

ON THE ORGANIZATION OF ESCOP

A White Paper

February 5, 1998

Introduction:

At the next ESCOP meeting in mid-February in Washington, D.C. a portion of the agenda has been set aside to discuss the organization of ESCOP. In anticipation of this discussion ESCOP's Chair requested that a White Paper be developed to set out some of the issues related to the Committee's organization, with the intention of stimulating membership thinking on how the Committee might be better organized.

Two components, **organizational structure** and **organizational operation**, are relevant to these planned discussions. In this light the following structural and operational issues have been developed for the purpose of obtaining the memberships' input into a discussion that will look at ESCOP and its preferred organization as it prepares for the next century.

Structure:

The structure of ESCOP has traditionally been provided as a set of Subcommittees that report to the parent Committee. Each of the existing Subcommittees should be reexamined for their utility, reformed to meet defined goals, charged with a specific mandate, and given a timetable for completion of their activities.

[HOT LINK TO ESCOP SUBCOMMITTEES PAGE](#)

Current and anticipated ESCOP Subcommittee activities are:

1. Research Policy- The BOA is moving to create a committee on science policy. This makes sense, given:

- the 1995 proclamation by President Bill Clinton of a national science policy that barely mentions agriculture;
- the recent call by Vice Chairman Vernon J. Ehlers of the House of Representatives' Science Committee asking for contributions to a congressional study on science policy (see Science 279 p.302 16 Jan. 1998); and,
- the absence of any national agricultural research policy statement.

Additionally, the past Chair of CARET called for a policy statement on agricultural research, teaching and extension. ESCOP's contributions to this BOA activity should come from concerted activity in agricultural science research policy. How this would be organized needs to be discussed by ESCOP.

2. Issues Identification- Strong signals from Congress and messages from constituent groups strongly indicate a need for giving more attention to listening to our customers and engaging our critics in dialogue. Moreover, calls for more attention for underserved constituencies will require greater efforts in information gathering. How this can be supported by ESCOP needs to be discussed.

3. Planning- Past efforts in planning by ESCOP have focused mostly on forming a research agenda, although it was done under the title of strategies. Less attention has been given to other forms of planning, such as futuring, implementation plans, marketing plans, advocacy plans, action plans, and staffing plans.

An expanded mandate for this subcommittee seems to be indicated. Moreover, the coordination of the Committee's resource planning, budget planning and legislative planning with its own strategic planning has not been evident. This area of Committee organization needs discussion by ESCOP.

4. Programs- One outcome of the current round strategic planning has been a proposal to move from a program-based organization (e.g., Pest Management Strategies, Genetic Resources, Human Nutrition, Social Sciences, Environmental Affairs) to a goal-based organization. Concern for the proliferation of programmatic subcommittees precipitated the choice to focus on the partnership's five goals, as this would contain transactional costs, and greatly facilitate coordination with ECOP and ARS, which have both adopted the same five goals. How should this goal-based organization of subcommittees be structured and supported?

5. Creating Initiatives- Emerging issues and relevant opportunities for the system's response can be accomplished through initiatives. Past ESCOP organizational activities allowed for the formation of national initiatives, but the mechanism was abandoned some years back. Current practices by ECOP to advance and graduate national initiatives offers ESCOP an opportunity for partnerships with extension in emerging areas. Attention to this point by ESCOP seems justified.

6. Partnerships- Links to our traditional and potential partners need to be fostered and supported. These partnerships include (in addition to ESCOP's core partners CSREES, ARS, ERS and FS) non-traditional federal agencies (e.g., EPA and NASA for the ESCOP Environmental Initiative); the professional societies (e.g., CROPS 99, FAIR 2002); the private sector, and others. Establishing these linkages and nurturing continued relationships with these agencies seem to be in need of ESCOP's consideration.

7. Budget and Legislative- The current ESCOP Budget Committee interacts with the ECOP Budget Committee, the ACOP Budget Committee to some extent, and primarily with the BOA Budget Committee. This has been done with mixed results. A second Subcommittee addresses issues related to legislative affairs. Some have argued that too little coordination occurs between these activities (i.e., budget advocacy and legislative advocacy) and the planning processes of ESCOP. Moreover, during the recent round of Farm Bill discussions it has been noted that the *ad hoc* Title VIII Coordinating Committee took the lead on legislative affairs, rather than the ESCOP Legislative Subcommittee. The point for discussion here goes to the notion of expanded responsibility for developing new strategies for obtaining authorizations and appropriations from Congress, and for securing resources (e.g., human, financial, political, physical, management, excess property) from non-traditional federal agencies. This approach would seem to be best organized through well coordinated, or perhaps integrated, subcommittee actions. Liaison to the BOA and the COP budget committees would need to be a continued responsibility.

