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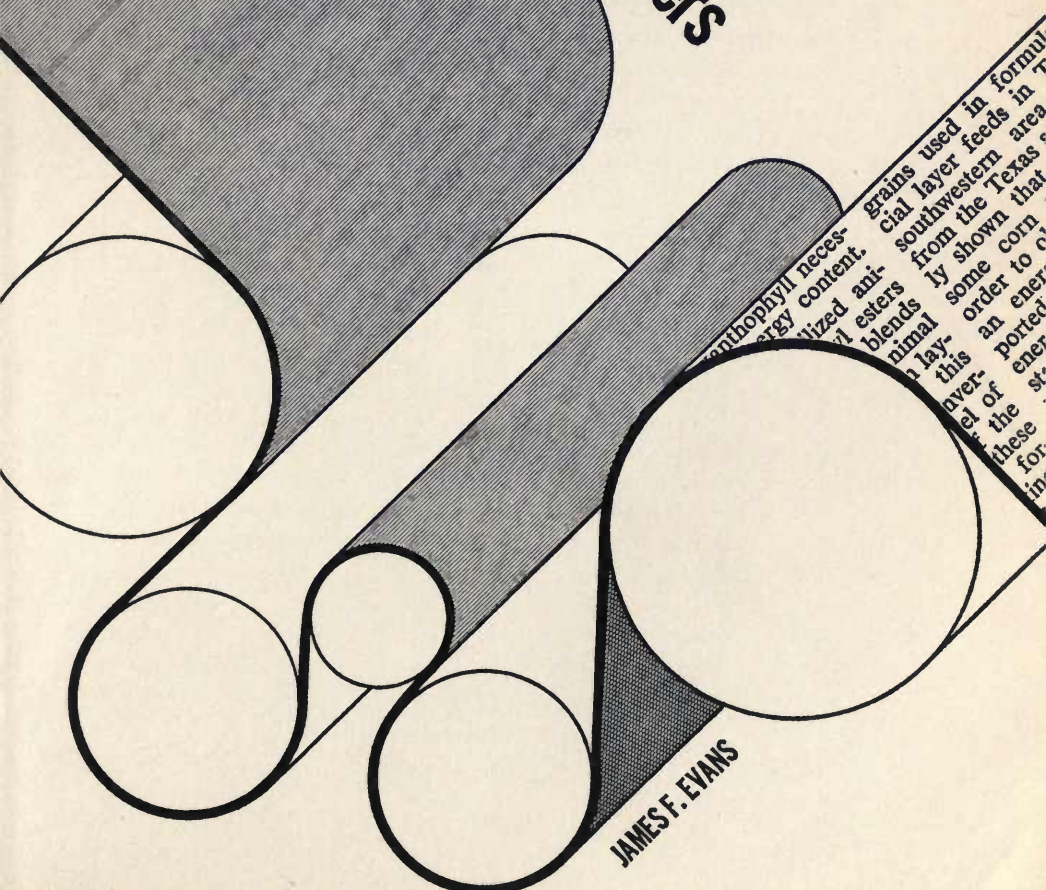
agricultural news in Illinois daily newspapers



CONTENTS

This report summarizes research conducted under a Hatch project on appraisal of Extension methods. The study was conducted by James F. Evans, instructor in agricultural communications. The author wishes to acknowledge help provided by Professor V. I. West in designing the study and analyzing data and Su Ann J. Thomas and R. E. Schingoethe in collecting data.

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AGRICULTURAL NEWS IN ILLINOIS DAILY NEWSPAPERS

A FAST-CHANGING FARM SCENE is prompting newspaper editors to take a close look at their agricultural news.

Today's U.S. newspaper editor, reaching a farm audience comprising about 7 percent of his total readership, can well be expected to treat agricultural news differently from the editor of 1930 whose total audience was 25 percent farm readers.[9]* In Illinois, the 1960 farm population averaged little more than 6 percent of the state's total population, less than half the 1930 share of 13 percent.[4]

Persons and groups wishing to reach farmers through newspapers are keenly interested in how editors are adjusting to these changes. The evidence, however, is fragmentary. Those who provide agricultural news have been aware that fewer newspapers now employ full-time farm editors than in the past.

In more formal efforts communication research workers have used opinion surveys to learn what newspaper editors want in the way of agricultural news. Two Illinois studies are somewhat typical of this approach.

One postcard survey[10] asked 40 Illinois daily newspaper editors about: (a) the extent to which they used farm and home releases from the College of Agriculture, (b) desired number of stories, and (c) desired story length. Half the editors said they used such stories "regularly."

A 1959 report[11] summarized visits to 50 Illinois weekly newspapers. This study identified county extension advisers and the University of Illinois College of Agriculture as two primary sources of farm, home, and garden news.

Useful as these opinion surveys may be, they are not adequate for those wanting to know exactly how newspaper editors are handling news about agriculture. Opinions may not always reflect actions. And such surveys often have not answered an array of other relevent questions:

In what amounts do newspaper editors actually print agricultural news?

Toward whom is the copy aimed?

What news sources account for most agricultural linage?

What topics find greatest appeal among newspaper editors?

* Superior figures refer to literature cited on page 31.

To what extent do editors use agricultural photographs?

