

**DOCUMENTATION**

**1961 SERIES**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

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**AGRICULTURAL DOCUMENTATION:**

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES**

**OF LIBRARIES**

**AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

24(J):7.5N.N6  
C1K1  
093304

**PUBLISHED BY THE EUROPEAN PRODUCTIVITY AGENCY  
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(continued on page 4 of

**AGRICULTURAL DOCUMENTATION:**

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF**

**LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

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PROJECT No. 6/15 (FATIS)

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Published by the **EUROPEAN PRODUCTIVITY AGENCY**  
DIVISION FOR TECHNICAL ACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
**ORGANISATION FOR EUROPEAN ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION**

*The Organisation for European Economic Co-operation comprises the following Member countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The Organisation came into being with the signing of the Convention for European Economic Co-operation on 16th April 1948, when Member Governments pledged themselves "to combine their economic strength, to join together to make the fullest collective use of their individual capacities and potentialities, to increase their production, develop and modernise their industrial and agricultural equipment, expand their commerce, reduce progressively barriers to trade among themselves, promote full employment and restore or maintain the stability of their economies and general confidence in their national currencies". Representatives of each of the Member countries meet daily at the O.E.E.C. headquarters, Château de la Muette, Paris, to discuss their economic problems and work out common solutions. The United States and Canada participate in all the work of the Organisation as Associate Members. Yugoslavia is represented by an observer. Since 1957, she has taken part fully in the work of the O.E.E.C. European Productivity Agency. Moreover, since July 1959, she has participated on an equal footing with Member countries in the Organisation's work on agriculture and food.*

*The European Productivity Agency, which is responsible for the publication of the present report, was set up as a new branch of the O.E.E.C. in May 1953. Its task is to stimulate productivity, and thereby raise European standards of living, by influencing not only Governments but also industrial, agricultural and research organisations, private and collective enterprises and public services. One of its primary aims is to convince management and workers alike of the benefits of productivity and to enlist their co-operation.*

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Published in March 1961

## FOREWORD

The rapid and continually increasing growth, since the end of the war, in the output of technical literature concerning the many disciplines which contribute to agricultural science has created a serious problem. How far are agricultural libraries and documentation centres succeeding in channelling the immense flood of information to the research scientists, industrial concerns, advisory workers, farmers and students whom they exist to serve? By what means can their service be made more efficient, comprehensive and rapid?

In order to study these questions the European Productivity Agency of the O.E.E.C. arranged a seminar on the subject of "Agricultural Documentation: the Responsibilities of Libraries and Information Services". It was organised by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry and the Research Council of Food, Agriculture and Forestry of Germany in conjunction with the International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists (I.A.A.L.D.). The seminar was held at the Agricultural College, Stuttgart-Hohenheim on 20th-23rd April, 1960; the recommendations of the seminar and a list of the participants are given in an Appendix.

The present report, of which Mr. D.H. Boalch, Librarian to the Rothamsted Experimental Station in the United Kingdom, has acted as general editor, is based on papers submitted by the principal speakers at the seminar and at the discussions to which they gave rise.

In publishing this report the O.E.E.C. wishes to express its gratitude to the authorities in the host country, Germany, and especially the President and staff of the Agricultural College at Stuttgart-Hohenheim, for the excellent facilities provided for holding the seminar. Sincere thanks are also due to the guest speakers from many countries whose papers contributed greatly to the success of the event, and to the personnel of the I.A.A.L.D. for their continuous interest both in helping to plan and to carry out this activity.

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## SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

INTRODUCTORY

Dr. F. Herren, Director for Agricultural Production of the Federal Ministry of Food, Agricultural and Forestry and Mr. Schad of the Ministry of Education of Baden-Württemberg welcomed members of the Conference. Dr. Herren expressed the hope that the Conference would be successful in every way, that the deliberations would benefit from being held at Stuttgart-Hohenheim which was a long-established educational centre for agriculture, and that the work done would lead to valuable and practical results for all who are working in library, documentation and information fields and ultimately for the agricultural industry as a whole. New developments in agricultural science and economics, Dr. Herren continued, will become normal practice on farms more rapidly if the information services to advisers and farmers are well-based and efficiently organised. The Conference agreed that the objective of their meeting should be to serve the interests of agriculture to the full, by promoting co-operation between agricultural advisory and research workers and agricultural librarians and documentalists.

