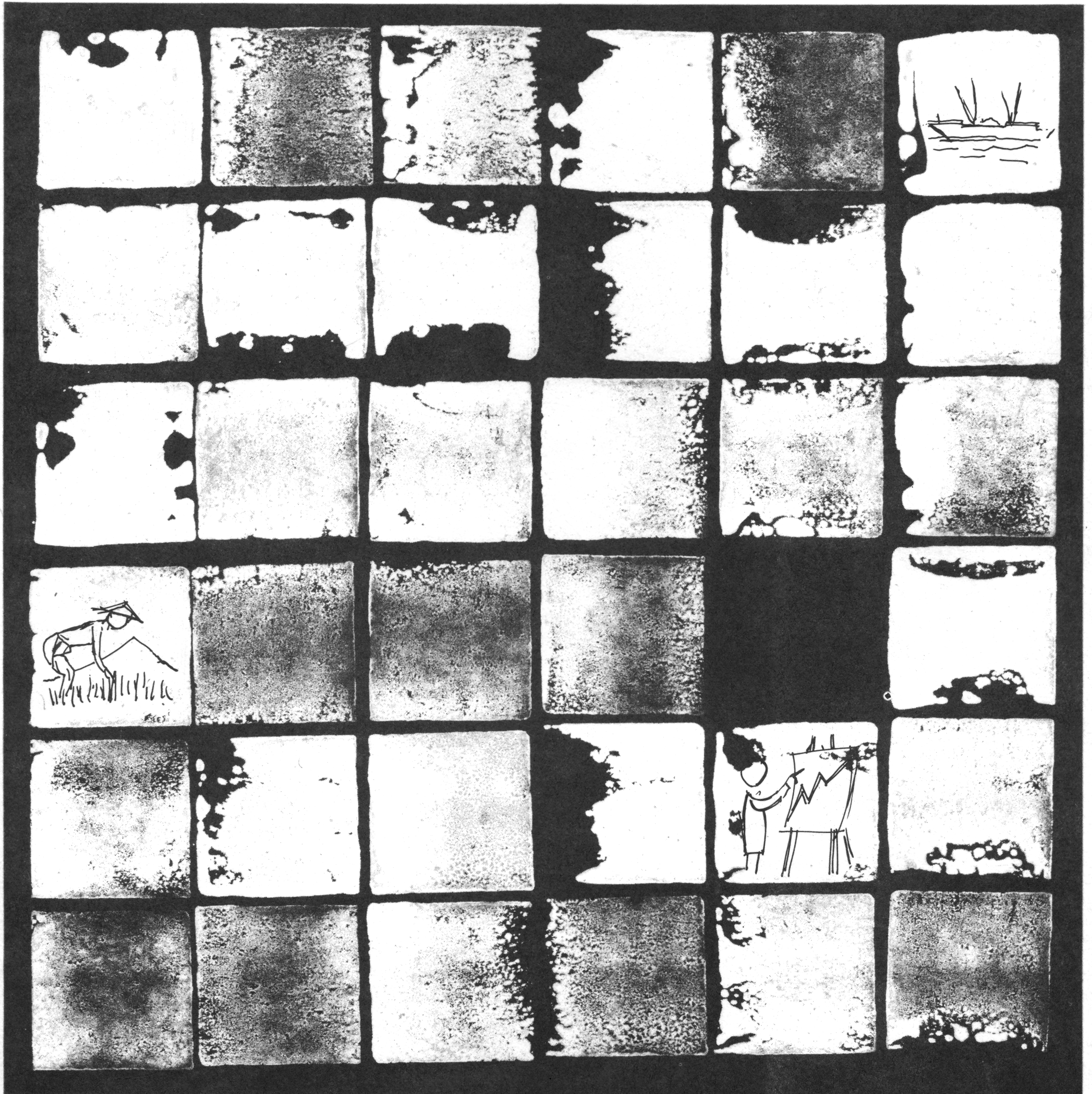


The Agricultural Attaché

HIS HISTORY & HIS WORK



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THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE--HIS HISTORY AND HIS WORK

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural attaché is the eyes and ears of American agriculture abroad. He is also its overseas marketing spokesman.

His basic mission is twofold: to expand foreign markets for U.S. farm products and to assist agriculture and agricultural trade representatives by providing them with information about foreign marketing opportunities and competition.

