

# 1986 Market Study

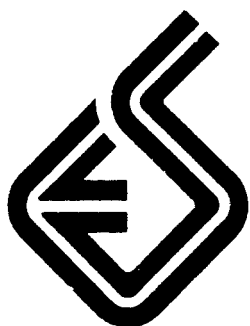
A survey of clientele

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**EXTENSION  
SERVICE**

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1986 Market study

EXTENSION SERVICE  
Marion County Office



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I want to thank the many people who made this research project possible. Without their hours of service, this office could not have conducted the many interviews necessary in the data-gathering process.

I offer a special thank you to Marilyn Higgins, family community leadership program volunteer and U.S. Census Bureau interviewer, who studied rough drafts of the questionnaire and offered thoughtful suggestions. She also spent time planning and conducting portions of our training workshop for interviewers.

Work by volunteers who attended the training and telephoned clients was essential to the project. They were: Amelia Butz, MariAnne Gest/Shirley, Eileen Doran, Phyllis Newell, Art Schoenborn, Doris Schoenborn, Allie Gamroth, Imogene Kuper, Stella Nelson, Carol Shelton, Darlene Bryant, Fay Hackelman, Jan Bevins, Lyle Johnson, Lois Sanders, Bev Neuenschwander and Paul Meadowbrook.

The Marion County Extension Office secretarial staff also deserves special thanks. For five days, Jan Pieters, Karen Ritchie, Bettie Woollard, Judi Baker and Lori Russell questioned all who contacted the office and gathered addresses and telephone numbers from many. Without their willingness to assume this added task and their adherence to strict data-gathering guidelines, our survey sample would not be scientifically sound.

I also want to thank Roger Fletcher, staff chair, for locating funds to conduct this study, and offering support, encouragement and direction. Extension Agent Mike Gamroth offered computer expertise and assistance, and Agent Bob McReynolds provided computer graphics training as well as feedback on drafts of this report.

Thanks to all of you. You were a joy to work with.

Ann Meadowbrook,

Redacted for privacy

Marion County Extension  
Media Relations Coordinator  
and Research Project Director

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Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H Youth, Forestry, Community Development,  
Energy, and Marine Advisory Programs, Oregon State University,  
United States Department of Agriculture, and Marion County cooperating

## Why do a study?

The Marion County office of Oregon State University's Extension Service touches thousands of people each year. Although clients seem satisfied with the services we provide, this office has never gathered data to help staff and advisory committee members evaluate how well we're serving local residents.

Our clients are Marion County residents, but we lacked data about whether they represent a cross-section of the local population. Who are the people who contact the Extension Office? Are adult clients old or young, rich or poor, well-educated or lacking in formal education? How are they different from other Marion County residents?

And are these clients satisfied with the services they receive? Do they have suggestions to improve the office?

How do they perceive Marion County Extension? Do they realize the office is part of Oregon State University, that local property tax dollars help pay office expenses, and that 4-H is not just for farm kids?

To answer these and other questions, this Extension Office surveyed a sample of clients.

## How we did it

We questioned 262 adults -- 145 randomly selected from the 4,125 clients whose names appear on at least one office mailing list, and 117 who contacted the office January 3-9 and were not on an office mailing list.

We did not interview 4-H youth or their parents, but did include 4-H leaders in our sample. Only adults who personally receive Extension services were questioned.

We trained 17 volunteers in telephone interviewing techniques, and they surveyed clients in mid-January. Volunteers phoned clients from the Extension Office between 6-9 p.m. Each interview took 10-15 minutes.

Volunteers interviewed 97% of those reached by phone-- only 3% refused to cooperate.

We were able to contact 84% of the sample originally drawn from the mailing list, and 91% of those in our non-mailing list group. Those we couldn't reach have moved, are deceased, have unlisted phone numbers, or could not be reached at home after repeated attempts. Only one person did not have a telephone.

## **Data analysis**

In analyzing the data, we combined all interview results for an overall look at Extension clientele. We compared client demographic information with 1980 Census data for Marion County, the 1984 State of Oregon Economic Survey Analysis, and demographic data gathered in the 1985 Statesman-Journal Market Study.

We also compared answers from clients on mailing lists to those who are not on an office mailing list. And we compared responses from clients who most often call about each specific program area, with responses from all other clients.

Responses from those under 50 years old were compared with answers given by younger clients, and we compared responses by clients who have at least some college education with those who have not attended college. We wanted to know if these differences among clients corresponded to different perceptions of the office and different degrees of satisfaction with our services.

This booklet contains a summary of the survey findings. A more indepth report of the results is available at the Extension Office.

## **How we will use the data**

The Extension Advisory Council, individual program advisory groups and Extension staff will study the data and discuss their implications. Demographic information about current clients, data about client perceptions of the office and suggestions for change will help staff and council members plan future programs.

It provides a basis for setting overall and individual program goals.

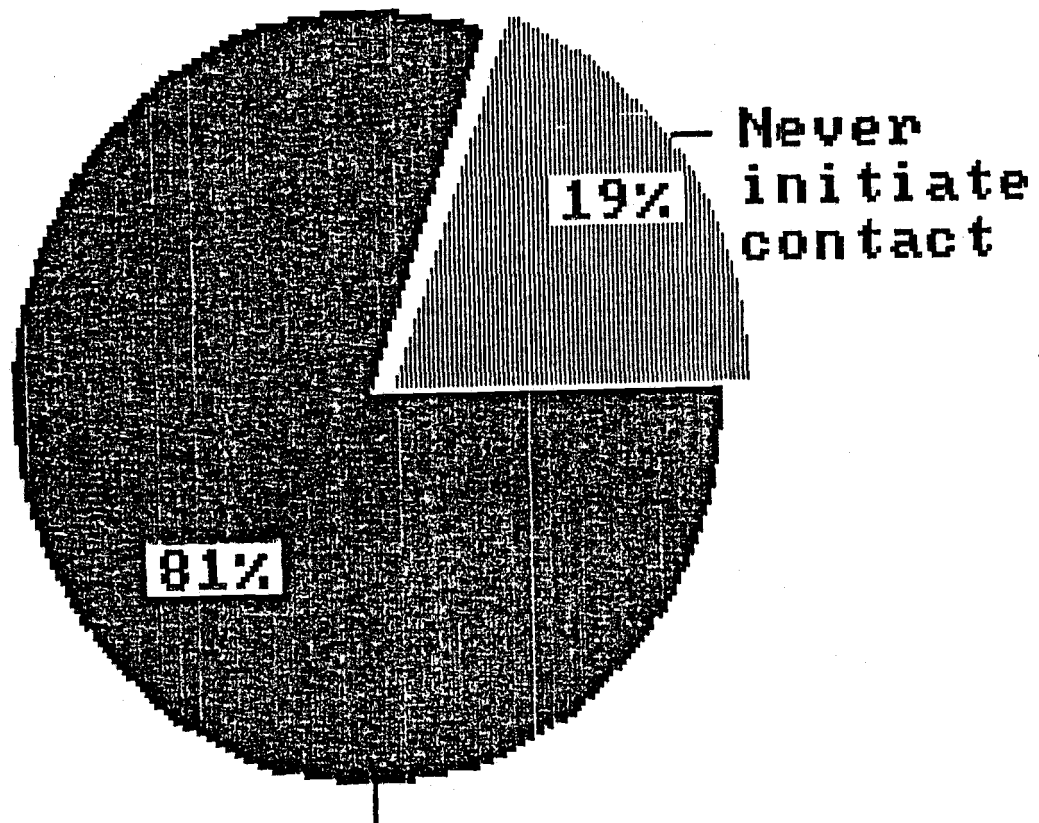
## THE RESULTS SUGGEST . . . .