Agricultural Research and Reference Libraries and their Role as Agencies of Information

The Conference heard with great interest the papers presented by Mr. F. Mohrhardt and Professor G. Franz on "Agricultural Research and Reference Libraries and their Role as Agencies of Information". The difficulty of obtaining all the necessary material, especially in marginal subject fields, was stressed, and attention was drawn to the importance of adequate finance and staff in making possible the rapid dissemination of information. There was also the problem of translation which presents difficulties especially in relation to the eastern European languages. The Conference agreed that in view of the fact that few agricultural scientists or advisory workers have sufficient time to keep pace with the output of literature in their own special fields, abstracts and bibliographies are indispensable to them. Delays in publication are common to all fields, and prompt abstracting and indexing are therefore essential to speed up the spread of vital information once it is published. The Conference considered that the choice of material for indexing ought to be selective, particularly in view of the wide range and complexity of the subject-matter content of many periodicals. It was also considered that more attention should be given to ascertaining more precisely the needs of the various classes of

readers who are served by agricultural libraries and documentation services (for example, teachers; students; advisory workers; and research workers etc.) so that each category can be provided for with the maximum efficiency and economy. In view of the rapid developments in agricultural science and economics there was a special need to instruct students of agricultural colleges and universities in the full use of library and documentation services.

The Conference noted with satisfaction that the tremendous increase in agricultural publications (estimated to amount to a 100 per cent increase within the past twenty years) which had long been a problem to librarians and documentalists, was now engaging the attention of the scientists themselves who were interested in the devising of new techniques for classification and dissemination. In expressing appreciation of the value and present coverage of the U.S.D.A. Bibliography of Agriculture, the Conference also hoped that this coverage could be further extended, if possible, to take in the continually increasing output of publications. Mr. Mohrhardt stated that while he shared the wish to extend the coverage, the possibilities of doing this, especially in the light of rapidly increasing output of publications, were limited by staffing considerations.

#### Types of Inquiry from various kinds of Readers in Agricultural Libraries and the Tools for Answering Them

From the papers presented by Mr. Th. P. Loosjes and Dr. M. Scheele on "Types of Inquiry from various Kinds of Readers in Agricultural Libraries and the Tools for Answering Them" the Conference noted with great interest recent developments in the techniques of analysis and evaluation of agricultural literature. The Conference agreed that these techniques had great potential importance especially for documentation and that they deserve serious consideration as contributions to more effective analysis, retrieval and dissemination. At the same time, the Conference considered that the terminology at present associated with the techniques made their general comprehension somewhat difficult and that this fact might limit the rate at which they were more widely adopted; it was also noted that they were primarily applicable to the exact and the biological sciences. It was acknowledged that the complexity of scientific literature made multiple parameters unavoidable, and that although three or four should normally suffice, as many as eight or ten are in fact used in practical work. While it was recognised that this number was more than the average user would call for, it was also agreed that complete analysis by punched cards would facilitate documentation work in tracing a variety of sources of material, wherever the application of the technique was practicable. Members of the Conference were of the opinion that the new systems of mechanical selection should principally be used in situations where highly specific groups of enquiries follow a pattern with similar central components.

## Documentation Requirements of Agricultural Advisory Workers

The needs of agricultural advisory workers for documentation was the subject of an interesting paper presented to the Conference by Mr. B. Waibel who stressed the urgent need for advisers to be kept well-up-to-date on recent developments in the science and economics of agriculture, and thereby to help them to give farmers the fullest possible service of advice and information. Unlike many other scientists, advisory workers are, by the very nature of their calling, often stationed away from good library facilities and an adequate service of documentation is therefore a professional lifeline for them. The Conference agreed that agricultural librarians, documentalists and information services should consider the problem in four clear stages, (a) the selection of suitable material, (b) appropriate editing procedures, of a synthetic as well as an analytical type, (c) form of publication, and (d) methods of distribution. A distinction should be recognised between material to serve research workers, advisory workers and farmers respectively. The form of presentation should be appropriate to each class of recipient, taking full account, in the case of farmers, of the physical and economic conditions in which they worked.

