

## Who Is Our Clientele?

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When we ask, "Who is our clientele?", we probably mean, "Who reads *PLANT DISEASE*?" Or, who reads any of the publications of the Society? Whom do plant pathologists serve? Do plant pathologists speak only to plant pathologists? Have we something to say to other agricultural scientists and to the public at large? Some answers may be found among certain interesting statistics.

The Director of Publications for APS, Steve Nelson, analyzed the list of initial subscribers to *PLANT DISEASE*, exclusive of APS

membership. They were agronomists and plant breeders (27%), horticulturists (19%), entomologists (12%), weed scientists (12%), arboriculturists (11%), nurserymen (7%), foresters (5%), county agents (4%), nematologists (2%), and a miscellaneous group (1%). We hasten to add that some of these professional people are also APS members. This is fairly representative of plant agriculture and suggests a wide diversity of professional agriculturists.

In the premiere issue of *PLANT DISEASE*, 21 commercial firms advertised their products or services. They represented chemical and fungicide industries, equipment manufacturers, seed companies, book companies, and consultants. Moreover, 56 agribusiness or industrial concerns are Sustaining Associates of APS and represent the same diversity of activity as the advertisers. Obviously, professional plant pathologists in experiment stations, on college and university faculty, in state and federal departments of agriculture, and in industry share common problems. All of us gain new information from research and develop the technology and operational services needed to make the research useful. Materials essential to the study and control of plant diseases have to become available for experimenter and grower. Unquestionably, we number professional and technical personnel in industry and agribusiness among our clientele.

As of March 1980, there were 12,159 county agents in the United States, representing both county and area field staff. Moreover, there are 4,452 state specialists in the extension service. Granted that these numbers include both animal and plant specialists as well as home demonstration agents, there is still a large group of technical people who need and use information generated by plant pathologists. In addition, state

departments of agriculture employ technically trained persons in regulatory and quarantine services separately from, or in cooperation with, federal agencies with similar functions. Are we meeting the needs of these people?

Another way to look at the question of clientele is to examine records of a plant disease clinic. Who responds to this service? Laura Sweets, who directed the clinic at Minnesota, reported that more than 10,000 contacts were made in 1979, with 3,100 in the peak month of July. Of that number, 6% were county agents and 94% were citizens who contacted the clinic by mail, by telephone, or in person. Among the questions answered or diseases diagnosed, those concerning forest and shade trees led the list (44%), followed by fruits (13%), vegetables (10%), turf (8%), ornamentals (7%), houseplants (4%), field crops (2%), and miscellaneous plants (4%). About 7% of the contacts involved poisonous mushrooms, poisonous plants, and weeds. These figures reflect plant problems associated with a large urban area, different from those in other states or locations. Nevertheless, they illustrate that our clientele is not only the professional or technical agriculturist but also the urban dweller with problems in house, lawn, and garden.

APS meets some needs by publishing compendia on diseases of corn, soybean, wheat, and alfalfa, of which about 55,000 copies have been sold—half of them the corn compendium. Compendia on potato, cotton, and elm diseases are forthcoming. We are reaching many who are not plant pathologists, since Fran Fisher, in the *World Directory of Plant Pathologists*, estimates there are only 12,000 plant pathologists in the world, located in 125 countries or areas.

The need for food is universal. Problems in food production are international. Those engaged in the increase of food supplies in highly populated nations must come to grips with plant disease problems and how to cope with them. Dr. L. Chiarappa reported recently that in 1978, the FAO of the United Nations provided technical assistance for 1,500 projects valued at \$800 million and approved or operational in 132 countries. Members of APS work in 75 countries and in every state of the United States and in every Canadian province. We have national and worldwide responsibilities to cooperate in increasing food supplies to combat hunger when resources are dwindling. As E. C. Stakman said on innumerable occasions, "Hunger will not be alleviated by spinning gossamers in ivory towers." Thus, we need to address ourselves to the clientele involved in the international programs sponsored by governments and foundations.

We should be "smart outside," as J. G. Horsfall frequently admonishes. In our careers and professional activities, we should look at both the science and the profession of plant pathology and seek to make our contribution in either or both of these areas.