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NOTE ON EDITORIAL POLICY

The Editorial Board of an international Journal like *Experimental Agriculture* defines in broad terms the scientific field in which it will specialize. It then publishes as many acceptable papers as it can in that field up to the limit set by a finely-balanced relation between its subscription rate, the number of subscribers and the costs of producing the Journal. Contributions are unsolicited; the decision on whether or not to accept or reject each paper is taken on the advice of independent referees who are acknowledged authorities in each particular subject.

Experimental Agriculture regularly receives rather more than twice as many papers as it can accommodate. Some of the submitted papers have to be returned because they are not recommended by the referees, but we publish those that are recommended up to the limit of the Journal's economic size, giving preference to those that are of widest international interest. No attempt has so far been made to influence the proportion of papers that are published in any particular subject, though some topics are doubtless of concern to a wider range of readers than others.

Perhaps there is a better way to serve the interests of subscribers and the general welfare of the sector of agriculture that the Journal covers, i.e. the agronomy of tropical crops, including soils, crop nutrition and soil/crop/water relations (as defined in greater detail in the rubric inside the front cover). Some topics within these general terms of reference may be of particular interest and importance, yet may be under-represented in the Journal's make-up. If rather few papers appear on a particular subject over the years workers in that field may be discouraged from submitting contributions because they feel that they would not be accepted by the Journal, or would not be seen by those who might be interested in them.

The purpose of this Note is to mention a few subjects that the Editorial Board thinks could usefully be given more attention. For instance, the general methodology of the subject is always of concern to a Journal such as this, which has in mind a readership that is widely scattered and may include some research workers who do not have easy access to comprehensive libraries. The other topics mentioned in the rubric are all concerned with the improvement of farming systems practised in the warmer countries of the world, but the Board may from time to time wish to redefine the Journal's field of interest. In the meantime, however, the Editor will specially welcome papers on the subjects named below, provided of course that the work meets the usual criteria of rigour and generality of interest, and that the papers are properly presented, as specified in Notes for Contributors and on page 307 of this number.

Methodology of experimental agriculture

During its early years this Journal published a successful series of 15 numbered papers on the Methodology of Experimental Agriculture. The papers covered a wide range of topics, including the planning of experiments, layout and management of plots, methods of recording results, analysis of experimental data and

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writing scientific papers. The Journal offered to send reprints of some of the key papers in this series to anyone who wished to have them and large numbers of copies were in fact requested by workers from all over the world.

The series was discontinued in 1973 but a new series was started in the January 1979 issue with the publication of a paper describing a system of recording the results of field experiments (Riley and Ryder, **15**, 1–14). Other contributions to this new series of Methodology papers will be welcome, specially where they are concerned with the problems of experimentation on agronomic methods peculiar to tropical agriculture, such as multiple cropping (see below).

Multiple cropping

Many tropical crops are grown in mixed or relay systems, yet most critical agronomic experiments have up to now been carried out on sole crops. Such work will doubtless continue to be of great importance, but several papers recently published in this Journal have shown that it is possible, though difficult, to study complicated systems of mixed cropping by the standard methods of agronomic research. The Board will welcome papers that throw further light on the agronomy of mixed cropping, relay cropping (inter-planting) or the production of more than one crop in a year, whether concerned with low or relatively higher input systems.

Pastures and forage crops

If natural grassland is included, pasture and forage species occupy more than twice as much land in the world as arable crops, yet relatively few papers are published on the agronomy of pasture and crops grown for fodder. This is doubtless a reflection of the relatively small amount of critical work which is being done on factors that affect the productivity of such species. Critical papers on broader aspects of pasture and forage, including range management and montane (hill) farming, will be considered by this Journal.

Agronomic aspects of plant breeding

There is no doubt about the importance of plant breeding as an aspect of agricultural research, but there are Journals which specialize in the publication of the results of breeding work and *Experimental Agriculture* will not normally publish papers concerned with genetics or plant breeding as such. The Journal will, however, give sympathetic consideration to papers concerned with the agronomic and other problems of exploiting the products of plant breeding in the context of particular cropping systems. It will particularly welcome experimental studies that seek to establish the historical effects of new varieties on yields or other aspects of crop management and performance. Few such studies have yet been published but they are essential if the agro-economic value of plant breeding is to be properly understood and exploited.