8. Research Infrastructure and Capacity- Recent calls for a national inventory of SAES facilities has raised the need for more attention to this ability to quantify the system's resource, at least in some measure. The question here is one of how to organize ESCOP's Subcommittees to better address current and future requests for inventories for multiple purposes.

9. Impact Assessments- In the age of GPRA and image enhancement there seems to be a need for more attention to responsibilities for the analysis of the successes and benefits of public investments in agricultural research (and extension) for enhanced communications to decision makers and their constituents. An expanded agenda for the ECOP/ ESCOP Image Enhancement Subcommittee might be the best way to provide this needed attention.

10. Regional Research- Ongoing inter-regional coordination and communication with the CSREES Partnership Office is a necessary activity for ESCOP. With the demise of C-9 this need has become very apparent for the management of the Regional Research Program. Representation from the Partnership

Office and ECOP, and participation by the professional staff (a.k.a. Administrative Assistants) of the various regional associations, has been recommended.

11. Management Training- Emergent groups of institutional leaders are entitled to access for training in the skills of management. Oversight of these activities, and the constant need for assessments of the training's effectiveness and value, should emanate from ESCOP. This obligation seems to indicate a need for a subcommittee.

12. Advocate Training- SAES system advocates are in critical need of training in the skills of advocating the value of the SAES system to Congress and other elected officials. This is a responsibility of ESCOP that appears to be in need of more attention and support by a subcommittee.

13. Information Dissemination- Communication with federal agencies other than ESCOP's traditional partners (e.g., EPA, NASA, DOI, DOD, DOE, DOJ) and the offices of the White House (e.g., OMB, OSTP) deserves more attention from ESCOP. Our collective research activities and the federal-state partnership's progress in attaining the five national goals need to be better communicated to political appointees and Senior Executive Service officials to convince them on the benefits of public investments in agricultural research. This is especially true for our base program, given recent federal budget proposals.

14. Other Committee Activities- There will be a need to continue with several of the Committee's traditional functions. These functions may best be embodied in individual subcommittees, or the Committee may want to rearrange them into a new configuration. These functions are now performed by the:

- Executive Subcommittee;
- Chair's Advisory Subcommittee;
- Nominations Subcommittee; and,
- Resolutions Subcommittee.

These activities may require the continuation of separate Subcommittees.

Operations:

The processes used for implementing ESCOP's decisions need to be evaluated. Could other operational procedures provide enhanced responsiveness to the members of ESS? Would better methods of operations more effectively use the time and energy of the Directors who volunteer to serve in the Committee's positions of leadership?

1. Meetings- The need for a more rational annual calendar for ESS/ESCOP meetings has been indicated through comments made by many ESS Directors. Attaining the proper mix of face-to-face meetings of ESS, ESCOP, our working subcommittees, and our advisory committees, along with the conference calls, has been a challenge. Past patterns may need to be changed to better meet the needs of tomorrow's members. Attention should be given to strengthened decision making and consensus building processes.

2. Role of the EDs- Recent changes in expectations and responsibilities of the Executive Directors of the regional associations and their staff have raised the issue of resetting the limits to their authorities and responsibilities. To what degree should the EDs engage in procedural, programmatic, and policy decisions? Should more clear delegations of authority be promulgated by ESCOP?

3. NASULGC Relations- Defining the preferred extent of the Committee's relations with its host association (NASULGC) has been a continuing challenge for ESCOP's leadership. Providing a clear

statement on the present and future relationship for ESS and ESCOP, *vis-a-vis* NASULGC and the other COPs, should be a priority activity for ESCOP .

4. Communications Technology- The emergence of the Internet and the WWW offer ESCOP an exciting opportunity to enhance communications within and beyond the organization. The creation of reliable list servers, home pages, and directories are in need of:

- a communications plan;
- the identification of adequate resources;
- the delegation of some responsibilities; and,
- an up-dated publications policy.

5. Consensus Building and Decision Making Processes- Limited time for ESS and ESCOP deliberations, and the all-too-often rushed dialogue among Directors has appeared to constrain the Committee's decision making processes, and may have slowed progress on needed changes, in some instances. New methods for information exchange and issue resolution seem to be critical needs for ESCOP.

6. Rules of Operation- The recently revised ESCOP Rules of Operation seem adequate for the moment, but an analysis of current and future needs should be conducted to assure all members that the best possible set of rules are in force.