But he also works for the American consumer. Attaché appraisals of the situation and outlook for crops not grown here—coffee, cocoa, and pepper, for example—help the U.S. trade maintain steady supplies at the best prices possible.

The attaché also serves as a full-fledged member of the embassy team, particularly on questions and problems involving agriculture. Once little more than a collector of foreign plants and a compiler of crop statistics, the agricultural attaché today is diplomat, salesman, reporter, negotiator, and builder of good will for American farm products.

EARLY FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL REPORTING

The forerunners of the present-day agricultural attaché were mainly agricultural scientists and explorers. They were principally concerned with obtaining new plant and livestock species, which they hoped would thrive in America.

The Patent Office, which handled agricultural matters in the early years, in its report of 1842 discussed for the first time foreign agricultural markets and duties on such commodities as cotton and fats and oils. Attention was given to the general U.S. agricultural export situation, agricultural imports, British Imperial preference, Canadian competition, and commercial policy.

As early as 1845 the Patent Office was receiving reports from a traveler in Europe who voluntarily collected and sent back to Washington agricultural information from several countries. The beginnings of a regular foreign agricultural reporting service had been made.

In 1862 a bill signed by President Lincoln officially established the Department of Agriculture. The first annual report of the Commissioner of Agriculture the following year announced that the new Statistics Division would collect data on the commerce, both foreign and domestic, in leading agricultural products.

After the Civil War, the growing need for more knowledge of foreign agricultural developments led to the establishment of a system of agricultural exchanges with many governments of Europe, Asia, and South America. As time went on, government and trade interests wanted information prepared by American investigators. This brought about the establishment in 1882 of an agency in the office of the Consul General in London to collect statistics showing prospective demand in Europe for American products.

The diversity of languages, monetary units, weights and measures, and investigative methods complicated the use of statistical documents received from foreign countries. This was partly responsible for the organization in 1894 of the Section of Foreign Markets, which also was given the

job of disseminating information that would help expand foreign agricultural markets. The section published a regular series of bulletins and circulars and also answered special inquiries.

THE GROWING NEED FOR AGRICULTURAL REPRESENTATION ABROAD

As the 20th century approached, the Department of Agriculture was turning its attention to the need for men trained in agriculture to serve abroad. The land-grant colleges were educating men along these lines, and a growing number were available who could report competently on market possibilities and crop production abroad.

By 1905, an employee of the Department's Bureau of Statistics was stationed in London, making regular trips to the Continent to report on crop yields and conditions. His reports were sent to Washington each month for publication in the *Crop Reporter*, a forerunner of today's weekly publication, *Foreign Agriculture*.

However, the Department's work of collecting foreign agricultural information was largely taken over early in the century by the International Institute of Agriculture, established in 1905 through the efforts of the King of Italy and comprising 46 member countries. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's foreign reporting declined markedly after this, and in 1908 the divisions working on foreign agriculture were practically eliminated.

After World War I, the Department of Agriculture reestablished a world market-reporting service to supplement the crop-reporting activities of the International Institute of Agriculture. This step was prompted by increasing criticism of the Institute's reports, which were based largely on data provided by member governments.

POSTWAR BOOM IN FOREIGN MARKET ACTIVITIES

The return to peace in 1918 marked the beginning of unusual activities among U.S. producers and exporters in preparation for the resumption of foreign trade. There was heightened interest in news of foreign market conditions. Studies were made regarding the foreign marketing of grain, flour, rice, seeds, cotton, vegetable oils and oil cake, dairy products, meats, honey, nuts, leaf tobacco, and fresh, dried, and canned fruits and vegetables.

The Department resumed its practice of reviewing foreign official and private publications, translating and abstracting material from them to answer inquiries. An increasing number of circulars, leaflets, and magazine articles was published.

The beginning of a formal agricultural attaché service dates from May 1919, when an agricultural trade commissioner was stationed in London to study the markets for American agricultural products in the British Isles and western Europe and to report regularly by letter and cable. This man, Edward Foley, is considered to have been America's first agricultural attaché in the modern sense, although he did not have the title.

As more and more reports and publications came in and the Department's responsibilities in the field of foreign agriculture increased, a demand arose for experts in Washington to analyze and publicize the information concerning world agricultural supply and demand, production, carryover, and trends of consumption and trade. To carry out this work, a Foreign Markets Investigation Division had been set up in the Bureau of Markets in 1917. In 1922, this became the Foreign Section of the Division of Statistical and Historical Research in the new Bureau of Markets and Crop Estimates (later the Bureau of Agricultural Economics).