In this connection the Conference noted with interest accounts of documentation services provided in certain countries; including critically evaluated weekly and monthly abstracts for advisers and teachers, and summaries in the form of yearbooks of specialised and general appeal in the Netherlands; also looseleaf systems of abstracts for advisers and teachers operated by Denmark and Norway and soon to be adopted by Sweden. It was noted that in the Netherlands it had been estimated that 50 per cent of the loans from the library had been stimulated by the issue of abstracts and documentation. The Conference agreed that the need of all advisory workers for a prompt service of information could be met by close collaboration between them and librarians, documentalists and information personnel, all of whom wish to achieve the maximum dissemination of information to advisers, and ultimately to the farming community.

With regard to encouraging the demand for, and proper use, of library and documentation services, some delegates reported upon the conduct of successful courses of instruction for agricultural students in universities and colleges on the use of libraries, abstracts and bibliographies. The Conference considered that this type of activity was likely to prove of the greatest value to students, not only during their training but also in carrying out their subsequent responsibilities in the field in a more effective way, as well as making it easier for the librarian and documentalist to give a quick and efficient service.

## The Abstract Journal as a Bridge between Scientific Research and Practical Agriculture

Following a much appreciated paper by Mr. G. V. Jacks which contained an account of the organisation and methods of work of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, the Conference

discussed the role of the abstract-journal in aiding the work of agricultural scientists and advisers. It was agreed that abstracting has now become an indispensable part of the organization of scientific research and until abstracting is recognised as a profession requiring skills comparable with those required for research itself, it will not be in a position adequately to perform its rapidly expanding duties. Also, shortages of staff and finance in many countries made the development of adequate abstracting services very difficult. It was noted that a demand was arising for a more comprehensive coverage of available literature consisting of short abstracts (annotations) rather than full ones. The Conference was of the opinion that some wider form of international co-operation in the exchange of abstracts should be sought, and that a positive effort should be made to overcome the existing difficulties with regard to adequate translation facilities. If more extensive international co-operation is to be achieved, effective national abstracting centres might be needed to co-operate with an international agency by which subsequent translation and wide dissemination of material could be undertaken. In this connection, interest was expressed in an account given to the Conference concerning experimental work in the United States and the U.S.S.R. to develop mechanical translation, although the process was as yet narrowly limited to certain subjects and certain languages. For the present, it was noted that copying and translation services were offered by many abstracting organisations by means of photostats and microfilms. The Conference noted with satisfaction that the advisory workers as well as research workers were making good use of abstracting services in their work, and attention was drawn to the need for abstracts in fields which were closely associated with adviser's work but not yet covered, or inadequately covered, by existing services. Accordingly the Conference learned with great interest of the recent publication of World Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Abstracts by IAALD in conjunction with the International Conference of Agricultural Economists. Attention was drawn to a recommendation made by an ad hoc group of Agricultural and Horticultural Work Study Specialists in March 1960 held under E.P.A. Project 5/17 that IAALD should include a section on "Work Study" in the World Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Abstracts. The Conference strongly endorsed this recommendation and hoped that it would be considered at the IAALD meeting to be held during subsequent days at Stuttgart-Hohenheim.

#### Classification Systems as a Tool for Retrieving Information

The importance of classification systems in agricultural library and documentation work, and in making material readily available to readers, was the subject of two stimulating papers presented to the Conference by Professor S. von Frauendorfer and M. Kervégant. The Conference considered that the international standardization of classification systems was extremely difficult to achieve, but different systems could be made available in a number of languages. The Conference were of the opinion that it is desirable to retain the U.D.C. as a normal classification reference after revision of certain sections. However, this does not mean a renunciation of the specialised classifications, notably the "system of classifica-

tion of agricultural sciences" which might be usefully related to the classification reference. The importance of giving readers some minimum instruction in the use of catalogues and classification systems and also including this subject in university curricula was stressed. The Conference asked the IALD to consider the preparation of a booklet on the basic principles of classification with comparative studies of various classification schemes and examples of use.

