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# Modern Trends Changing Farming's Uniqueness

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A century ago, a government official observed poetically that "God made the country; man made the town."

Farming then was a way of life and still is widely regarded in this light, but the farm-nonfarm delineation is becoming blurred. Many people want to live in the country but do not want the responsibilities of farming. Many farmers have had to seek urban jobs in order to survive as food producers.

After Democrats started replacing Republicans in Washington, Dr. Don Paarlberg was asked what was the most important thing that had happened in agriculture during his eight years as director of agricultural economics for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

After deliberation, he responded that "The most important thing that has happened is that agriculture is losing its uniqueness." It is losing its favorable distinctions from other forms of livelihood, economically, culturally and politically.

This has been

brought about by agriculture's response to such things as scientific farming, technology, paved roads and the automobile, the farm

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press, radio and television, the tractor, and a number of other factors.

Paarlberg said that it was when management people broke apart the factors of production—land, labor, capital and management in the hands of one person—that the farm business began to separate itself from the farm household.

Agriculture is losing its uniqueness, he said, because "it is entering the mainstream of economic life." He offered these observations as evidence of the trend:

1. Farmers are depicting themselves in

their business decisions more-like nonfarm people.

2. The former white male tradition that long characterized agriculture is being eroded.

3. The agricultural establishment has lost control of the farm policy agenda. Major issues of agricultural policy have been questions placed on the agenda by nonfarm people.

4. The constituency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has changed. Only 16 per cent of the 1977 budget is in the form of research, education and other services devoted to USDA's historic farm clientele. The balance is for food stamps, lending programs, natural resources, environmental services and nonfarm items.

5. On food and agriculture policy issues, the USDA no longer is

clearly decisive within the executive branch.

6. Land grant colleges, no longer sure of the uniqueness of their role, are broadening services to encompass rural nonfarm and urban groups.

7. Farm organizations, operating from a base of declining power, are working with nonfarm groups through a series of alliances and coalitions.

8. Agricultural committees of Congress are balancing membership

and legislation to show a new awareness of such nonfarm issues as food stamps and environmental protections.

"The change is under way," Paarlberg said, "and it is irreversible."

Where, then, is agriculture headed? For one thing, it will continue to be indispensable. Population experts predict there will be two billion more people on earth by the end of this century and that 40 million of them will live in the U.S.A.

That's a lot of new customers. Even if people should dramatically reduce amounts of food they consume, the world still will need a great deal more food than is now being produced. Much of it must

come from the United States.

Other nations are trying to catch up with their needs but too often growing population more than offsets increases in food output.