

# Doctor of Plant Health Degree and International Programs: The Council Acts

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In this editorial, I would like to highlight two long-standing issues confronting APS that may finally be approaching resolution and action. These are the position of APS regarding 1) an interdisciplinary doctoral degree in plant health protection and 2) technical aid to increase food production in developing countries.

### Plant health practitioner.

In 1958, at our Golden Jubilee meeting, J. G. Horsfall proposed the granting of a new doctoral degree for those who practice the "art" of plant pathology (*Plant Pathology: Problems and Progress, 1908-1958*).

He felt that a degree distinct from the Ph.D. would lead to more relevant training for extension specialists, and that this aspect of plant pathology would develop more fully if its functions were not confused with those of the science of plant pathology.

This issue was raised periodically during the next 20 years. Some specific proposals were made toward implementing the degree by J. F. Tammen and F. A. Wood (*Plant Disease—An Advanced Treatise*, Vol. 1). To my knowledge, however, no position has been taken by APS and no institution in this country has undertaken to offer such a degree. Most recently, an interdisciplinary doctoral degree in plant health was advocated by J. A. Browning in his presidential address at the 1982 annual meeting (PLANT DISEASE 67:575-577) and in a chapter in our Diamond Jubilee volume, *Challenging Problems in Plant Health*, and by J. B. Kendrick in two editorials in *California Agriculture* in 1984.

In response to Dr. Browning's initiative, APS President R. E. Ford, in 1983, appointed a special committee, chaired by W. Merrill, to investigate the feasibility of and necessity for a professional doctoral degree in plant health. The committee's report strongly endorsed the need for the degree and urged APS leadership in the development of such programs. It recommended a highly structured program of training in the plant protection disciplines and in plant physiology, ecology, and soil science, as well as economics, crop production and management, business and agricultural law, computer science, communication skills, and an internship. The report of the committee was published in the June issue of *Phytopathology News*.

Council's response to the report of the Merrill committee was to affirm the concept of a professional degree in plant health. The language in the minutes is as follows: "The APS Council recognizes the need for a general practitioner's degree in plant health care. This should be a professional degree and could parallel the M.D. or D.V.M. degree. Council recommends further that the Intersociety Consortium for Plant Protection (ISCPP) consider the nature of training needed for such a degree and encourages one or a few educational institutions to develop a program leading to a general practitioner's professional degree."

The ISCPP, last October, submitted to CSRS a proposal requesting funding to study the present plant health care system in the United States, and especially to address the research, education, and extension needs for the training of plant health care practitioners.

I believe it is time for our Society to provide this symbolic act of support for the concept of a professional degree in plant

health care. It would provide another educational option for those wishing to enter careers in extension or private practice for plant protection. An interdisciplinary plant health care profession will inevitably involve colleagues in disciplines other than plant pathology. Therefore, I suggest that a need may arise for a professional organization of plant health care professionals outside APS, to provide mutual support, for the sponsorship of meetings, and possibly the publication of a professional journal.

**APS participation in international food production programs.** The issue of the policy of APS regarding aid to developing countries arose first at a symposium on the World Food-Population Confrontation at the 1975 annual meeting. W. C. Paddock proposed that APS adopt a resolution recommending that a moratorium be placed on research programs to increase food production in countries 1) with an accelerating growth rate or 2) whose population growth was above the world average (*Proc. Am. Phytopathol. Soc.* 3:40-46). He argued that to increase food production in these countries would contribute to overpopulation leading to greater suffering and more deaths than would occur in the absence of such assistance. (J. S. Niederhauser responded to some of Dr. Paddock's arguments in an editorial in the May 1985 issue of PLANT DISEASE.)

Council at that time debated this issue, assigned the matter to an ad hoc committee for study, and subsequently asked the newly formed Public Responsibilities Committee to propose recommendations for consideration. To my knowledge, no position was ever taken by Council. In 1983, Dr. Paddock repeated his challenge in an invited chapter in our Diamond Jubilee volume, *Challenging Problems in Plant Health*.

Our lack of response to Dr. Paddock's challenge has raised the question of what the policy of APS is regarding involvement in international programs. Since no point of view other than Dr. Paddock's was expressed in the Diamond Jubilee book, one could infer that the policy expressed by Dr. Paddock is that of APS, or that we have no policy at all. Reacting to these concerns, the Caribbean Division at its meeting last October approved a resolution requesting that the APS International Cooperation Committee prepare a proposal for Council defining the policy of APS 1) in relation to international programs dedicated to increasing food production in the world and 2) the relation that these programs must have to world population stabilization.

A statement was prepared by the International Cooperation Committee and was adopted in tentative form by Council at its midyear meeting last February. Though the wording is not yet final, its essence will be that APS reaffirms its commitment to support an increase in plant health research and education, particularly in developing countries, while realizing that population stabilization and sustainable food production should be the long-term goals of any such effort. The resolution will be finalized by Council in Reno and presented to the membership for approval at the business meeting.

I hope our membership will see fit to support the resolution. While no one can doubt that population increases have contributed mightily to world hunger and that population stabilization is absolutely essential to long-term success in feeding hungry people, I think few of us would agree that withholding our assistance is the appropriate response.

Establishment of a clear policy by APS in these matters is likely to stimulate greater involvement by APS members—and APS itself—in programs designed to increase food production and in support of efforts to control population growth. If the resolution is approved, proposals will be solicited from the appropriate APS committees, with the aim of implementing specific programs at the 1986 annual meeting in Orlando.