c. Technical Liaison and Support

This activity assignment is not found in many LDC R/E Systems, and this lack is one explanation for extension's limited effectiveness. The assignments, activities, and responsibilities associated with it are not well understood. There must be some mechanism by which the field extension agent can be linked effectively with sources of technology. If the link is not present, agents are not de facto part of the System and must supply the technology from their own resources. This has never proven a viable alternative.

There are several options for providing this linkage. The research entity can provide it, extension can provide it, or they can share it. Technical liaison and support has three major responsibilities which it will discharge through several activities.

+One is to maintain liaison with research for the purpose of knowing about and understanding the current best technology alternatives available and about promising alternatives that are becoming available. It must not only know about the technology, it must also have the capacity to understand the technology and to work with it.

This requires that at least half the TLS staff have formal training to the same level as area research personnel, probably the M.S. degree, and all should have adequate short-term training.

Collaboration with the field research in testing and adaptation is the single most effective way of keeping up with technology development. By this collaboration extension can inform itself of the technology and understand it. It can give the technology a better test than can research without this collaboration, thus serving its own interest. Finally, for the technology that does stand the test, the extension process is off to an early start.

Collaboration also facilitates extension participation in problem identification and problem definition and in deciding what passes the tests.

+The second responsibility of technical liaison and support personnel is to liaison with input suppliers to improve the chances that the right inputs will be available for that technology embodied in inputs. In the case of seed, this unit could recruit producers of improved varieties.

+The third responsibility is to provide technical support to field staff. The field staff, by its very posting, will quickly become isolated from the rest of the system, if the system is not energetic in keeping it integrated.