- ☐ The office serves a disproportionately small number of employed adults under 30 years old, and a disproportionately large number of retired persons.
- ☐ Clientele are somewhat more formally educated than the overall population of Marion County.
- ☐ Clients earn slightly more gross income than most Marion County adults (except home economics clientele).
- ☐ Most clients don't live on farms.
- ☐ Most clientele (except commercial agriculture clientele) learned of the office through a friend or relative.
- ☐ Clients contact the office an average of 2 to 5 times per year, but 4-H leaders call agents twice as often. Their average is 3 to 10 contacts each year.
- ☐ Most clients have used the office between 5 and 20 years.
- ☐ An extremely high percentage of clients are satisfied with services, believe the office offers the latest scientific information and report receiving prompt, courteous, and friendly help.
- ☐ The major client suggestion involved increasing publicity about Extension events and services. Clients also suggested hiring more staff.
- ☐ Most clients (except 4-H clientele) don't realize most 4-H club members are not living on farms.
- ☐ Most clients know:
  - The office offers a wide variety of services.
  - The office is part of Oregon State University.
  - Agents work with teenagers.
  - Extension programs don't only serve farmers.
- ☐ Most clients don't know:
  - Volunteers help plan educational programs.
  - Local property taxes help pay office expenses.
  - Agents are OSU faculty members.

# A PROFILE OF CLIENTELE

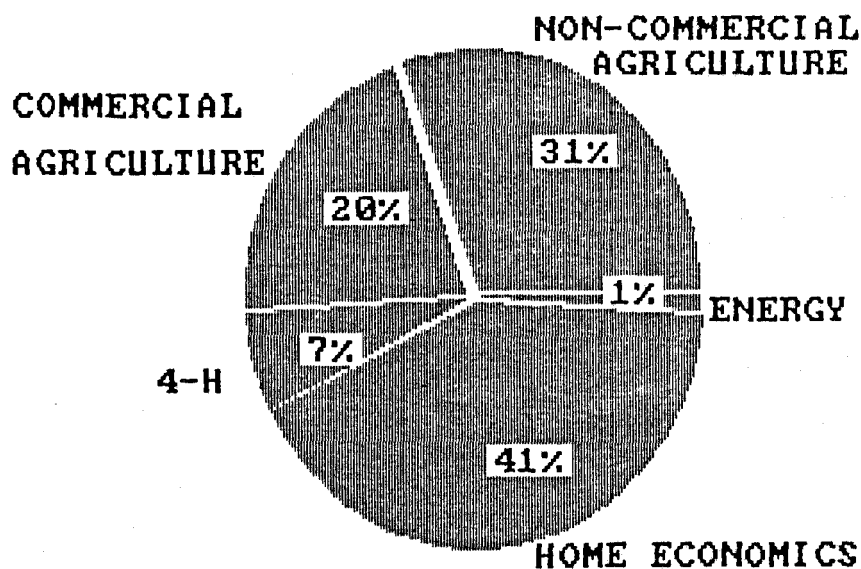
	All Clients	Clients Who Contact The Office For Services Or Information			
		4-H	Home Economics	Commercial Agriculture	Non-Commercial Agriculture
<u>AGE</u>					
Average Age in Years	40-59	40-49	50-59	40-49	50-59
<u>SEX</u>					
% Female	61%	73%	97%	12%	47%
<u>RACE</u>					
% White	98%	100%	97%	100%	99%
<u>EMPLOYMENT</u>					
% Employed	48%	56%	31%	82%	48%
% Unemployed	3%	0	1%	0	10%
% Homemaker	19%	25%	35%	0	10%
% Retired	30%	19%	34%	18%	33%
<u>EDUCATION</u>					
% with at least some college training	62%	63%	59%	71%	66%
<u>INCOME</u>					
% above county median of \$26,000/year (50% of county residents gross more than this each year)	55%	69%	50%	74%	55%
<u>RESIDENCE</u>					
% reporting they live on a farm	29%	44%	14%	64%	21%
% live on a farm that grosses \$20,000 or more annually	10%	13%	6%	36%	0
% living on more than 5 acres	28%	38%	17%	61%	16%
<u>FREQUENCY OF CONTACT</u>					
Average number of times they initiate contact each year	2-5	3-10	2-5	2-5	2-5
<u>HOW THEY HEARD OF EXTENSION</u>					
<u>OFFICE</u>					
% told by friend or relative	55%	58%	66%	31%	51%
% newspaper	8%	8%	7%	3%	13%
% TV	1%	8%	1%	0	0
% radio	1%	0	0	0	2%
% Extension publication	10%	0	8%	13%	13%
% direct contact with Extension agent	8%	8%	6%	26%	3%