#### International, Inter-regional and National co-operation in Agricultural Documentation

The Conference listened with great interest to a report by Miss Borghild Bjørlikke on the "Scandia Plan" of co-operation between libraries which is in a steady process of full realisation. It commended the work being done as a model of practical co-operation which should serve as a stimulus to other countries and regional groups. The progress of International and Inter-regional co-operation in Agricultural Documentation over a wider field was the subject of a survey by Mr. D.H. Boalch and presented to the Conference, in his absence by Mr. F.C. Hirst. It was generally agreed that progress would be more rapid as agricultural librarians and documentalists became increasingly aware of the mutual benefits to be gained. In this connection the Conference particularly welcomed the contribution being made by the publication of the IALD Quarterly Bulletin as a medium of information over a wide area. The Conference emphasized the need for exchange of personnel as well as documentation within the context of international co-operation, and considered that agricultural librarians and documentalists were not adequately represented in some exchange-schemes for technical personnel.

The Conference drew attention to the difficulties arising in the international exchange and acquisition of documents by administrative restrictions, and expressed strongly the hope that this situation would progressively improve. The well-established Exchange of Publications Scheme operated by FATIS through its Liaison Centres for the benefit of advisory and information workers in O.E.E.C. countries was noted as an example of what a "sample" scheme of exchange could achieve by international co-operation. The Conference expressed the hope that appropriate international organisations would do everything possible to assist the development of co-operation between agricultural libraries and documentation services. In this connection interest was expressed in the selective catalogue of holdings in the F.A.O. library, to be published shortly, and a mimeographed list of current journals issued in 1959. One of the factors affecting the development of international co-operation was considered by the Conference to be a lack, in some countries, of adequate support for documentation centres, and there was a need in this connection for a form of agreement on the status, qualifications, and training of agricultural librarians and documentalists. Turning to co-operation on a national scale the Conference heard with great interest a description of co-operation between the agricultural libraries of Canada by Mrs. Margaret Reynolds. It was agreed that the automatic periodical circulation scheme operated in Canada,

which overcame many of the disadvantages of the manual methods of circulation, was an innovation of great importance.

### Rural Public Libraries and Reading Requirements and Preferences of the Rural Population

The paper by Mr. Helge Nielsen gave rise to considerable discussion of the particular needs and preferences of rural readers. The Conference agreed that rural libraries can play an important role in the cultural and technical education of the rural population and that they should be able to put at the disposal of their readers a wide range of recent books, general and technical publications, as well as fiction; they should also carry literature relating to advisory work published by official bodies, professional organisations and commercial agricultural firms. Liaison between libraries would provide a more comprehensive choice for readers, and the Conference considered that attention should be drawn to the fact that rural libraries can be of great value in supporting agricultural advisory work especially for groups of progressive farmers. To encourage reading among the rural population, the Conference considered that the schools, the agricultural press, radio and television and the agricultural advisers themselves should pay closer attention to technical literature in the agricultural and rural fields generally.

### Summary Recommendations

As a result of its deliberations, the Conference also wished to recommend that:

- (1) Competent organisations should be requested to give close attention to co-operation between advisory workers and documentalists. There is a need for fuller and more precise information on the kind and form of documentation material which the advisory worker finds most valuable in his work; such information would make it possible to derive the maximum value from documentation services.
- (2) International co-operation between agricultural librarians and documentalists should be strengthened in a number of ways. One important task is the compilation of a world list of agricultural periodicals. Attention should be given to the exchange of material between agricultural libraries, possibly by creating international centres for this purpose.
- (3) Interest in documentation work ought to be further encouraged by international and national organisations through (a) sponsoring the training and exchange of staff and (b) creating or improving educational facilities in the use of agricultural libraries and documentation services.
- (4) Research on modern methods of automatic selection should be carried out because this subject deserves the fullest attention, particularly in relation to specialised research institutions, although its more general use also needs careful consideration.

