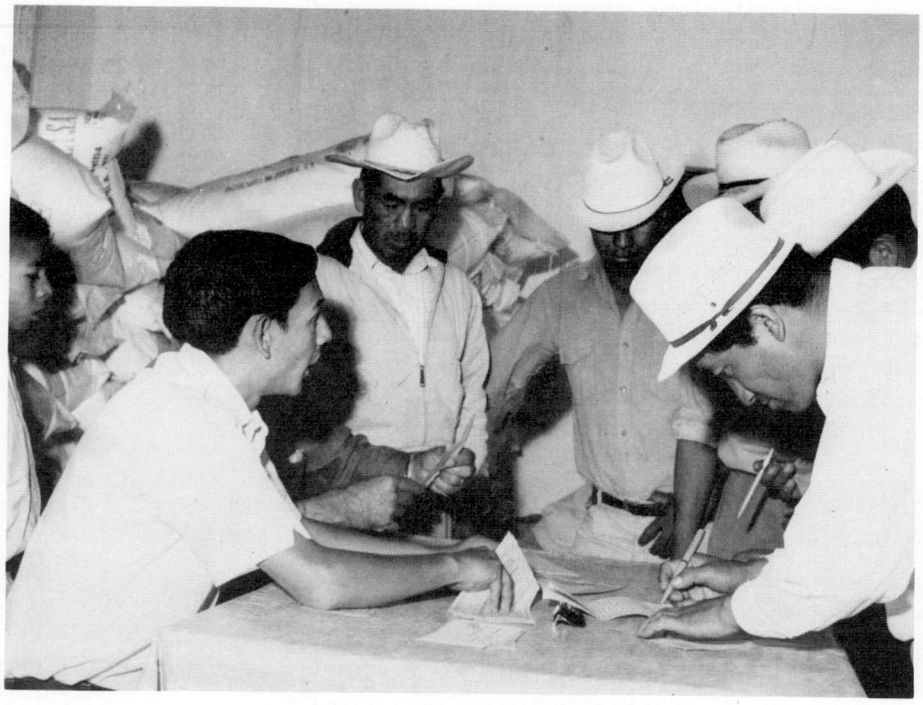

The program to promote farmer use of the new maize technology was initiated in 1968, with 103 farmers participating with 141 high-yield plots. Eighty percent of these farmers were provided credit by a fertilizer distributor and an official bank. Here farmers are seen signing loan agreements.

The traditional planting rate for maize required a full step distance between hills; however, the new planting rate was demonstrated in terms of a distance between hills of about one-half step. The higher population required learning a new rhythm of planting—inserting the shovel, opening and covering twice as many holes per hectare.

To assure an optimum population density, the farmers, at first, were taught to overplant and then thin to the desired 50,000 plants/ha. In this way, the population could be assured in spite of soil insects, inadequate germination, and other factors. However, the fertilizer applied at planting time caused vigorous early growth. When told that it was time to thin the plants, the farmers frequently replied: "Here I have one of the most beautiful plantings of maize that I have ever grown, and you want me to pull out some of the plants." To them, pulling of the superfluous plants was a destructive act. As a result, before the planting season was far advanced, it was decided to reduce the planting rate and eliminate the thinning operation.

The technicians kept in contact with the high-yield plots throughout the growing season. As the plantings were completed, attention was given to weed control, and where necessary, to control of the rose chafer. Demonstrations for neighboring farmers were held at the second cultivation when the second fertilizer application was made. The visiting farmers learned which fertilizer to apply, and how much, as well as how to keep fertilizer out of the bud to avoid damaging plants.

Result Demonstrations

Local demonstrations were held just prior to harvest at 15 of the high-yield plots, and neighbors and farmers from adjoining communities were invited via local sound equipment, printed circulars, and posters. Attendance ranged from 11 to 75 farmers.

The demonstration consisted of three parts: (a) the technical assistance agent's explanation of the Puebla Project, (b) the cooperating farmer's report of the practices used in the high-yield plot, and (c) open discussion led by the farmer and technician. An interesting aspect of the discussion was the obviously greater self-confidence felt by the visiting farmers when raising questions and making comments to the farmer-demonstrator.

Two regional demonstrations also were held just before harvest at strategic locations where both a high-yield plot and an experiment could be seen. Farmers with high-yield plots in each locality were asked to organize the event. In meetings with these farmers to plan the demonstration, two aspects were noted: (a) the farmers lacked confidence in their ability to plan and carry out a demonstration, and (b) they thought that no one would attend. They felt that the technical assistance agents should make the decisions. The technicians, however, encouraged the farmers and insisted that the farmers handle the arrangements.

The organizational approach which evolved was to name a committee of the most enthusiastic farmers with the formal title: Committee for Organizing the Agricultural Field Day. The committee took charge of: (a) inviting the authorities, both of the federal and state governments, (b) inviting the neighbors, (c) naming a person to receive each of the groups as they arrived from the different communities, and (d) naming members to look after the smooth functioning of the demonstration to assure that there would be an atmosphere of hospitality.

The technical assistance agents invited farmers from other parts of the Project area, using personal contact, a poster, a printed circular, plus personal invitations to all farm-