**Most clients on mailing lists  
have contacted the office  
for services**

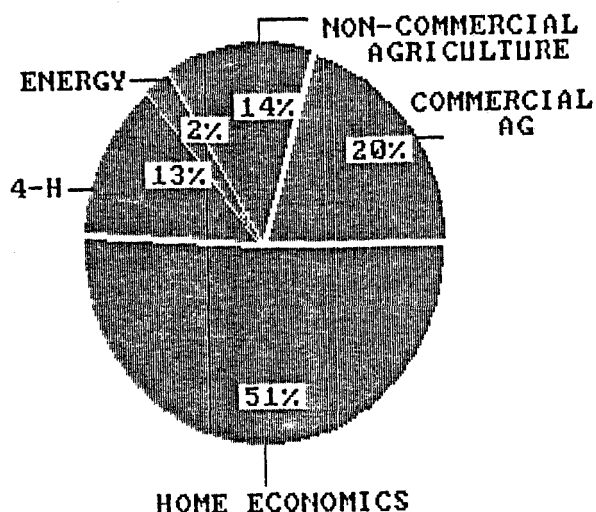


**Have contacted the office  
at least once**

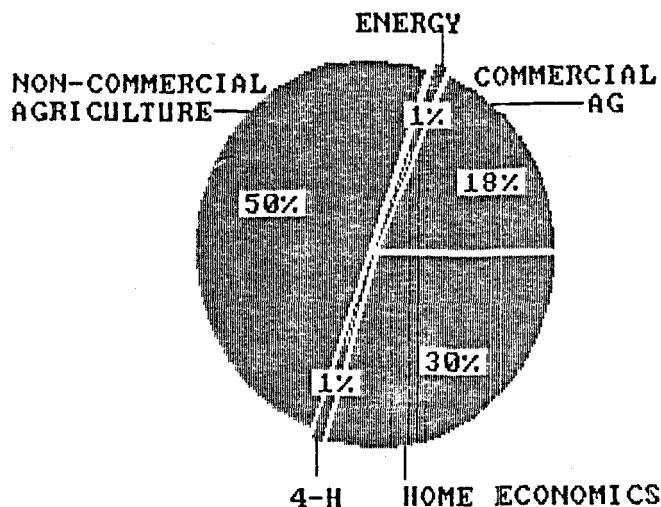
# Clients request a variety of program areas



Contacts from clients on  
Extension mailing lists



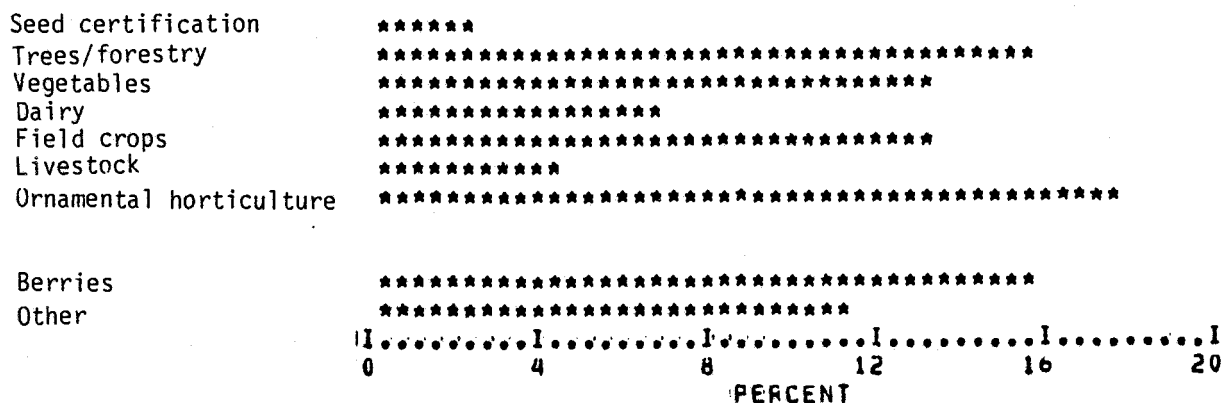
Contacts from clients  
not on a mailing list



