

COLLECTION AND USE OF FARM MANAGEMENT DATA IN GREAT BRITAIN *

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THOUGH interest in farm costing in Great Britain dates back to a little before the first world war, the British Government started taking active interest in this subject only in the 1920's when the first 'Advisory Economists' were appointed to 15 provincial advisory centres located either at agricultural colleges or at agricultural departments of universities. Very little was achieved initially on the national level because of lack of co-operation between different advisory centres and the absence of an agreement among them on methods of cost accounting and research. In 1930, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries established 'The Conference of Agricultural Economists' consisting of Advisory Economists and some Ministry officials "for achieving co-operation between centres". Two major costing schemes were started under the general control of this body : (1) In 1934, the Milk Marketing Board proposed to the Ministry for an investigation into cost of milk production. Immediately after this a scheme for investigation of production costs and the economics of milk production was introduced in England and Wales.¹ (2) The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries itself proposed for a national scheme for the provision of farm management data. This scheme was adopted in 1936. Very soon after this the country was engulfed in war, and during this as well as in the immediate post-war period the scheme was brought more under the direct control of the Ministry. In 1945, all the Provincial Advisory Centres in England and Wales came to be attached directly to different universities. The economists then came to be known as the Provincial

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¹ An excellent account of the history and methodology of this scheme is given by Dr. Phyllis Manning in a publication entitled *A History of the National Investigation into the Economics of Milk Production*, The Agricultural Economics Research Institute, University of Oxford, 1960.