

DRAFT

ON THE REORGANIZATION OF ESCOP

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Introduction:

The members of ESCOP met in Washington D.C. February 11 to 13, 1998 at their regularly scheduled time. A portion of the meeting's agenda was set aside by the ESCOP Chair Dan Rossi to discuss organizational issues. A White Paper was developed and distributed to the participants prior to the meeting to help frame the issues and set the direction for the discussion. The [White Paper](#) explored a number of topics, with specific reference to the structure and operations of ESCOP.

At the conclusion of the ESCOP meeting it was noted that more time was needed to complete discussion of the topic, and that extending the dialogue to include the Spring regional association meetings would add to the richness of the discussions. This paper was then requested as a basis for those Spring meetings.

This document is not a summary of the February ESCOP discussions, but it attempts to map the next set of organizational considerations, as ESCOP conducts this self-examination. Feed back from the Spring meetings will be considered at the April ESCOP Executive Committee meeting, as the Committee plans the next steps in this process.

History:

During the process of revising the Experiment Station Section's (ESS) Rules of Operation (formerly the By Laws, which are now integrated with the former ESCOP By Laws), it became evident that a review of ESCOP's organization would be beneficial, if for nothing more than to confirm that the present structure is preferred over all other possible options.

Some have said that ESCOP has evolved into a structure of subcommittee that may not necessarily reflect the committee's current and future needs. Some components of the ESCOP "agenda" are not now represented as subcommittees, while other areas have ESCOP-sanctioned subcommittees that are no longer contributing to the Committee's agenda. Some of the existing subcommittees may reflect individual interests, rather than the Committee's needs. And, in a few cases, these individuals are no longer active in ESCOP.

Issues:

In the process of ESCOP's February 1998 discussion the participants identified several issues that seem relevant to the process of redefining the Committee's organization. These issues are:

1. ***The number of "tasks"***- Depending on one's point of view there are between 15 and 25 "tasks" that need to be performed by ESCOP, when fulfilling its responsibilities to ESS. Clearly this is too many subcommittees to expect sustained activities from a loose federation of institutions. ESCOP depends on voluntary participation to complete tasks. Thus some lumping of areas of responsibility seems necessary, if only to make the "agenda" of ESCOP manageable.
2. ***The lack of continuity***- The tenure of ESCOP subcommittee Chairs are in many cases (but not all) made for determinant periods. This planned change-out of chairs has contributed to some significant interruptions in subcommittee activities. New leadership, quite expectedly, often changes a subcommittee's direction or focus. Although change may in-and-of itself be good, it is the lack of subcommittee continuity that seems to be contributing to the inefficient use of ESCOP members' time and energy. And it seems that this discontinuity may be working against ESCOP completing its tasks for the ESS.
3. ***Constrained resources***- No member of ESCOP has an unlimited travel budget to participate in ESCOP activities. Great care must be exercised to be absolutely sure that all committee and subcommittee participation will be effective and efficient use of their travel funds.
4. ***Time demands***- Today's fast-paced SAES administrative duties place extra demands on ESCOP to be sure that every member's participation is worthwhile for them, and beneficial to the system. Greater attention to facilitating and supporting a Director's involvement in ESCOP seems to be needed.
5. ***Communication***- The exchange of information among subcommittee and with ESCOP is not, at present, efficient. Information that is necessary for one subcommittee to function does not get forwarded from the source. Recent examples of one ESCOP subcommittee assuming functions that might have been better done by another subcommittee is but one type of communication

problem that ESCOP is facing. Another example is the missed opportunity for subcommittees to jointly work on common activities, and thus leverage skills and talent otherwise not available.

Strategies:

For purposes of discussion, the following strategies are offered for further discussion:

1. ESCOP should combine the multiple tasks into a manageable number of standing committees, and address any extraordinary activities through the appointment of ad hoc committees specifically charged for a defined time period. (Examples of appropriate ad hoc committees are: strategic planning, initiative development; futuring). The proposed number of ESCOP standing subcommittees is five. (See next item for the rationale for this number, and a proposed list of standing subcommittees in a following section.)
2. Permanently assign one Executive Director (from one of the five regional associations) to one of each of the five ESCOP standing subcommittees. This configuration would provide ESCOP with continuity for subcommittee activities, and it should greatly help facilitate and support subcommittee activities. Communications among subcommittees should also be enhanced.
3. Form a permanent secretariat for ESCOP. The secretariat would be responsible for meeting organization and support, meeting minutes, planning conference calls, web page development, intra-committee communications, and support for the ESCOP Chair and the ESCOP executive committee.
4. More clearly define the responsibilities of the standing subcommittees through the development of charges, terms of reference and task-reporting responsibilities (content, frequency, progress).
5. Identify liaisons to ESCOP with the intention of having them help us complete our agenda, not report to us on their organization's activities.

Proposed Structure:

The following proposed structure for ESCOP's subcommittees represents one combination of "tasks" that would meet the strategy of having a manageable number of committee subunits that could be better facilitated and supported. Other suggested configurations are invited.

1. *Policy, Organization, and Operations:*

- Responsibilities- Develop and recommend national research policies; recommend organizational structures for national activities; oversee the ESS Rules of Operation.
- Liaisons to- BOA Policy Committee; COPS; CSREES Liaisons from- CSREES, COPS, ARS, ERS, Forestry, Vet. Med., Human Ecology

2. *Resources, Legislation and Finance:*

- Responsibilities- Draft proposed legislation; develop proposed federal budgets; coordinate human resource development and leadership programs; monitor national needs for facilities and large equipment.
- Liaisons to: BOA; COPS; ARS; REE; OMB (?); Congress (?) Liaisons from: CSREES; COPS; ARS; CARET; Commodity groups (?); NGOs (?)

3. *Strategic Partnerships:*

- Responsibilities- Build stronger federal-state relations; seek links to the private sector; work with NGOs as new partners.
- Liaisons to: CSREES; ARS; ERS; other federal partners; COPS Liaisons from: CSREES/Partnership Office; ARS/NPS; ERS; COPS; Forestry; Vet. Med.; Human Ecology

4. *Science and Technology:*

- Responsibilities- Program development; planning national initiatives; recommend system-wide positions on technical issues; research priority-setting exercises.
- Liaisons to: BOA; CSREES; OSTP; COPS; ARS; ERS
- Liaisons from: CSREES; CARET; COPS; other federal agencies

5. *Evaluation and Assessment:*

- Responsibilities- Interactions with the federal partner on GPRA issues; efforts in image enhancement; working with advocacy groups.
- Liaisons to: BOA; CSREES; AESOP; ACE; COPS Liaisons from: CSREES; COPS; ACE; AESOP

An additional Regional Research standing committee will be needed to provide continuous coordination of the regional research portfolio. It is proposed that this subcommittee of ESCOP be comprised of all five of the Executive Directors and their administrative assistants; a representative of ECOP; and representation from the CSREES Partnership Office of their choosing. This standing subcommittee would be empowered to oversee aspects of operating the regional research system with a national perspective, and in partnership with CSREES.

Comments on this proposed configuration can be voiced at your regional association's Spring meeting, or via e-mail to Dave MacKenzie at: dm184@umail.umd.edu