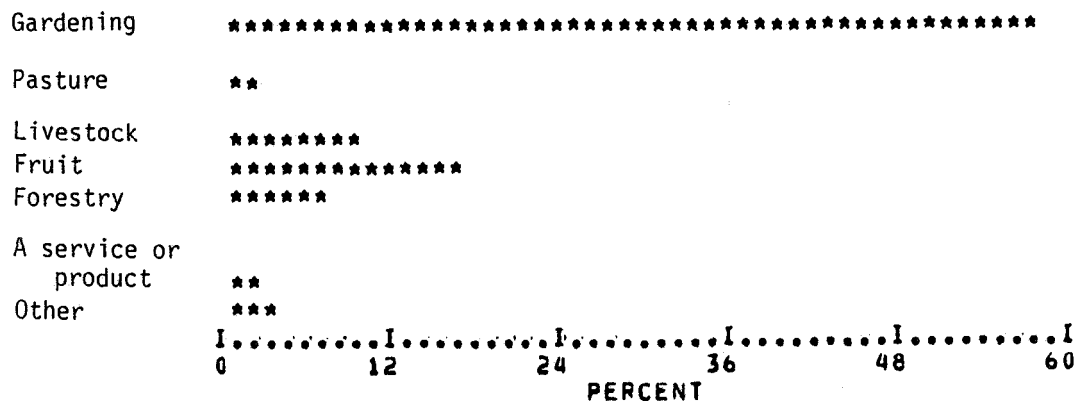


# WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION

## Commercial agriculture clients most often ask about....

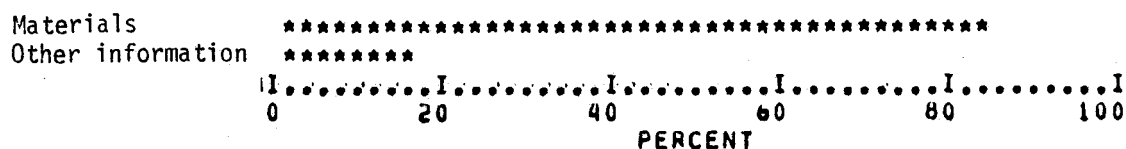


## Non-commercial agriculture clients most often ask about....

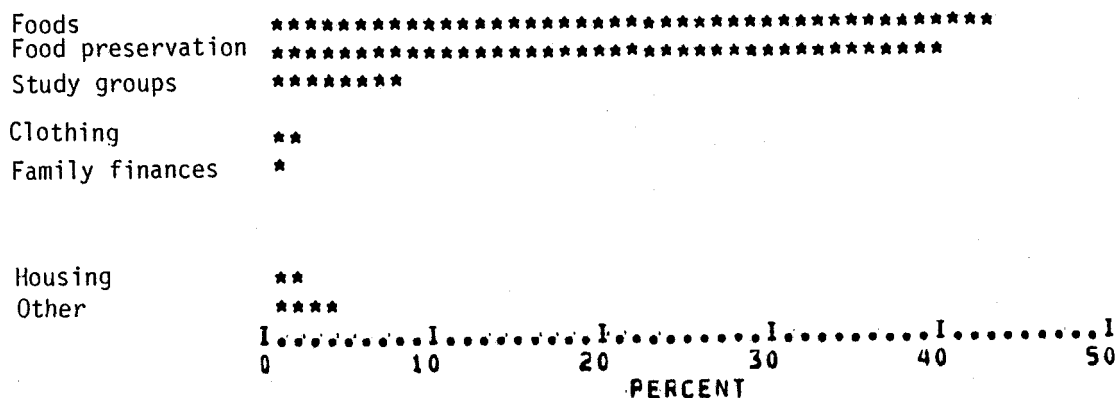


# DO CLIENTS REQUEST?

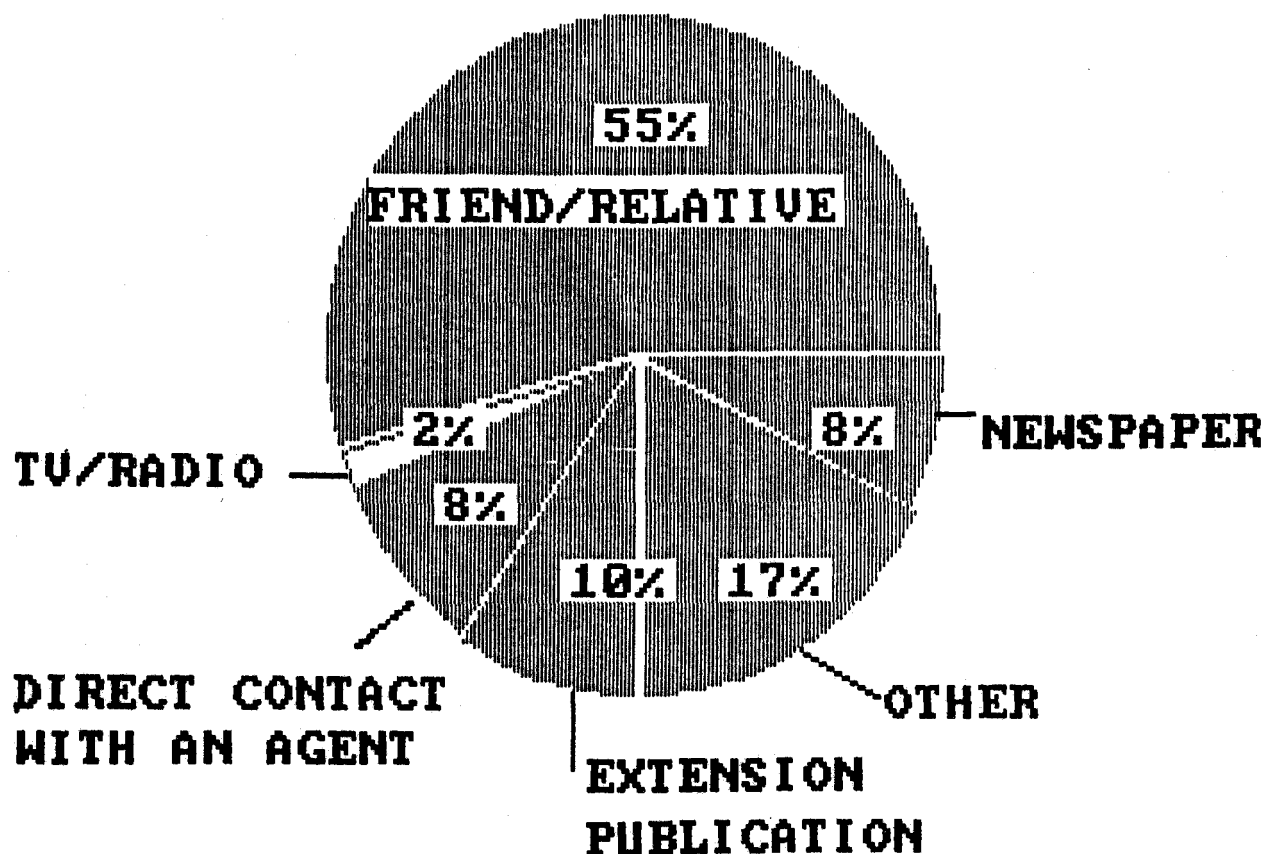
4-H clients most often ask for....



Home economics clients  
most often ask about....



**Most clients learned about the office  
from a friend or relative**



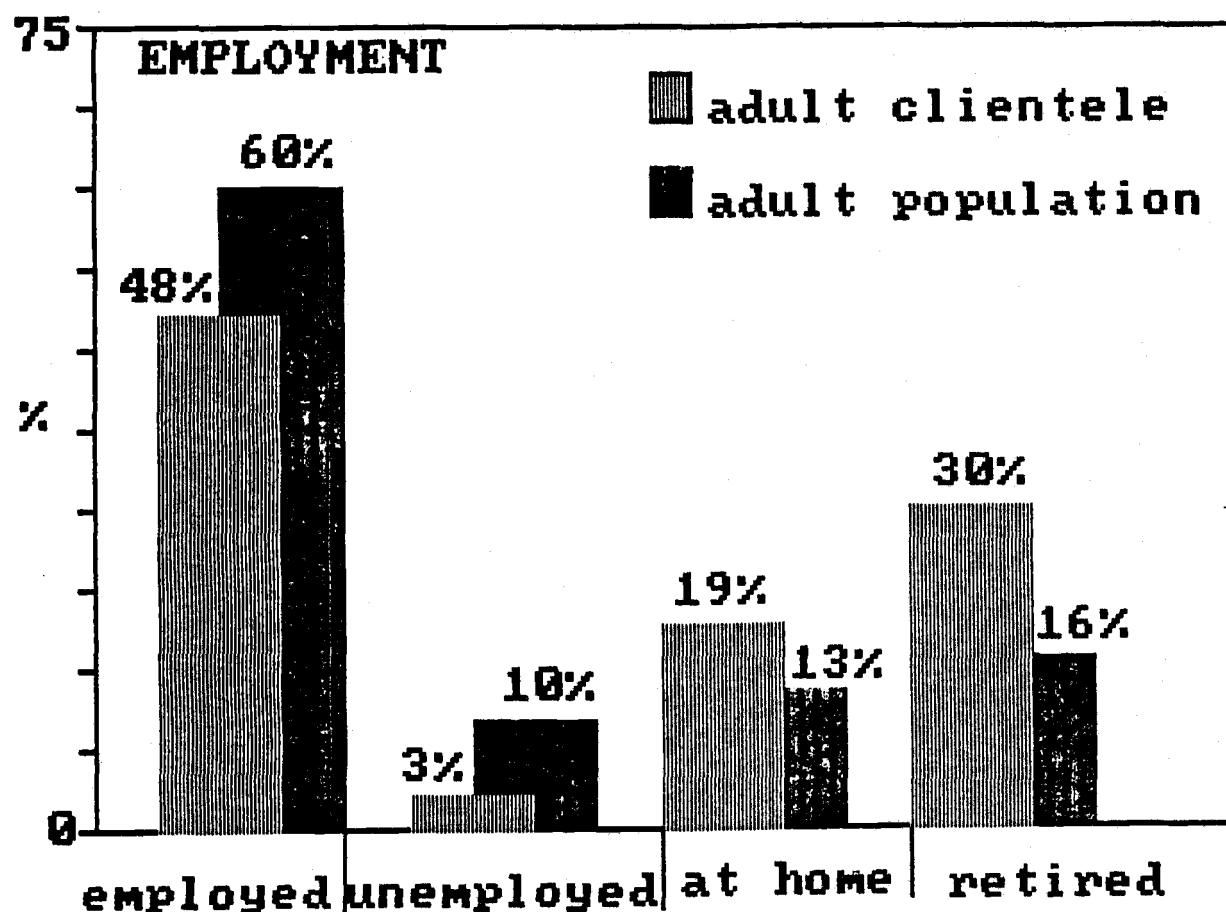
**OTHER WAYS CLIENTS HEARD  
OF EXTENSION OFFICE**