What length of agricultural stories do editors actually print?

In what section of the paper is agricultural news usually placed?

To what extent do editors print agricultural news in identified sections?

How much local agricultural news do editors use, compared with nonlocal news?

What use do editors make of bylined agricultural stories?

How much does agricultural linage vary by season of the year?

How much does use of agricultural news vary according to size of newspaper?

How much does agricultural linage vary by day of the week?

WHAT PAST STUDIES INDICATE

Content analysis promises accurate answers to the above questions. This section outlines results of past research of this type conducted throughout the United States. Analysis is confined primarily to findings relating to daily newspapers.

Agricultural news makes up a small share of total. As would be expected, agricultural news has been found to make up a relatively small share of total newspaper linage. Goss[8] found in a 1954 analysis of 38 Vermont newspapers that the dailies devoted only 3.6 percent of their total news space to agriculture. Agricultural news ranged from 1.18 to 8.05 percent of the total newshole in rural editions of eight Midwestern metropolitan dailies studied by Wolfson in 1960.[15] The only Illinois paper in that sample, the *Chicago Tribune*, ranked at the low end of the range with 1.60 percent agricultural news.

Deutschmann's 1959 analysis of the five Ohio dailies in his study[1] showed that agricultural news made up 0.2 to 2.4 percent of total news and editorial space. However, his news and editorial categories did not include special sections such as comics, sports, society, and financial.

A 1948 study of 63 U.S. dailies[12] showed that agricultural news made up 0.3 to 2.3 percent of all nonadvertising space. The mean of percentages was 1.1.

Before 1930, newspaper editors devoted an increasing amount of space to news about agriculture. A study reported in 1934 by Stedman[6] illustrates this trend. Using a sample of 58 daily papers in 13 states, he compared the amount of agricultural news printed by those papers during one week of 1914 and 1930. Stedman found 66 percent more agricultural articles in 1930 than in 1914. However, individual agricultural articles grew shorter during that time. In terms of column inches, agricultural linage increased 45 percent between 1914 and 1930.

Agricultural news comprises smaller share of larger papers. The 1948 study[12] showed that agricultural news made up the following percentage of nonadvertising space of 37 Wisconsin and 18 Oregon dailies:

Average for Wisconsin dailies:

Up to 10,000 circulation .....2.1 percent
10,000–20,000 circulation .....2.3 percent
20,000–30,000 circulation .....1.6 percent

Average for Oregon dailies:

Up to 10,000 circulation .....1.1 percent
10,000–20,000 circulation .....1.1 percent

These findings indicate, but not strongly, that agricultural news made up a smaller share of space in dailies with 20,000 or more circulation than in smaller dailies.

Agricultural news continues to be aimed mainly at farm readers. In a survey of how Ohio newspapers handle agricultural news, Frisbee[2] reported in 1961 that three-fourths of the 164 weekly and daily editors sampled aim their agricultural news at rural readers. He found that two-fifths try to reach suburban readers and one-sixth try to appeal to urban readers.

In Wolfson's 1960 study of Midwest metropolitan dailies, farm editors of all eight papers agreed that they were writing for both the city reader and farm reader but their emphasis varied from newspaper to newspaper.

Dailies stress articles about events and economics. Results of several studies agree quite closely on this point. Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien[8] concluded in a 1963 Minnesota report that ". . . event stories received preferential display in comparison to subject-matter articles." Nearly half of the special events stories were located on page one of the sampled weekly and daily newspapers. Only 14 percent of the subject-matter stories got page-one treatment. Among the daily papers, 10 percent of the events stories were located on page one and only 3 percent of the subject-matter stories. In his 1954 report, Goss found that "dailies used spot news more than subject-matter stories."

Studies by Stedman, Goss, and Schwartz[5] highlight the popularity of market and other economic news among newspaper editors. Stedman found that information about markets for farm products made up more than 20 percent of all articles relating to agriculture, home economics, and 4-H club work appearing in daily papers in both 1914 and 1930.

Goss concluded that economics subjects proved most popular among his sampled Vermont papers.

In a 1950 study of 41 New York State dailies, Schwartz found that marketing and economic topics comprised 42 percent of all agricultural news printed. Rural life topics made up 36 percent, and stories about agricultural production made up the remaining 22 percent.

The 51 Ohio daily editors interviewed in Frisbee's survey placed less stress on economics. They listed the following topics in order of preference: youth organizations, crops, adult organizations, animals, conservation, forestry and wildlife, food buying and nutrition, lawn and garden, food marketing, clothing, engineering, and interrelationship of town and country.

Newspaper staff coverage and Cooperative Extension Service are most-used sources. Newspaper staff members accounted for almost 33 percent of the agricultural information that Ward[13] found in a 1941 study of 63 daily newspapers from 31 states. County extension contributed about 20 percent, state extension service 16 percent, and markets 9 percent. Wire services and other organizations provided most of the remaining 22 percent.

Schwartz's later study in New York State showed somewhat the same pattern. Newspaper staff provided 22 percent of the agricultural news, county extension 20 percent, wire services and syndicates 15 percent, state department of agriculture and markets 15 percent, and state extension service 6 percent. Farm organizations and commercial firms provided the remaining 22 percent.