ORIGIN OF TODAY'S FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

The Department of Agriculture's operations were hampered by the fact that its representatives were not diplomatically accredited by the Department of State in the same manner as officers of an embassy or legation. Concerned agricultural organizations and Congressional leaders began to urge

separate status for the agricultural representatives. This concern took the form of the Foreign Crop Marketing and Report Bill, introduced in 1924. Its purpose was "...to promote American agriculture by making more extensively available and by expanding the service now rendered by the Department of Agriculture in gathering and disseminating information regarding agricultural production, competition, and demand in foreign countries in promoting the sale of farm products abroad and in other ways."

Opposition to the bill was largely centered in a group which believed that the commercial attachés and employees of the Department of Commerce assigned to foreign posts could adequately serve the interest of the American farmer. However, the House was ultimately convinced of the necessity of the attaché posts mentioned in the pending legislation—London, Berlin, Paris, Marseilles, Copenhagen, Bucharest, Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Johannesburg or Pretoria, and Shanghai. After passing the House and Senate, the bill was approved by President Hoover on June 5, 1930.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1930

In 1930 U.S. agricultural commissioners were resident in London, Berlin, Marseilles, Shanghai, Belgrade, Buenos Aires, Pretoria, and Sydney.

Principal developments in the work of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in the 1930's included: (1) more emphasis on commodity (rather than area) reporting in the European offices; (2) a marked increase in participation by FAS officers at international conferences; and (3) a considerable extension in the activities of the agricultural attachés as advisers to the heads of the embassies or legations to which they were accredited. Foreign projects of a typical year (1936) included appraisals of French wheat policy, of the agricultural production capacity of Germany, of the expansion of cotton production in Argentina, of recent developments in Soviet agriculture, of the present and potential agricultural resources of Manchuria, and of agricultural production in the Philippines.

In a general reorganization of the Department of Agriculture in late 1938, the Foreign Agricultural Service Division was transferred from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to the Office of the Secretary. In mid-1939, as a result of the President's Reorganization Plan No. 2, the Foreign Agricultural Service became the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations (OFAR) and the nine agricultural officers stationed abroad were transferred to the Foreign Service of the Department of State.

OFAR continued operations with its Washington staff of commodity and area analysts and maintained close liaison with Foreign Service agricultural officers. Meanwhile OFAR attempted to maintain through the Department of State an agricultural reporting schedule.

By 1944, agricultural attachés were stationed at London, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Ottawa, Havana, Mexico City, and Moscow, and agricultural reporters were stationed at Santiago, Bogota, Managua, Lima, Caracas, and Brussels. A dramatic expansion of attaché operations began with the end of World War II, when agricultural attachés, officers, or advisers were appointed to 38 new posts, mostly in Latin America and Europe.

The number of posts varied in the unsettled postwar years, but since 1953 many attaché posts have been added, putting the total number of posts for 1970 at 61. Most recent additions have been the posts in Australia, Congo (Kinshasa), Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Portugal, Switzerland, El Salvador, and China (Taiwan).

Attachés have also been appointed in recent years to Brussels, Belgium, for coverage of European Common Market activities and to Geneva, Switzerland, European headquarters of the United Nations and many other international organizations.

In 1953 the Foreign Agricultural Service was reconstituted in the Department of Agriculture, retaining from OFAR the commodity and area specialists.

The agricultural attachés were returned to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture in 1954 by the passage of Public Law 690.

As indicated by House Report 966 of the 82d Congress (Aug. 23, 1951) and the 1954 Report of Agricultural Trade Missions, the feeling had long been widespread that the agricultural attaché service could function with best results for the American farmer and farm industry as an organic part of the Department of Agriculture. It was thought that the Secretary of Agriculture should select, train, and assign the attachés and should plan and supervise their reporting activities. And there were those who believed that some separation from the diplomatic corps would be more in keeping with the down-to-earth nature of the work of the agricultural attaché.

With these structural changes, an assistant administrator for attachés was added to the FAS staff.

In the years immediately after World War II, foreign emphasis was on rebuilding and rehabilitating a war-torn world. In agriculture, the problem was one of allocating worldwide short supplies. Market development did not receive major attention until domestic farm surpluses and foreign buying power had built up.