**QUESTION:**

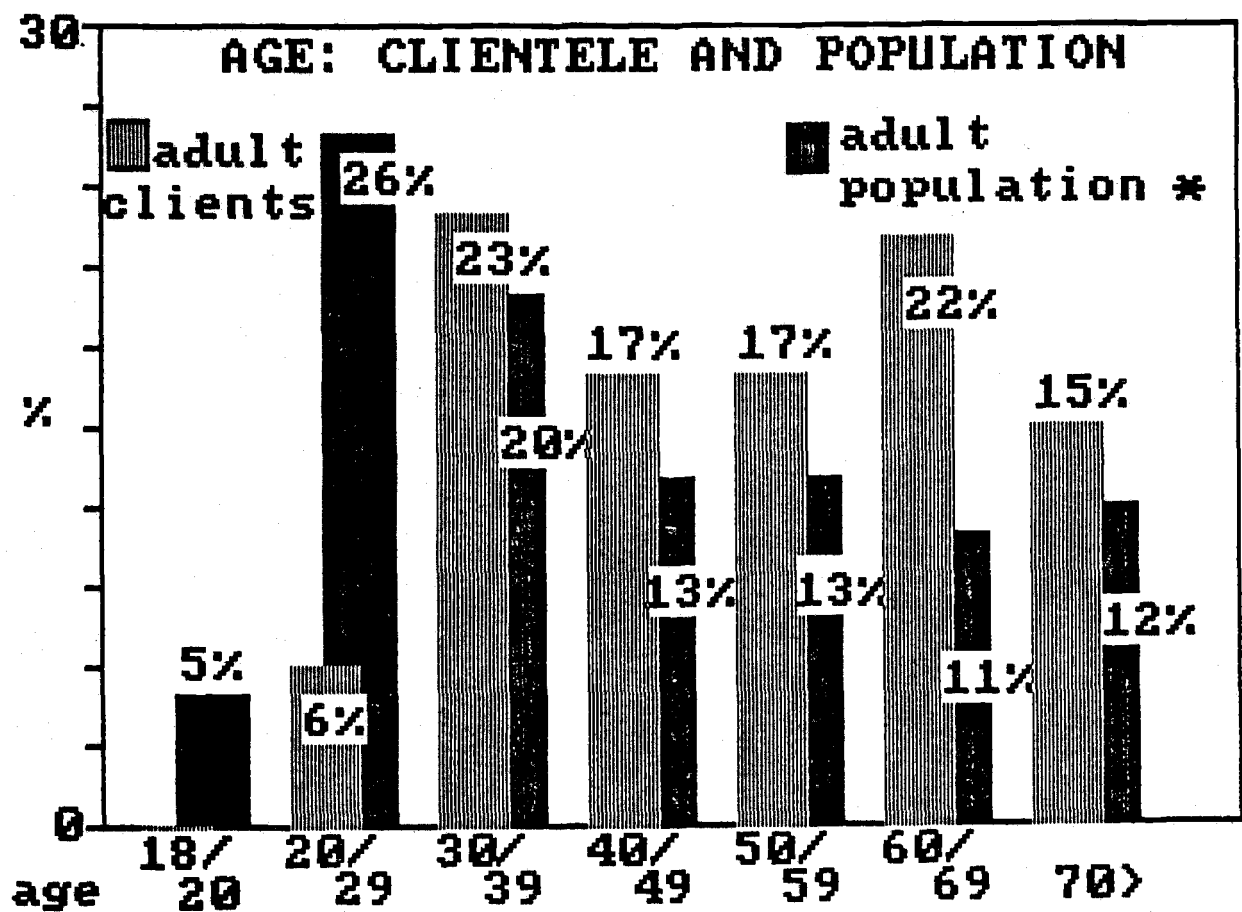
How did you first hear about the Marion County Extension Office? Was it through a friend or relative, from a newspaper article, a TV or radio news story, by seeing a printed Extension publication, through an Extension agent or employee, or was it some other way?

- \* OSU OR OTHER COLLEGE
- \* PREVIOUS 4-H INVOLVEMENT
- \* USED EXTENSION IN OTHER COUNTIES OR STATES
- \* BOOTHS AT COUNTY/STATE FAIR
- \* REFERRED BY BUSINESSES