Photographs comprise a small share of total agricultural linage. Schwartz found that pictures made up about 10 percent of total space devoted to agricultural news. Photos in Stedman's daily papers averaged 13 percent of total agricultural linage in 1914 and 15 percent in 1930.

Agricultural stories are becoming shorter. Story length seems to have declined sharply during the past 50 years. Stedman found that agricultural news stories among 58 dailies averaged 14.3 column inches in 1914 but by 1930 had dropped to 12.5 column inches.

By 1950, when Schwartz carried out his analysis of New York State papers, he found that agricultural stories averaged only 4.7 column inches. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) were less than 5 column inches long. Only 6 percent were longer than 12 column inches.

More recently, Tichenor[7] reported the results of an experiment measuring the effect of length upon usage of agricultural press releases in

40 Wisconsin weeklies. He found that short articles (75 words) got greater use than longer articles (up to 325 words). Almost always the shorter articles were used more often during the week of release. The difference was not so great in the case of eventual usage.

Most agricultural stories are placed in latter sections of the paper. Tichenor *et al.* found that of all subject-matter stories submitted by county advisers to sampled dailies, less than 1 in 20 appeared on the front page. Only 1 in 10 stories about events appeared on the front page.

Most agricultural stories are not in recognized farm sections. Frisbee's survey of Ohio weeklies and dailies showed that about one-fourth of them reported having a regular farm page or column. In the Schwartz study, only 4 of the 41 dailies surveyed had a weekly farm page.

Editors prefer local news over nonlocal news. Little evidence is available based on actual analysis of newspaper content, yet a number of opinion studies, including those in Illinois and Vermont, have shown that editors prefer local news about agriculture.

Subject-matter stories are bylined more often than event stories. Half of the subject-matter stories appearing in the Minnesota dailies which Tichenor *et al.* studied mentioned the person (county agent) who supplied the information. The source person was identified in only 37 percent of the special events stories appearing in those dailies.

Larger papers rely more on staff and wire services. In his New York State study of dailies, Schwartz concluded that ". . . the larger papers rely more on their own staff (probably market reporters) and the wire services for a greater part of their information than do most of the other papers. And in turn the smaller papers depend more on (or at least utilize more fully) the numerous essentially agricultural organizations around the state."

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday are most popular agricultural news release days. This matter seems only partly explored to date. However, Goss's findings in Vermont point to these days as preferred release dates among daily editors.

No studies were found indicating how the amount of agricultural news varies seasonally.

The results and needs indicated by past studies and described on the preceding pages were used as a guide in designing the study reported in the following section. They also were used as guidelines for predicting and analyzing the outcome of this study.

OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURE FOR STUDY

The immediate objectives were (1) to learn more about how Illinois daily newspapers are using agricultural news — how much, what types, from whom, when, where, and in what form; and (2) to get the opinions of Illinois daily newspaper editors about reader-interest trends involving agricultural news.

The long-range objectives were (1) to provide guidelines by which organizations and persons interested in conveying news about agriculture can more precisely serve the needs and desires of newspaper editors; and (2) to create a benchmark against which possible future studies can trace trends in the way Illinois daily newspapers use agricultural news.

Selecting sample

The Illinois Advertising Rate Book and Newspaper Directory was used to develop a list of all non-Chicago daily and twice-weekly papers. Chicago metropolitan area papers were excluded because it was felt that agricultural news coverage in such areas should be analyzed separately.

The sampling frame proved to be 90 newspapers, from which a probability sample of 30 was drawn, stratified by circulation. Based on the standard deviation found in White's thesis,[14] a sample of 30 should provide a standard error of the mean of about 0.4 percent of total news.

Two of the newspapers with under 5,000 circulation were eliminated because they no longer published either daily or twice weekly. The 28 newspapers in the final sample were:

Northern district	
30,000 circulation and over	Rockford Morning Star
	Aurora Beacon-News
10,000–29,999 circulation	Freeport Journal-Standard
	DeKalb Daily Chronicle
	LaSalle-Peru Daily News-Tribune
	Streator Daily Times-Press
5,000–9,999 circulation	None
Less than 5,000	Sycamore Tribune & True Republican
West-central district	
30,000 circulation and over	Quincy Herald-Whig
10,000–29,999 circulation	Kewanee Star-Courier
	Galesburg Daily Register Mail
5,000–9,999 circulation	Monmouth Review Atlas
Less than 5,000	None

East-central district

30,000 circulation and over	Bloomington Daily Pantagraph Decatur Review
10,000–29,999 circulation	Illinois State Register
5,000–9,999 circulation	Lincoln Daily Courier Taylorville Breeze-Courier Mattoon Daily Journal-Gazette
Less than 5,000	Charleston Daily Courier-News

South-central district

30,000 circulation and over	None
10,000–29,999 circulation	None
5,000–9,999 circulation	Hillsboro Journal Robinson Daily News
Less than 5,000	Shelbyville Daily Union Casey Daily Reporter Salem Times-Commoner Lawrenceville Daily Record

Southern district

30,000 circulation and over	None
10,000–29,999 circulation	Southern Illinoisan
5,000–9,999 circulation	Wayne County Press Cairo Evening Citizen
Less than 5,000	Marion Daily Republican

Opinion interviews

The first part of this study involved personal interviews with editorial staff members on each of the selected dailies. A four-page questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed. It sought editors' opinions and expectations regarding agricultural news. Editors were interviewed in their offices between July 1, 1962, and March 1, 1963.

