

## COORDINATION

The coordinator has been the central figure in the operation of the Puebla Project. His function has been that of coordinating activities of the farmers, agricultural institutions, and Project staff so as to enable small farmers to attain higher levels of production and net income. In practice, his responsibilities have included three distinct (but closely related) activities: (a) administration of the program, (b) direction of the program, and (c) acquisition and maintenance of the full support of the agricultural institutions.

The Project coordinator made most of the decisions affecting the administration of the Project. He was responsible for locating candidates for staff positions, evaluating their qualifications, and deciding whom should be hired. He recommended salary levels and perquisites for Project staff, the purchase of vehicles and equipment, budget changes, etc. He approved the local expenditure of funds for day laborers, supplies, gasoline, vehicle maintenance, etc.

The coordinator directed the activities of the Project staff in the: (a) preparation of operational plans, (b) execution of these plans, and (c) the summarizing and reporting of accomplishments. Each program presented its plans for the year at meetings of staff and advisors that were generally held in January. The plans were discussed, modified and finally approved. Weekly meetings were held throughout the year to discuss progress and problems of the staff. Adjustments in operational plans, as a result of new information, were made at these meetings. Important matters affecting the operation of the Project were discussed fully at the weekly meetings before a decision was made by the coordinator. The coordinator maintained contact with the field work by accompanying the members of the staff, as time permitted, in their daily activities. At the end of the year, the coordinator worked with the staff members in analyzing, evaluating, and reporting the results of their programs.

A large part of the coordinator's time was dedicated to work with the agricultural institutions. Initially he was involved in informing the institutions of the philosophy, objectives, and plans of the Project, and becoming familiar with their operating procedures. Then, as information flowed in from the field work, much of this data had to be communicated to the institutions. For 2 or 3 months after harvest, the coordinator was in almost constant contact with representatives of the institutions, explaining the plan of operations for the following season and working to obtain their approval and support. When a problem arose due to the operating procedures of an institution, information about the problem was prepared by the Project staff and communicated by the coordinator to the responsible people. Generally this was followed by a series of meetings and the gathering of additional data until a decision could be made.

## PROJECT PERSONNEL

From the beginning it was recognized that the quality of the Project staff would be the most important factor in assuring the success of the undertaking. Screening procedures were followed which, hopefully, would assure the selection of the best candidates available.

The Project sought to provide working conditions and opportunities that would enable its staff to work harmoniously and effectively and to advance professionally through (a) salaries and perquisites that were competitive with other employment opportunities; (b) opportune availability of the necessities for getting the job done (adequate operating expenses for vehicles, prompt purchase of equipment and supplies, revolving funds for the purchase of small items, prompt repair of vehicles and equipment, etc.); (c) encouragement to use initiative and be innovative (the staff could not be provided with an operations manual that would cover every exigency that might arise; thus, the team members were encouraged to work out their own solutions when confronted with new problems and to seek advice from other staff and advisors as soon thereafter as possible); and (d) opportunities for advancement (outstanding team members were given the opportunity to advance both in salary and in professional position; also, staff members interested in continuing their academic preparation were assisted in doing so, after 2 to 3 years with the Project).

Because of the Project policy encouraging its staff members to continue their academic training, plus the availability of other job opportunities, especially in regional production programs in other parts of Mexico, there were frequent changes in Project personnel. Figure 2.1 shows diagrammatically the periods of employment of professional staff during the period 1967-1973. The shortest period of service was one cropping season; the longest service was 6 years and 4 months.

When possible, new staff members were hired 1 to 3 months before the resignation of the person they would replace. Thus, it was possible for the departing staff member to relay to the replacement much of the knowledge that had been gained of the area, farmers, and institutions. Also, many departing staff members entered the Graduate College at Chapingo and continued to be available for advice and information.

The lines in Figure 2.1 show that there were 35 periods of employment in the Project. However, one staff member served both in evaluation and coordination, and a second in both evaluation and technical assistance; thus, there was a total of 33 staff members during the 7-year period. The total number of man-years of professional time varied from 2.2 in 1967 to 12.3 in 1971.

Beginning in 1967, young farmers in the Project area were hired to assist in the field activities. Initially they were hired as day laborers, but some of them were given permanent employment after a period of training and selection.