## 30% OF EXTENSION CLIENTS ARE RETIRED

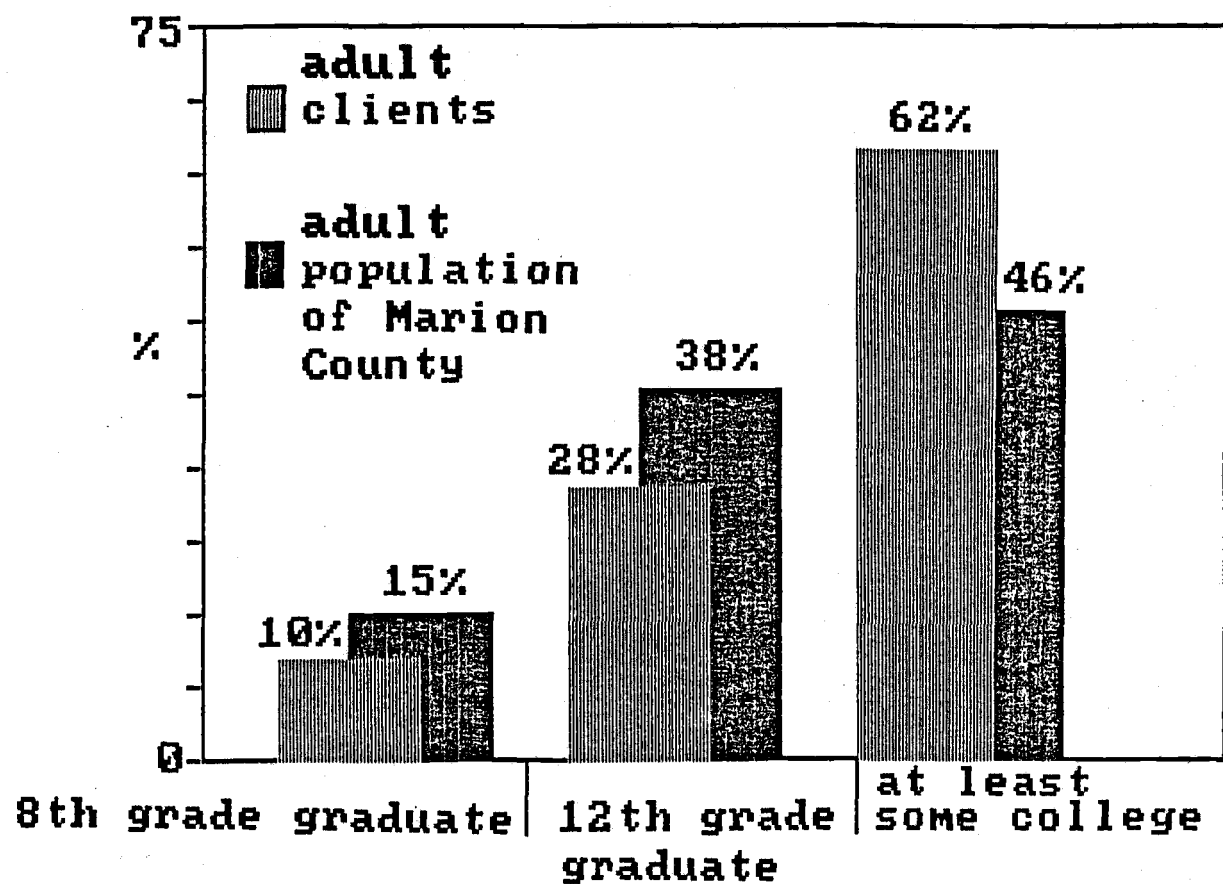


# FEW ADULT CLIENTS ARE UNDER 30

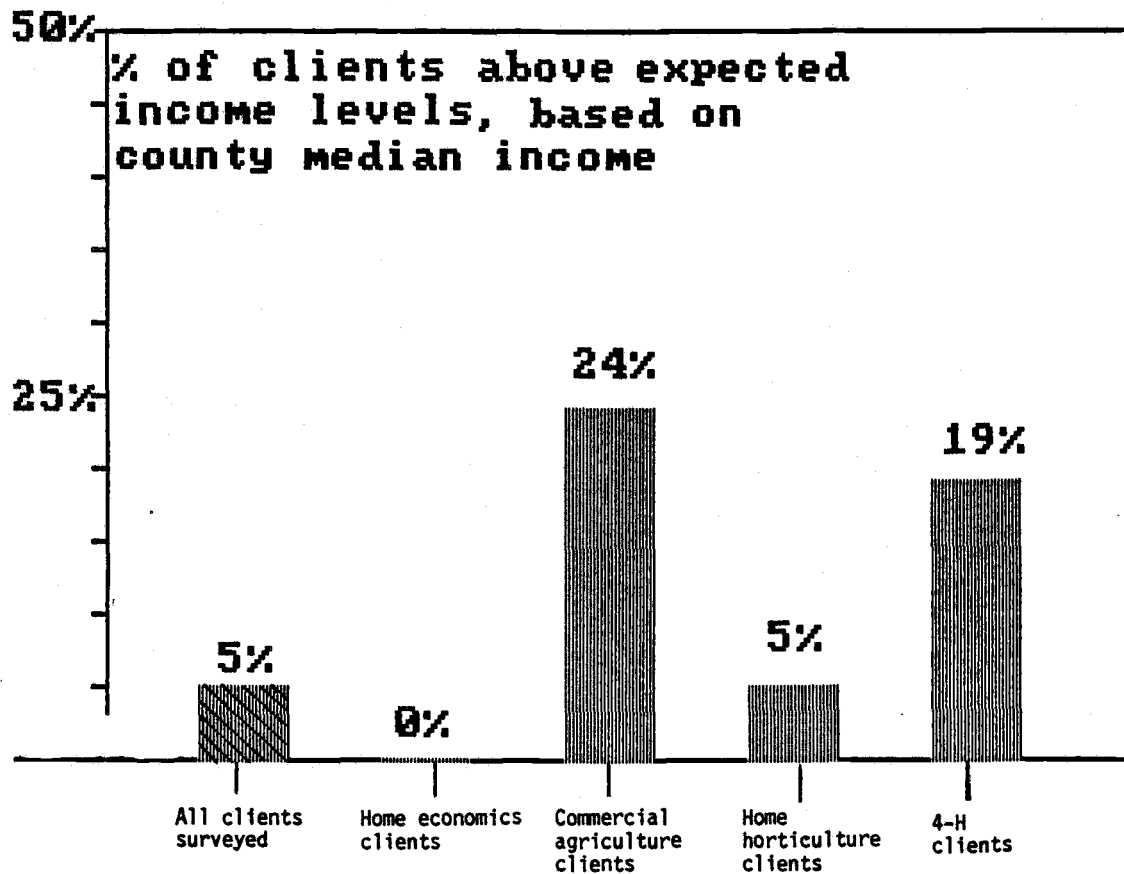


\* of Marion County

# MANY CLIENTS ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED



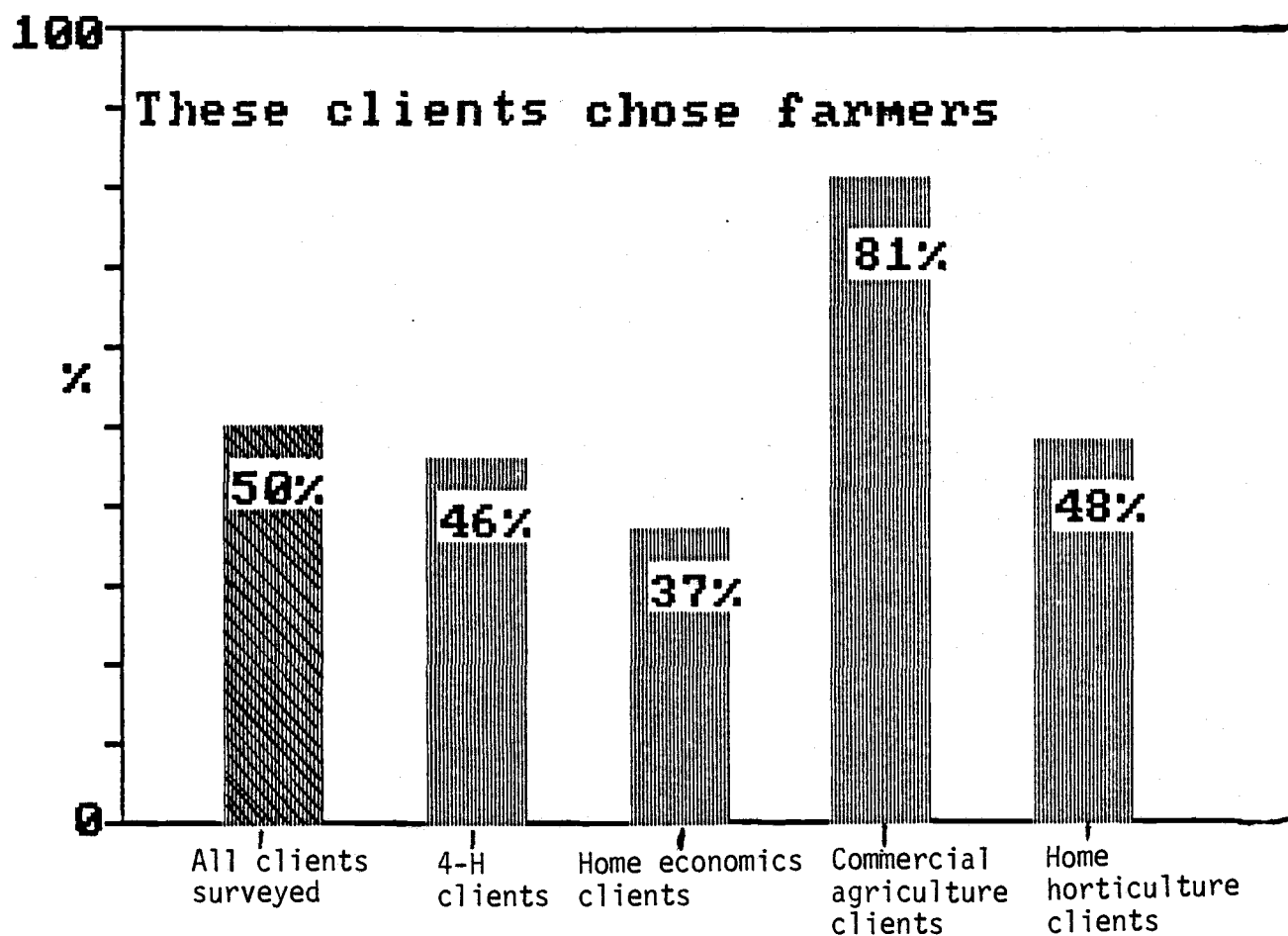
## CLIENTS ARE A HIGHER THAN AVERAGE INCOME GROUP



### QUESTION:

Which of the following income categories best describes the gross annual income of you and other family members living in your home. Does your