Content analysis

The second part of this study involved analyzing selected issues of the 28 newspapers throughout a year, beginning September 1, 1962. Probability sampling was used in order to make this effort feasible.

Each of the dailies was analyzed during nine weeks of the year, three weeks being selected randomly within each four-month period. A week was used as a sampling unit because it would cover variations by papers that print farm sections on specific days of the week and because nine week-long analyses made possible better seasonal sampling than fewer month-long analyses. Three weeks within three four-month periods also allowed measurement of seasonal changes in newspapers' use of agricultural news.

The nine weeks selected for analysis included:

September-December, 1962: September 23-29, October 21-27, November 18-24

January-April, 1963: January 6-12, February 3-9, April 7-13

May-August, 1963: July 7-13, August 18-24, August 25-31

This part of the study involved analyzing 6,277 news items defined as agricultural news. Editors were not told that their papers were being analyzed.

Definition of terms used in the study

Daily newspaper. Defined in this study as a newspaper published two or more times each week. The 28 papers in the study included 4 published twice a week, 1 published five days a week, 18 published six days a week, and 5 published seven days a week.

Agricultural news. News about agriculture aimed toward farmers, businessmen, and other interested readers. Major categories of such news included agricultural production, marketing, legislation and policy, events, and human interest. Activities of the Future Farmers of America and agriculturally oriented 4-H activities were included. Weather reports, classified farm advertising sections, and garden club articles were excluded.

News item. A piece of news, with or without illustration, set off by customary makeup indicators. Items known as "fillers" were included, as well as longer news articles. A picture with cutline was counted as one news item. Regardless of the number of illustrations used, a picture story was counted as one news item. Cutlines accompanying photographs used in picture stories were counted as part of the body copy of the news item.

Illustration. Photograph, line reproduction, or other nontext presentation.

Agricultural news section. A specifically identified collection of news about agriculture; for example, farm section, farm page, farm markets section.

Linage. Space occupied by news items, measured in column inches. A piece of news material one column wide and 1 inch deep was classified as 1 column-inch. News items were measured to the nearest inch.

Local news item. A news item containing specific reference to people, places, or things within the newspaper's circulation area.

News source. The person or entity from which the newspaper re-

ceived a given news item. By this definition, the source was not necessarily the origin. For example, a wire-service item may have originated from an information office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In this study, the wire service is cited as source of the item.

Syndicates. Commercial agencies, excluding wire services, that are engaged in supplying news, features, and art material to newspapers for profit.

Wire services. Commercial press associations that supply news copy and illustration material to newspapers via leased wire systems. Examples: Associated Press, United Press International.

Staff coverage. Refers to news items gathered and written by newspaper staff members.

Commercial, trade groups. Merchants, business firms, trade associations, and others who seek news space by providing newspapers with news material.

HOW ILLINOIS EDITORS VIEW THEIR AGRICULTURAL NEWS

About one-third considered the farm news page as a "money-maker." Thirty-six percent of the editors said they consider a farm news page or section as a "money-maker" in terms of attracting advertising and circulation. As shown in Table 1, 42 percent answered "no."

Table 1. — Extent to which editors considered a farm news page or section as "money-maker" in terms of attracting advertising and circulation

Response	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
Yes	1(14%)	4(50%)	3(37.5%)	2(40%)	10(36%)
No	4(58%)	4(50%)	3(37.5%)	1(20%)	12(42%)
Don't know	1(14%)	....	1(12.5%)	2(40%)	4(14%)
Yes and no	....	....	1(12.5%)	....	1(4%)
No answer	1(14%)	....	....	....	1(4%)
Total	7(100%)	8(100%)	8(100%)	5(100%)	28(100%)

Seventy-five percent of the Illinois editors said they expected to print the same amount of agricultural news during the coming year as during the current year (Table 2). Four editors (14 percent) said they planned to use more, three of these representing papers having circulation of more than 30,000.

Table 2. — Amount of agricultural news editors expected to use during coming year

Expected use	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000 29,999	30,000 and more	
More	....	....	1(12.5%)	3(60%)	4(14%)
Same	6(86%)	8(100%)	6(75%)	1(20%)	21(75%)
Less	1(14%)	....	....	....	1(4%)
Don't know	....	....	1(12.5%)	1(20%)	2(7%)
Total	7(100%)	8(100%)	8(100%)	5(100%)	28(100%)

Limited editorial space was most often cited as the reason for keeping agricultural news at its present linage level. Editors who said they planned to use more agricultural news offered two main reasons: (1) growing importance of farm news in their area, and (2) promise of more staff and space.

One-third said they believed that nonfarmers have little interest in news about agriculture. Only 28 percent said nonfarmers are "interested" in such news. Another 29 percent said they believe nonfarmers are "somewhat interested" or "interested in some kinds" of such news.

But many editors saw a growing interest among nonfarm readers in agricultural news. In fact, 43 percent reported a trend of growing interest (Table 3). Thirty-nine percent said they believed nonfarm reader interest will remain about the same, while 4 percent expected less interest.