(5) The Conference, noting the growing demands for bibliographical information and documentation from agricultural research and advisory workers, wished to draw attention to the increase in finance and equipment which these demands necessitated.

PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERSParticipantsAustria

Reinhold BAYER	Head of Documentation Service, Austrian Timber Research Institute	Arsenal-Objekt 212 Vienna III
Sigmund von FRAUENDORFER(1)	Chief Librarian, College of Agriculture	Gregor Mendelstr. 33, Vienna XVIII/110

Belgium

Arthur GOBBE	Director of Agricultural Information Service, Ministry of Agriculture	14, rue de la Limite, Brussels 3
--------------	--	-------------------------------------

Canada

Mrs. Margaret N. REYNOLDS(1)	Chief Librarian, Canada Department of Agriculture	K W Neatby Building, Ottawa
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Denmark

Carl Olaf GÖTZSCHE	Chief Editor, Federation of Danish Smallholders Associations	Husmandshjemmet Axelborg 1 Copenhagen V
N.P. KRISTENSEN	Editor, Agricultural Information Office	Platanvej 12, Copenhagen V
Arne LAURBERG	Editor, Federation of Danish Farmers' Associations	Platanvej 28, Copenhagen V
Helge NIELSEN(1)	Librarian, Royal Veterinary and Agricultural College	Bülowsvej 13, Copenhagen V

France

Michel DUMANT	Head of Documentation Section for Agricultural Advisers, Ministry of Agriculture	78, rue de Varenne Paris, 7ème
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(1) Guest speakers.

France (Cont'd)

Désiré KERVEGANT(1)	Director of Documentation Service, National Centre for Agronomy Research	Route de Saint-Cyr Versailles, S & O.
François le NAIL	Head of Pest Control Service, 'ACTA' Secretary-General of the National Federation of Crop Protection Association	Association de Coordination Technique Agricole 121, Bd. Haussmann Paris, 8ème
Louis Henri MILA	Head of Documentation Service, Permanent Assembly of the President of the Chambers of Agriculture	11 bis, rue Scribe Paris, 9ème
Serge VERETENICOFF	Senior Documentalist, French Overseas Fruit Research Institute	6, rue du Général-Clergerie, Paris, 16ème

Germany

Günther FRANZ(1)	Chief Librarian, Agricultural University	Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule-Hohenheim, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Schloss
Wilhelm GÖCKE	University Library, Agricultural Division	Bonn, Meckenheimer Allee 172
F. HERREN	Director for Agricultural Production, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry	Bonn-Duisdorf
Heinrich LOHMEYER	Documentalist, Scientific Employee Federal Institute for Nature Protection and Landscape Management	Bad Godesberg, Heerstrasse 110
Martin SCHEELE(1)	Free-lance Documentalist	Schlitz/Oberhessen Ringmauer 7
B. WAIBEL(1)	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, Baden-Württemberg	Stuttgart W., Marienstr. 41

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(1) Guest speakers.

Germany (Cont'd)

Robert WIEHR	Federal Dairy Research Institute	Kiel, Hermann-Weigmann- str. 3-11
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Ireland

Miss Margaret M.J. BURKE	Librarian, Department of Agricul- ture	Upper Merrion St., Dublin
Miss Olive DALY	Library and Information Officer, The Agricultural Insti- tute	33 Merrion Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin
Miss Ellen POWER	Librarian, University College	Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin

Luxembourg

Eugène WEYMERSKIRCH	Officer-in-Charge of Documentation Service, Ministry of Agriculture	1, rue de la Congrégation, Luxembourg
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The Netherlands

Th. P. LOOSJES(1)	Librarian, Agricultural College	Wageningen, Général Foulks- weg 1 a
Dirk J. MALTHA	Director, Centre for Agricultural Publica- tions and Documentation	Wageningen, Général Foulks- weg 1 a

Norway

Miss Borghild BJØRLYKKE(1)	Associate Librarian, Agricultural College of Norway	Vollebekk
Hersleb WALNUM	Editor, Office for Agricultural Research	Wergelandsvein 15, Oslo

Sweden

Miss Margareta ÅKESSON	Director of the Library, Royal Veterinary College	Roslagswägen, Stockholm 51
Hans BAUDE	Chief Librarian, Royal Veterinary College	Ultana, Uppsala 7

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(1) Guest speakers.