family income before taxes total less than \$26,000 per year or more than \$26,000 per year?

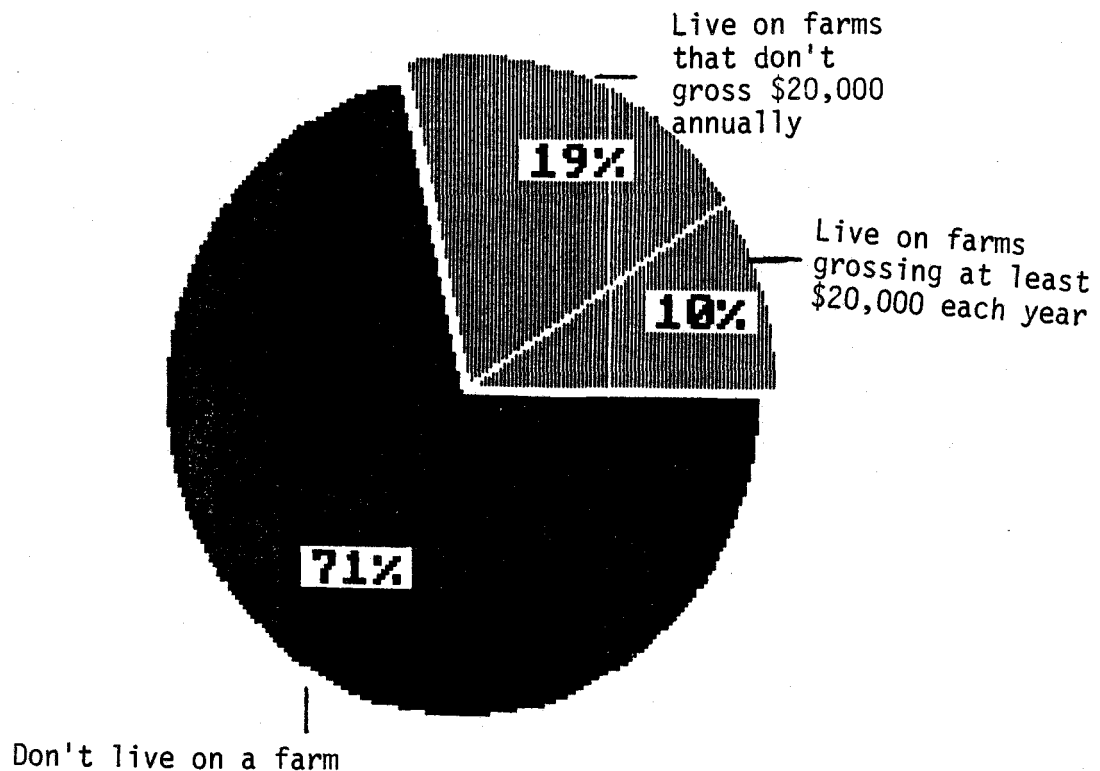
**QUESTION: Is it more important to serve farmers or consumers in Marion County?**



**Client groups tended to respond with their personal best interest in mind.**



# **MOST EXTENSION CLIENTS DON'T LIVE ON FARMS**

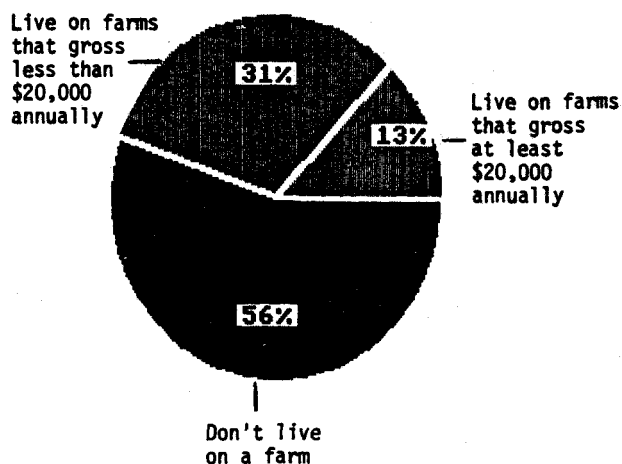


While 29% of our clients report they live on a farm, only 10% live on farms that gross \$20,000 or more annually.