Table 3. — Editors' opinions about trends in nonfarm reader interest in agricultural news

Interest trend	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
More	1(14%)	4(50%)	4(50%)	3(60%)	12(43%)
Same	4(57%)	2(25%)	4(50%)	1(20%)	11(39%)
Less	....	1(12.5%)	....	....	1(4%)
Not specified	2(29%)	1(12.5%)	....	1(20%)	4(14%)
Total	7(100%)	8(100%)	8(100%)	5(100%)	28(100%)

Editors of papers having a circulation of more than 5,000 were most inclined to expect growing interest. The editors believed these types of news were responsible for this growing interest: political farm issues,

taxes, allotments, subsidies, food prices, and agriculture as a source of national strength.

Editors said they preferred sources that provide local agricultural news regularly. The county farm adviser was mentioned most often (Table 4) as editors' "most important" source of agricultural news, mainly because he provides news of local interest. Other sources cited as "most important" included (in declining order): University of Illinois, commercial and trade groups, wire service, universities other than University of Illinois, and other noncommercial local sources. Table 5 shows the reasons that editors offered for naming their "most important" sources of agricultural news.

This response corresponds with editors' replies to another question about how they decide whether or not to use a particular agricultural story. Eighty percent said they judge a story on the basis of its local interest (Table 6).

Table 4. — Agricultural news sources cited as "most important" by editors

Source	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
Wire service	....	1(11%)	1(8%)	....	2(5%)
University of Illinois	1(12.5%)	2(22%)	4(31%)	3(43%)	10(27%)
Other universities	....	....	....	1(14%)	1(3%)
County farm adviser	4(50%)	6(67%)	4(31%)	2(29%)	16(43%)
Newspaper reporter	....	....	1(8%)	....	1(3%)
Other local (not commercial)	1(12.5%)	....	....	....	1(3%)
Syndicates	....	....	....	....	....
Commercial and trade groups	....	....	3(22%)	1(14%)	4(11%)
None specified	2(25%)	....	....	....	2(5%)
Total	8(100%)	9(100%)	13(100%)	7(100%)	37[a](100%)

[a] Some editors cited more than one source as most important.

Table 5. — Reasons editors gave for selecting their "most important" source of agricultural news

Reason	Number of mentions	Percent
Provides local-interest news	7	25
Provides more information than others; cooperates closely	5	19
Available; regular; dependable	5	19
Knows local news	4	15
Provides readable material	3	11
Authoritative	3	11
Total	27	100

Table 6. — Basis on which editors said they decided whether to use a story

Criterion	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
Local interest	5(71%)	7(87.5%)	7(70%)	5(100%)	24(80%)
Timeliness	....	1(12.5%)	2(20%)	....	3(10%)
Space demands	....	....	1(10%)	....	1(3%)
Not specified	2(29%)	....	....	....	2(7%)
Total	7(100%)	8(100%)	10(100%)	5(100%)	30[a](100%)

[a] Some editors cited more than one criterion.

At the other extreme, editors expressed dislike for material that does not apply to the local situation and for material that promotes products or distorts views (Table 8). These were the most common reasons that editors gave for selecting their "least important" source of agricultural news. As Table 7 indicates, commercial and trade groups were mentioned most often as least important source.

Table 7. — Agricultural news sources cited as "least important" by editors

Source	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
Wire service	....	1(12.5%)	2(25%)	1(20%)	4(14%)
University of Illinois	1(14%)	....	1(12.5%)	....	2(7%)
Other universities	....	....	....	....	....
County farm adviser	....	....	....	....	....
Newspaper reporter	....	....	....	....	....
Other local (not commercial)	1(14%)	2(25%)	1(12.5%)	1(20%)	5(18%)
Syndicates	....	....	....	....	....
Commercial, trade groups	....	2(25%)	4(50%)	2(40%)	8(29%)
None specified	5(72%)	3(37.5%)	....	1(20%)	9(32%)
Total	7(100%)	8(100%)	8(100%)	5(100%)	28(100%)

Table 8. — Reasons Illinois daily editors gave for selecting their "least important" source of agricultural news

Reason	Number mentions	Percent
Promotes products; distorts views	8	38
Material does not apply to local situation	7	33
Too broad; too general	2	9
Provides little of worth on a daily basis	1	5
Provides material too late for deadline	1	5
Duplicates local source	1	5
Provides releases only, except when called	1	5
Total	21	100

HOW ILLINOIS DAILY EDITORS USE AGRICULTURAL NEWS

Amount printed

Papers averaged 4.5 agricultural news items per issue. Content analysis revealed 6,277 agricultural news items in the 1,380 issues analyzed.

Agricultural news comprised 1.3 percent of total issue linage. Of the 4,039,081 column inches in all issues analyzed, 52,254 column inches (1.3 percent) could be classed as agricultural news.

The issue linage total includes advertising as well as editorial material. Newshole was not measured in this study, but if we assume that editorial matter comprised 40 percent of total issue linage, which is a reasonable estimate, then agricultural news would have amounted to 3.2 percent of all editorial matter.

