I lent a patient and sympathetic ear. But this added to the time necessary for the interview. Although it was certainly not an objective of the study, it was found that there was a relationship between the progressiveness of a farmer and the time the interview took. The more progressive and efficient farmers, though helpful and courteous, seldom involved me in long discussions, meals, and numerous glasses of wine as did the more traditional.

Including the 5 for pretesting, a total of 106 interviews were carried out. (The discard resulted from a casual contact made in desperation after two appointments in one day had fallen through. The interviewee had 6 ha but 4 were rented out). Some 14 contacts were made that did not lead to interviews. Mainly, the decision not to go ahead was because the farmer was not representative, while in other cases they were too busy. In only three cases did farmers actually refuse to be interviewed at the last minute, apparently because of uneasiness at the prospect.

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