THE OPPORTUNITES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL FOREST GENETICS COMMITTEE

by

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Fourth Southern Forest Tree Improvement Conference, I am happy to have the opportunity to discuss regional research with you, including the opportunities and responsibilities of the S-23 Regional Forest Genetics Committee. To begin with, we should realize that many biological problems do not recognize state boundaries. For example, little leaf disease of pine is not limited to Alabama by the Georgia-Alabama line. The solution to such problems is frequently to be found through cooperation. These facts form the background for regional research.

Most simply, regional research is defined as research on problems of interest to two or more states and in which two or more states cooperate. Cooperation, however, should be in the form of division of labor among operators, or conscious and needed replication, not duplication of effort nor a series of unrelated activities.

Many types of problems are amenable to attach through regional cooperative research. Fundamental research which may be concentrated at a few locations but the results of which may have widespread application is especially suitable to the regional approach. A second type is that which may be influenced by environmental factors and which may require widespread replication throughout the region. A third is research that is too costly in terms of numbers of subjects or amounts of equipment to be undertaken by a single institution.

The passage of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 (now known as the Hatch Act, Amended) gave great impetus to regional research but cooperation did not await the passage of that Act nor is all cooperative research supported by RRF funds. The authors of the Research and Marketing Act recognized the importance of cooperation, stipulated that not more than 25 per cent of the funds appropriated thereunder to the State Experiment Stations be used for regional research, and directed the U. S. Department of Agriculture to cooperate with the States wherever feasible. One of the advantages of regional research is that a few Stations, working cooperatively, can frequently attack a problem of regional concern; few problems need involve all Stations of the region when attacked on a regional basis.

Since Schools of Forestry in some of the Southern Land-Grant Colleges

apparently have no direct administrative or organic relationship to the Agricultural Experiment Stations of those institutions, and since many of you interested in forest tree improvement are not directly associated with colleges or the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it is desirable that we discuss the general philosophy, organization, and functioning of regional RRF research. To begin with, all regional RRF projects are supported partially by RRF funds appropriated by the Congress for research in the State Experiment Stations. Thus the Experiment Station directors in a region are administratively responsible for RRF projects in much the same way that they are for other research projects. Although the RRF funds are not appropriated directly to any State Experiment Station, by agreement each Southern Director knows the total amount of RRF funds that will be allocated to the Station that he serves.

Proposals for new regional projects are reviewed by the Southern Regional Research Committee (composed of three elected Directors) and then submitted to the Southern Experiment Station Directors. If approved, a Director is appointed as Administrative Adviser who is authorized to call a meeting of the Technical Committee for the purpose of developing a regional project outline. The Technical Committee is composed of representatives of interested State Experiment Stations and of the appropriate agencies in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Technical Committee is an entity formed to develop a regional outline and to conduct cooperative research. Being an entity, it is not subordinate to or under the jurisdiction of a broader group, although liaison with other groups having related interests is highly desirable. It should not attempt to become a scientific society. The regional project should be designed to attack problems of broad regional concern but it should have definite objectives; in very rare instances should a Technical Committee attempt to write so broad an outline as to preempt an entire field of work. After the regional project outline is developed, it is reviewed by the Southern Regional Research Committee, approved by the Chairman of the regional directors, and forwarded to the Committee of Nine for review and approval before submission to the State Experiment Stations Division. Each Experiment Station Director has an opportunity to assess the importance of the problem to his State, to evaluate the special interests of his staff, and to weigh other factors in determining whether his Stations should participate. Each participating State Stations submits a state contributing project to cover the work that it will undertake.

The RRF budget consists of the RRF funds allocated to the project from the total of such funds available to the several Experiment Stations. Few regional projects, however, are supported entirely by RRF funds. The U. S. Department of Agriculture supplies funds to support its participation.

With this background, we should be better able to understand the responsibilities, opportunities, and limitations of the Technical Committee for the S-23 regional project entitled "The Application of Genetics and Cytology to the Improvement of Southern Pines." No one can quarrel with the assertion that the need for the improvement of Southern pines is a

problem of wide regional importance. The fundamental sciences of genetics and cytology have been shown to fit one of the truest definitions of regional research as they have been applied to the improvement of other crops. The number of foresters trained in genetics and cytology is limited. Even if it were desirable for every State Station to have forest geneticists and cytologists on its staff, the supply would not equal the demand.

It is obvious, 'therefore, that the S-23 project meets the best criteria for regional research. The opportunities and responsibilities of the Technical Committee are self-evident. From this cooperative research can come results of far-reaching importance to Southern Forestry.