Tables 9 and 10 show where this agricultural linage appeared, in terms of newspaper size and geographic location. Direct comparisons among the circulation and district categories are not meaningful because of differences in the number of newspapers analyzed within categories.

Table 9. — Agricultural news material printed, by district

District	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Northern (7 papers)	1,544	25	13,197	25	8.5
West central (4 papers)	1,395	22	11,597	22	8.3
East central (7 papers)	2,192	35	17,711	34	8.1
South central (6 papers)	635	10	5,424	11	8.5
Southern (4 papers)	511	8	4,265	8	8.3
Total	6,277	100	52,254	100	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.015) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 4 d.f.

Table 10. — Agricultural news material printed, by circulation category

Circulation	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
30,000 and more (5 papers)	1,685	27	13,992	27	8.3
10,000–29,999 (8 papers)	2,145	34	18,841	36	8.8
5,000–9,999 (8 papers)	1,802	29	13,984	27	7.8
Under 5,000 (7 papers)	645	10	5,437	10	8.4
Total	6,277	100	52,254	100	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.063) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 3 d.f.

When printed

Agricultural linage was greatest in late summer and early fall. Nearly 39 percent of all agricultural stories and linage in the nine-week sampling appeared during the three weeks of August 18-24, August 25-31, and September 23-29 (Table 11). Coverage of agricultural fairs may account for part of this clustering.

Table 11. — Seasonal variations in agricultural news material printed

Week	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
September 23–29	863	13.9	6,694	12.9	7.8
October 21–27	615	9.7	4,866	9.3	7.9
November 18–24	680	10.8	5,924	11.3	8.7
January 6–12	713	11.4	6,054	11.6	8.5
February 3–9	714	11.4	5,447	10.4	7.6
April 7–13	595	9.4	4,712	9.0	7.9
July 7–13	558	8.8	5,033	9.6	9.0
August 18–24	759	12.1	6,566	12.6	8.7
August 25–31	780	12.5	6,958	13.3	8.9
Total	6,277*	100.0	52,254*	100.0	8.3**

* Number of stories and agricultural linage varied significantly throughout the nine sample weeks. Computed chi-square was greater than $x^2_{.005}$ with 8 d.f.

** Analysis of week-to-week variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.293) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 8 d.f.

Early spring and summer months seemed to be lightest in agricultural news. Agricultural linage in late October also appeared to be below the year-long average.

These seasonal variations, based on the nine-week sampling, proved to be significant at the 0.005 level.

Linage differed from day to day. A day-to-day comparison of agricultural linage including all 28 dailies would not be meaningful because of variations in publishing schedules. Some of the papers published twice a week, some five times, some six, and some seven times.

So two major groups of papers were studied for day-to-day trends in agricultural news: those publishing every day of the week (5 papers) and those publishing every day except Sunday (16 papers).

In both groups, the amount of agricultural news was found to vary significantly (at the 1 percent level) from day to day.

Sunday was the biggest agricultural news day among papers publishing every day. One-fifth of all agricultural news items found in the seven-day papers appeared Sunday (Table 12). Five weekdays were grouped rather closely in number of agricultural news items printed. Saturday was lowest at 11 percent.

Table 12. — Day-to-day variations in the amount of agricultural news printed by five dailies publishing seven times a week

Day	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Monday	211	13	1,664	12	7.9
Tuesday	228	14	1,918	13	8.4
Wednesday	243	14	2,080	15	8.6
Thursday	257	15	2,082	15	8.1
Friday	226	13	1,817	13	8.0
Saturday	188	11	1,396	10	7.4
Sunday	331	20	3,175	22	9.6
Total	1,684*	100	14,132*	100	8.3**

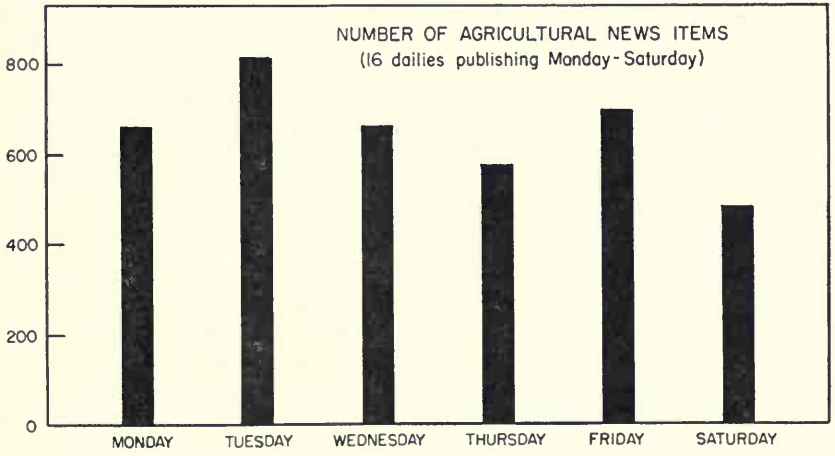
* Number of news items and linage varied significantly among the seven days. Computed chi-square was greater than $x^2_{.0005}$ with 6 d.f.

** Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.35) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 6 d.f.

Tuesday was the biggest agricultural news day among papers publishing daily except Sunday, accounting for 21 percent of the week's agricultural news items (Table 13). Again, Saturday rated lowest with only 12 percent.