# WHICH PROGRAMS SERVE THE MOST FARMERS?

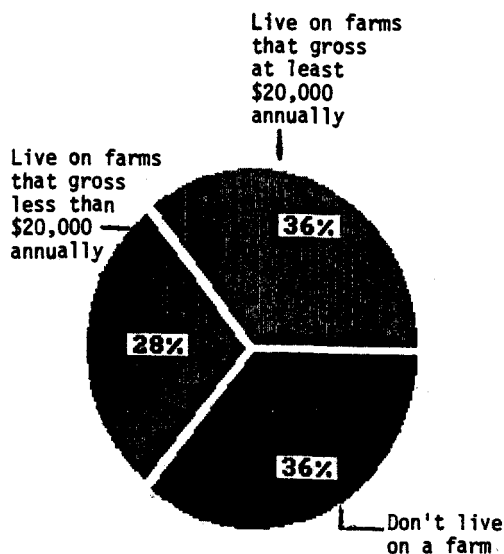
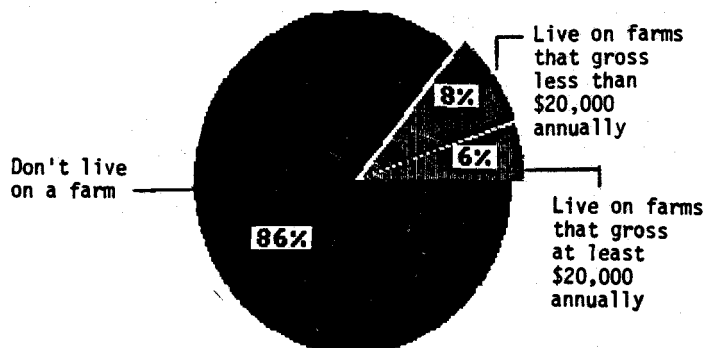
## 4-H

44% of 4-H clients say they live on farms; 13% live on farms that gross at least \$20,000 annually.



## HOME ECONOMICS

14% of home economics clients say they live on farms; 6% of them live on farms that gross at least \$20,000 each year.



## COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

64% of commercial agriculture clients live on farms; 36% of them live on farms that gross at least \$20,000 annually.

## **HOW DO CLIENTS SURVEYED PERCEIVE THE OFFICE?**

- 90% know the office has information on many topics
- 97% see staff as friendly
- 89% say agents are experts
- 84% think the office brings residents the latest scientific information
- 98% say agriculture is important to the local economy
- 76% know the office is part of Oregon State University

## **WHAT CLIENTS DON'T KNOW....**

- 46% don't know the office has information to help clients cut electric bills
- 44% don't know agents work with teenagers
- 43% don't know most 4-H club aren't living on farms
- 55% don't know local tax dollars pay some office expenses
- 59% don't know volunteers help plan educational programs
- 84% don't know agents are OSU faculty members

## THE AVERAGE CLIENT IS SATISFIED WITH LEVELS OF SERVICE

- 99% generally satisfied with services
- 94% usually receive help requested
- 95% say agents usually do good job
- 89% get quick answers to questions

### WHAT THEY SAID....

"I like the courteous service - they are friendly and seem interested in your problem, and they usually take care of it to my satisfaction."

"They send out pamphlets and information right away."

"I feel that it's the ultimate answer, the authentic, researched answer. It's the only place I know where I could get these answers."

"Good information -- free."

"You get the help you need."

# **THE MOST COMMON SUGGESTION WAS TO INCREASE PUBLICITY**

## **CLIENT SUGGESTIONS- IN ORDER OF POPULARITY**

- Have more publicity
- Have experts available more
- Hire more staff
- Improve information - update/have more
- Agents spend more time in the field
- Have more lectures
- Have a brochure
- Serve youth or younger people
- Have a clearer listing in the phone book
- Be open more

# A SAMPLE OF SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

"Get the average person to know about you more--advertise. The average person doesn't know the variety of services you offer. Start a group to work with disadvantaged homemakers--women who are poor or lack education--these are often single mothers or older women. Help them develop self-confidence, job skills, and help them learn how to look for a job and where to go."

"Let the public know more about what you offer. Advertise, but I know this is costly. Have inexpensive brochures to get to the public--put them somewhere the public will pick them up."

"You need to get the word out that you're there, and what kind of services you offer. I read that article in the paper when that lady retired, and saw there are many other services you offer. I hadn't known about them before. The paper was a good way to get out the word."

"The only way to improve is to reach more people. A lot of people don't know about it. I was unaware of it for years."

"More publicity to help people know about the services available."

"I would like an agent available when I call and not have to call again and again."

"More staff to answer questions."

"Too low a profile. Should let the public know more about them besides through the newspaper, or have bigger articles in the paper."

"I'd like to see the Extension Service be a leader in new trends like organic gardening and farming. Make a move away from pesticides and toward organic gardening and farming. Advisory committee members are very locked into agricultural industry. I know they have to work with them, but to have them so heavily influence policy is detrimental to the Extension Service."

"With cutbacks, you can't often get the person you want. The horticulturist is only in on three days a week and it's sometimes hard to call on those days. More personnel. Of course, then I'd have to pay for it, but I'd use it."

"I see you as an educational service. You need better public relations and better marketing of services available. You need more staff--there's too large a demand for services for present staff."

"Do a little more work in the area of new crops. Help farmers diversify to keep their heads above water. Introduce new crops. Do something to keep us abreast of what's going on in the rest of the world."

"Make people aware of all the services Extension offers. Hard to locate Extension in the phone book. Where are you located?"

"Possibly to be listed in the yellow pages, or in the white pages have more explanation of the services available. Have better education in the county so the public can know you are there. Place ads: Nickel ads."

"Make yourself more visible; open house, workshops, Extension agents setting up contacts with local schools, satellite office--or at least have one available in other communities like the bookmobile. Greater involvement of agents in outlying communities."

"More publicity to let people know it's there. Also, have things more available for the working person--like the study groups could meet more in the evenings. Offer short-term talks--like on money management and finances--in seminars at noon for working people. Go into the work place for a noon seminar, like Chemeketa does."

"I would like to see more done for young people."

"Make people aware that the Extension is more than just farming."

"Agents need more contact with farmers--come out to the farm--on-site help."

"Extension agents should be more in contact with the University. Be more up-to-date on chemicals, etc. Farmers know more about the problems than they do. The seed and chemical representatives know more. Extension agents should be more up-to-date."

"Let it be known that one day a week, on a specific day, each agent will be in to answer commercial agriculture questions--berries, horticulture, Christmas trees, ornamentals--they're never in."

"If you had a translator to read the berry newsletter--otherwise they're useless." (from a Russian who doesn't speak English).

"More staff--community outreach--advertising--more phone lines."

"The Extension Office should be highlighted in the local newspapers throughout Oregon. These should cover all aspects of programs offered and available to the public. These articles could be published quarterly, semi-annually or annually."

"Let people be aware of the programs available--start with young people."

"Provide the MOST up-to-date technological information possible. I know they're close to the leading edge, but it's possible to be closer. Due to Gramm-Rudman, consider charging for services rendered. The true test of service is whether people are willing to pay for it. Charge for classes, etc. This will provide money for Extension and show what people are willing to pay for."

"Stable budget. Separate budget for voting."



Study conducted and report prepared by Ann Meadowbrook,  
organizational psychology, University of Oregon, and  
Marion County Extension Media Relations Coordinator.