Sweden (Cont'd)

Mrs. Gunborg BJÖRKMAN	Director of the Library, Royal Academy of Agri- culture and Forestry	Hovslagargatan 2 Stockholm C
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Switzerland

B.E. MOEKLY	Head, Documentation Service	c/o J.R.Geigy A.G. Basle 16
Emile RAUCH	Scientific Expert, Swiss Association for the Promotion of Farm Advisory Work (SVBL)	Küsnacht, ZH

United Kingdom

Donald H. BOALCH	Librarian, Rothamsted Experimental Station	Harpenden, Hertfordshire
Douglas HARVEY	Director, Commonwealth Bureau of Animal Nutrition Rowett Research Insti- tute	Bucksburn, Aberdeen, Scotland
Frank C. HIRST	Chief Librarian, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Whitehall Place, London, S.W.1.
Sir Herbert HOWARD	Secretary to the Execu- tive Council, Common- wealth Agricultural Bureaux	Farnham House, Farnham Royal, Buckinghamshire
Graham Vernon JACKS(1)	Director, Commonwealth Bureau of Soils, Rotham- sted Experimental Station	Harpenden Hertfordshire
Miss Elisabeth S. SMYTH	Vice-Principal and Librarian, Wye College (University of London)	Near Ashford, Kent.

United States

Foster E. MOHRHARDT(1)	Director of the Library, U.S. Department of Agri- culture	Washington 25, D.C.
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(1) Guest speakers.

ObserversGermany

G. BIRK	State Advisory Institute	Donaueschingen Max Egonstrasse 16
Dr. BRUDE	Press Office, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, Bad-Württemberg	Stuttgart W, Marienstr. 41
M. HARTAN	Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry	Bonn-Duisdorf
Hellmut KAMLAH	Head of Seminar for Agricultural Advisory Niedersachsen	Göttingen, Nikolausberger Weg 5a
Rudolf LAUCHE	Director of the Library, Agricultural Research Institute	Braunschweig, Bundesallee 50
H. RHEINWALD	Director of Department for Agricultural Advisory Work, Agricul- tural University	Stuttgart-Hohen- heim Hochschule Hohenheim
M. SCHAGEN	Library Assistant	Bibliothek der Technischen Hochschule, Stuttgart

United States

Dorothy PARKER	Assistant Director, Rockefeller Foundation	11, West, 50th St. New York 20, N.Y.
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International Bodies

## C.E.E. (European Economic Community)

Henri ENTRINGER	Divisional Member, Director-General for Agriculture, Direction C, Division 1	12, avenue de Broqueville, Brussels, Belgium
Claude Serge MOUTON	Divisional Member, Directorate-General for Agriculture, Direction B, Division 1	12, avenue de Broqueville, Brussels, Belgium

F.A.O. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations)

V. CAMERANI	Acting Chief, Reference and Loans Section Library, F.A.O.	Viale delle Terme di Caracalla Rome, Italy
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W.M. SHEPHERD	Public Relations and Legal Affairs Depart- ment, F.A.O.	Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome, Italy
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IAALD (International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists)

Hans Guillermo GRAVENHORST	Librarian and Director of the Library of the Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Sciences	Facultad de Agronomia y Veter- inaria Biblio- teca, Avda. San Martin 4453, Buenos Aires, Argentina
-------------------------------	---	--

Maria Teresa RONCHI	Chief Cataloguer, Library F.A.O.	Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome, Italy
---------------------	-------------------------------------	--

Majlis TULANDER	Chief Librarian of the Agricultural Library University of Helsinki	Hallitusk, 3 A Helsinki, Finland
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