Form of material printed

Linage averaged seven-eights copy, one-eighth illustration. Table 14 shows that 87 percent of all agricultural linage was in the form of



The amount of agricultural news printed varied significantly from day to day. Among papers published daily except Sunday, Tuesday was the biggest day. Least agricultural news appeared on Saturday.

Table 13. — Day-to-day variations in agricultural news material printed by 16 dailies publishing six times a week, Monday through Saturday

Day	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Monday	662	17	5,451	17	8.2
Tuesday	817	21	6,535	21	8.0
Wednesday	663	17	5,449	17	8.2
Thursday	574	15	4,583	14	8.0
Friday	698	18	5,900	18	8.5
Saturday	478	12	4,150	13	8.7
Total	3,892*	100	32,068*	100	8.3**

* Number of news items and linage varied significantly among the six days. Computed chi-square was greater than $x^2_{.0005}$ with 5 d.f.

** Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.05) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 5 d.f.

printed copy. Illustrations (mostly photographs) made up the remaining 13 percent.

Larger papers had higher ratio of illustrations. Illustrations made up less than 10 percent of all agricultural linage in dailies having circulation of less than 10,000 (Table 14). On the other hand, papers having 10,000–29,999 circulation averaged 16 percent illustrations. Those with circulation of more than 30,000 averaged 14 percent illustrations.

Table 14. — Agricultural copy and illustration material printed in 28 Illinois dailies, by circulation

Circulation	Illustration			Copy		
	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total agr. linage	Percent of total issue linage	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total agr. linage	Percent of total issue linage
30,000 and more	1,939	14	...	12,053	86	....
10,000–29,999	2,957	16	...	15,884	84	....
5,000–9,999	1,271	9	...	12,713	91	....
Under 5,000	536	10	...	4,901	90	....
Total (28 dailies)	6,703	13	.17	45,551	87	1.13

Nine out of ten agricultural news items were not illustrated. As Table 15 indicates, 5,687 of the total 6,277 agricultural news items (90.7 percent) consisted of copy only. About 5 percent of the items were classed as picture stories, while the remaining 5 percent consisted of picture and cutline.

Table 15. — Type of agricultural news material printed

Type	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Copy only	5,687	90.7	40,441	77.4	7.1
Picture story	303	4.8	7,391	14.1	24.4
Picture and cutline	287	4.5	4,422	8.5	15.4
Total	6,277	100.0	52,254	100.0	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (37.5) was greater than $x^2_{.05}$ with 2 d.f.

For the purposes of this study, a picture story was defined as consisting of one or more photographs accompanying a rather complete, self-contained article. The article usually was longer than a cutline, which is printed below the photograph and often merely identifies the subjects in the photographs.

Although copy-only items made up 91 percent of agricultural news items printed, these *items* made up a somewhat smaller share of agricultural news *linage*. Specifically, they made up 77.4 percent of total agricultural linage. This indicates, of course, that illustrated articles tended to be longer than copy-only articles.

Front sections of the papers contained the largest share of illustrated agricultural news. Whereas illustrated news made up 30 percent of all agricultural linage located in the first quarter of their editions, only 16 percent of all agricultural linage in the fourth quarter consisted of picture stories and photo-cutlines (Table 16).

The second quarter averaged 26 percent illustrated material, and the third quarter averaged 22 percent.

Table 16. — Type of agricultural news material located in various sections of the newspaper

Section of paper	Copy only	Picture story	Photo-cutline	Total
	(column inches and percent of total in quarter)			
First quarter	8,298(70%)	2,272(19%)	1,328(11%)	11,898
Second quarter	8,948(74%)	1,917(16%)	1,159(10%)	12,024
Third quarter	9,194(78%)	1,614(14%)	924(8%)	11,732
Fourth quarter	14,001(84%)	1,588(10%)	1,011(6%)	16,600
Total	40,441(77%)	7,391(14%)	4,422(9%)	52,254

Length of agricultural news items

Items averaged 8.3 column inches, counting illustrations. In terms of aggregate totals — 6,277 news items making up 52,254 column inches of space — the average agricultural news item was 8.3 column inches long. However, as seen earlier, illustrated stories tended to be longer than copy-only items. A more detailed breakdown shows that:

- Mean length of copy-only news items was 7.1 inches (Table 15).
- But most news items appeared to have less copy than that. Although Table 17 includes all copy, from illustrated as well as unillustrated news items, it implies that median story length may have been shorter than mean length. According to the distribution shown in that table, median amount of copy per item was 4 to 5 column inches. This may be a fair estimate of median length of copy-only news items.

Table 17. — Amount of copy per agricultural news item, including copy in illustrated stories

Length (column inches)	Number of news items containing copy	Percent
0–1	432	7
2–3	1,486	24
4–5	1,337	21
6–7	803	13
8–9	538	8
10–11	432	7
12–13	356	6
14–15	247	4
16 and more	646	10
Total	6,277	100[a]

[a] Weighted mean length of copy used per agricultural news item was 7.1 column inches. The midpoint of each copy length category was used as the basis for estimating total linage within each category. For example, each news item was assumed to be .5 column inches long in the first category, 2.5 column inches in the second category, and so on. The 646 news items in the "16 and more" category were figured as averaging 20 column inches, on the basis of a systematic analysis of 365 stories classed as "16 and more."