The impact of agricultural surpluses brought about a redirection of emphasis in U.S. foreign agricultural policies in the early 1950's. Through 1953 and early 1954, House and Senate committees considered various ways to dispose of the growing farm surpluses without disrupting world markets. The result was Public Law 480 (PL 480), which authorized the sale of U.S. farm surpluses to friendly foreign countries for their currencies and also provided for barter and donation programs. The foreign currencies acquired through PL 480 sales were utilized, among other purposes, to carry out activities designed to develop and expand markets abroad. As the 1950's progressed, this market development work became an increasingly important aspect of the activities of the agricultural attaché.

The early 1960's brought two developments involving FAS and its work. Responsibility for foreign trade statistics, monetary matters, and agricultural analyses by regions was transferred out of FAS to two new agencies, the Economic Research Service and the Statistical Reporting Service. This action left FAS free to expand its scope of market promotion. At about the same time, new opportunities for market expansion were opened up through legislation that provided for long-term dollar credit sales of American farm commodities under PL 480.

The latter part of 1969 saw the transfer of PL 480 operations to a newly created agency, the Export Marketing Service, with the agricultural attaché continuing his field responsibility in this activity.

FUNCTIONS OF THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHÉ

The principal functions of the U.S. agricultural attaché and his staff are to report on agricultural production, trade policy, and market development in his area of assignment and to work to expand the market for U.S. agricultural products in his area. The fact that the United States is the world's largest exporter and second largest importer of agricultural products makes these functions of utmost importance.

The United States today maintains a complete global agricultural reporting network, and the agricultural attaché is at the heart of this fact-finding and analysis system. His production and trade reports are constantly supplemented by special reports on changed prospects of crop production, new tariff decisions, dangerous insect infestations, outbreaks of epidemics in livestock, and major policy changes. These reporting activities give the United States complete and current knowledge of world agriculture for conducting private and government trade programs.

In addition to his reporting and analysis, the agricultural attaché: participates in negotiations with foreign governments; assists official visitors and traders; tries to break down trade barriers; advises the ambassador on agricultural matters; collaborates with staff members from Washington to carry out the international trade fairs program; meets regularly with businessmen, importers, exporters, processing organizations, shipping lines, and government officials; and works directly with individuals and groups in a market development effort that involves more than 40 agricultural and trade groups working in association with FAS. These trade cooperators represent nearly all U.S. commodities that move to foreign markets and are active in over 50 countries.

The diverse nature of his work brings the attaché into contact with all sections of a U.S. mission, particularly the economic and political sections. As a member of the embassy staff, he may be called on to explain many different problems and developments that affect the United States in dealing with foreign countries.

An agricultural attaché is expected to be familiar with the conditions of rural life and well grounded in the basic problems of agricultural production and marketing. He is usually a land-grant college graduate with one or more degrees in the agricultural field and generally with a major in economics. He has had training in price analysis, land management, and market structures and statistics as well as technical training. In addition, he has had professional experience in domestic agricultural problems before receiving his foreign assignment.

To be eligible for appointment to an agricultural attaché staff, the applicant must qualify under Civil Service standards as an agricultural economist, an agricultural marketing specialist, or a general agriculturalist. He must be willing to accept assignment anywhere in the world, depending on the needs of the service. The ability to work harmoniously with FAS and embassy associates and with trade and government contacts in foreign countries is another very important qualification.

The FAS Professional Development Program has been established to bring into the organization qualified people for training and eventual overseas assignment. This program provides for broad agency orientation and intensive training in FAS program areas. Initial appointments are to Washington positions.

While foreign language knowledge is not an absolute recruiting requirement, its value to the job is recognized, and language familiarity is given consideration. Knowledge of the language is a prerequisite for service in many posts. A language training program has been set up, and intensive training prior to actual assignment is customary.

Although the attaché is a member of the American ambassador's or consul general's staff in his country of assignment, he is an employee of the Department of Agriculture and as such is responsible to the Secretary of Agriculture for his program activities.

During the entire course of American history, U.S. agricultural representatives have carried out an important mission. While the agricultural attaché of today is primarily interested in reporting on agricultural conditions and developing agricultural markets, his responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities in behalf of U.S. farmers and U.S. foreign relations. As he continues the work of his predecessors on a broadened scale and with a high degree of technical competence, he remains constantly alert for new agricultural production, processing, and marketing techniques of interest to U.S. agriculture.