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This report is No. 15 in a series on "Scope and Method" of research in the various sub-fields of agricultural economics and rural sociology. This series of reports is part of a program of assistance to research in these fields, upon which the Advisory Committee on Social and Economic Research in Agriculture set forth in 1925 under instruction from the Social Science Research Council. Each report will undertake to outline the research of some sub-field of agricultural economics or rural sociology and then discuss the problems in methodology that are peculiar to it. The outline of any sub-field will be in large part in terms of a listing and discussion of specific research projects that have been undertaken or might be undertaken. Hence the discussion of methodology will be largely in terms of specific projects.

It is expected that these reports will be useful in the following ways: First, directors of experiment stations and chiefs of divisions of agricultural economics and of rural sociology in land-grant institutions in the United States, and persons similarly responsible for direction of the research in agricultural economics and rural sociology of other types of institutions, will find the outlines of the various sub-fields of much help in laying out continuing programs of research for their institutions. Second, individual research workers, graduate students looking for thesis subjects, and teachers conducting research seminars, as well as the agencies above named, will find the listing and discussions of projects helpful in choosing suitable research projects. Third, the descriptions of research already done will save research workers from duplicating other work and help them to find a way of building upon it successfully. Fourth, the discussion of the nature of a project and the qualitative background will reveal the body of the subject-matter which needs to be mastered for its intelligent prosecution, and the difficulties involved, and thus save many research workers from launching forth upon projects for which they have not yet qualified themselves, or which may be too difficult for all but the chosen few. Fifth, the analysis of methodology will furnish a basis for a more intelligent decision as to the procedures and methods which will lead to valid and usable results. Sixth, the discussion of methodology will also suggest helpful devices in technique and details of procedure that might not otherwise be brought to the attention of the research workers. Seventh, the discussions of both scope and methods will make clear to those organizing research in any field the contributions which workers on different subjects have to offer to it, and point the way to the form of collaboration needed.

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