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ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS

Since the creation of the Department of Agriculture in 1862, there has always been some unit charged with the securing and disseminating of information on foreign production and consumption (foreign competition and demand).

Foreign representation of the Department began in 1882, when an agent was placed in London to report on the competition offered United States agricultural exports by foreign producers of similar products. In the early 1920's foreign representation was placed on a permanent, though restricted, basis. A more effective service, however, was made possible by the passage on June 5, 1930 of Public, No. 304, Seventy-First Congress, an act creating the Foreign Agricultural Service.

The act provided for the establishment of a separate Foreign Service for agriculture, and provided specifically for the assignment of agricultural attaches to American embassies and legations abroad. At the same time the Division of Foreign Agricultural Service was established in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The field staff and the assistant agricultural attaches and their assistants, comprised, in the beginning, the officers and employees formerly stationed abroad by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The nucleus of the Washington staff of the Foreign Agricultural Service consisted of the Foreign Section of the Division of Statistical and Historical Research.

The work of the Division of Foreign Agricultural Service was confined to securing and analyzing information in the field of foreign competition and demand. During the first few years of its existence, the Division had no significant responsibilities in the field of coordination of foreign work within the Department or in respect to action programs dealing with foreign trade.

This situation changed radically, however, with the passage of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934. This act specifically provided that in formulating trade agreements the President shall seek information from the Department of Agriculture. From the beginning of the trade-agreements program the primary responsibility for cooperation on the part of the Department of Agriculture has devolved upon the Foreign Agricultural Service Division and its successor organizations.

In December 1938, as a part of a general reorganization of the Department of Agriculture, the Foreign Agricultural Service Division of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics was made a separate unit, known as the Foreign Agricultural Service in the Office of the Secretary. At that time specific recognition was given to the added responsibilities of the organization in the field of foreign trade programs and policies.



On July 1, 1939, as a result of Reorganization Plan No. II, the permanent foreign office staffs of the Foreign Agricultural Service were transferred to the Department of State. The Washington staff of the Foreign Agricultural Service, however, was retained in the Department of Agriculture, as were the commodity specialists who are subject to assignment to particular foreign countries to make specific investigations. Concurrently with the transfer of the foreign offices, the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations was established in the Department of Agriculture. The Washington staff of the former Foreign Agricultural Service and the commodity specialists referred to above constituted the staff of this Office.

The functions and responsibilities of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations differed from those of the preceding Foreign Agricultural Service primarily in broadening the responsibilities for coordinating all lines of work relating to foreign trade within the Department of Agriculture and also included the responsibility for liaison with the consolidated Foreign Service of the United States. In the establishment of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations the Secretary of Agriculture prescribed the following specific functions:

1. To collect information on foreign agricultural production, foreign markets, foreign trade, and related matters through the Foreign Service of the United States, the International Institute of Agriculture, and other appropriate sources and to disseminate such information to all branches of the Department interested and to the public.
2. To maintain liaison with the Department of State with a view to assuring prompt and adequate reports from the Foreign Service of the United States on foreign developments of interest to the various branches of the Department of Agriculture, and to American agriculture generally.
3. To conduct specialized research and investigational work on foreign demand for American agricultural products, including such related subjects as the trends and potentialities of competitive foreign agricultural production, the nature and tendencies of foreign government policies affecting agricultural production and consumption, and general economic and financial conditions in foreign countries as they affect the demand for agricultural products.
4. To direct and coordinate the participation on the part of the Department of Agriculture in the reciprocal-trade agreements program.
5. To plan, direct, and coordinate the participation by the Department of Agriculture in the general program of cooperation between the Government of the United States and the governments of the other American republics under the terms of acts of Congress authorizing such cooperation.

In addition, the Director of Foreign Agricultural Relations, acting in a staff relationship to the Secretary, was charged with coordinating the relations of the Department of Agriculture (1) with the Department of State and other departments and agencies of the Government in questions affecting foreign trade and allied problems and policies, and (2) with foreign governments and private agencies either through the Department



of State or direct.

This staff relationship requires that the Office provide personnel for representing the Department on numerous interdepartmental committees, the more important of which are the Executive Committee on Commercial Policy, the Trade Agreements Committee, the Board of Trustees of the Export-Import Bank, and various interdepartmental committees concerned with cooperation with the other American republics. The Director of the Office also serves as the Department of Agriculture member on the Foreign Service Personnel Board of the Department of State whenever matters of concern to the Department of Agriculture are under consideration.

The Office also maintains a full-time liaison officer in the Department of State for the purpose of coordinating the reporting work of the Foreign Service in respect to agricultural developments in foreign countries. During the past year this officer has assisted in the reorganization of the reporting work for the Foreign Service, and provision has been made for substantial expansion in the agricultural reporting of that service. Under the revised arrangements the Department of Agriculture will receive some 3,700 reports annually on agricultural matters. These reports will normally arrive according to a definite time schedule, and copies will be distributed by the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations to all interested bureaus and agencies of the Department.

Concurrently with the reorganization, the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations was charged with the review of all foreign correspondence of the Department of Agriculture, as described in paragraphs 1621 and 1622 of the Department Rules and Regulations.

The organization and work of the major Divisions of the Office are described in the following pages.

Source: Report of the Director of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, 1939/1940 p. 7-9.