- Picture stories averaged 24.4 column inches (Table 15), including about one-half copy and one-half photographs. As Table 18 shows, photographic material averaged 11.5 column inches per illustrated news item. That average includes photos used with cutlines, however. Picture stories tended to use more illustrated linage per story than picture-cutline items, so may have included more than 11.5 inches of illustrations.
- Picture-cutline items averaged 15.4 column inches. Based on estimates from Table 15, copy accounted for about one-fourth to one-third of this linage.

Table 18. — Amount of illustration material used per illustrated agricultural news item

Length (column inches)	Number of illustrated items	Percent
1–3	126	21.6
4–6	51	8.7
7–9	80	13.7
10–12	129	22.1
13 and more	197	33.9
Total	583	100.0[a]

[a] Weighted mean length of illustration material used per illustrated agricultural news item was 11.5 column inches. The midpoint of each length category was used as the basis for estimating total linage within each category. For example, each illustration was assumed to be 2 column inches long in the first category, 5 column inches in the second category, and so on. The 197 illustrated items in the "13 and more" category were figured as averaging 21 column inches, on the basis of a systematic analysis of 112 illustrated stories classed as "13 and more."

The number of news items having various lengths of illustration material shows a bi-modal distribution (Table 18). A sizable share of illustrated stories are grouped in the 1-3 inch range. These represent the small, one-column photograph commonly used to identify people in the news. An even larger share of illustrated stories are grouped in each of the two ranges exceeding 10 column inches. These represent larger photographs used either with stories or cutlines and picture stories consisting of more than one photograph.

Story length varied by type of material, audience, author identification, degree of localization, and source. Because the data were analyzed in terms of both numbers and length of news items, it is possible to identify those factors associated with differences in item length. For example, Table 11 indicates that agricultural news items ranged from an average of 7.6 column inches during the week of February 3-9 to 9.0 inches during July 7-13. Mean item length for the entire study was 8.3 inches. It is possible, then to measure goodness-of-fit by comparing the computed chi-square with the chi-square distribution. Results in Table 11 show an extremely good "fit," indicating little seasonal variation in item length.

The following are results of analyzing story length in terms of 11 other variables:

Geographic location. No significant differences in length of items appeared among the dailies in the five Illinois districts (Table 9).

Newspaper circulation. No differences (Table 10).

Day of week. No significant differences, although agricultural news items printed on Sunday tended to be longer (Tables 12 and 13).

Type of material. Picture stories and pictures with cutlines were significantly longer than copy-only news items (Table 15).

Intended audience. Agricultural news items directed toward farmers tended to be shorter, but not significantly shorter, than those for both farmers and nonfarmers (Table 19).

Story location. No differences (Table 20).

Setting. News items located within specific agricultural news sections were slightly, but not significantly, longer than isolated items (Table 20).

Source. News items gotten by staff coverage and from county farm advisers, syndicates, and wire services were longer than average. Items from commercial and trade groups and from noncommercial local sources other than county farm advisers were considerably shorter than average. Differences among sources were significant (Table 24).

Identification of author. Bylined news items were significantly longer than items not bylined.

Proximity. Local news items tended to be shorter than nonlocal items (Table 27).

Topic. Length of news item did not vary significantly from topic to topic, although human interest and safety items proved to be longer than average (Table 23).

Intended audience

About four-fifths of the agricultural news items seemed to be directed mainly toward farmers (Table 19). Nearly all the remaining agricultural news items were classed as being of interest to both farmers and nonfarmers.

Table 19. — Intended audience for agricultural news items

Intended audience	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Farmers	5,171	82.5	40,577	78.0	7.8
Nonfarmers	4	....	60	....	....
Both	1,102	17.5	11,617	22.0	10.5
Total	6,277	100.0	52,254	100.0	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.57) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 1 d.f.

Location of agricultural news items

More linage was in the back. Table 20 shows that nearly one-third (32 percent) of all agricultural news items were in the fourth quarter

Table 20. — Location and setting of agricultural news items within newspapers

Location	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
			Section of paper		
First quarter	1,418	22.5	11,898	22.8	8.4
Second quarter	1,456	23.1	12,024	23.0	8.3
Third quarter	1,386	22.0	11,732	22.4	8.5
Fourth quarter	2,017	32.4	16,600	31.8	8.2
Total	6,277*	100.0	52,254*	100.0	8.3**
			Setting		
Within specific agricultural news section	3,239	51.7	28,477	55.0	8.8
Isolated	3,038	48.3	23,777	45.0	7.8
Total	6,277	100.0	52,254	100.0	8.3***

* Number of news items and amount of linage varied significantly among the four location categories. Computed chi-square was greater than $x^2_{.005}$ with 3 d.f.

** Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.01) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 3 d.f.

*** Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (.06) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 1 d.f.

of the editions in which they were printed. Other linage was divided evenly among the first three sections of the paper. The differences by quarters were significant at the 0.005 level.

Setting for agricultural news items

About one-half the items were in identified sections (Table 20). Of the 6,277 agricultural news items printed, 3,239 (52 percent) were in specific agricultural news sections. Many of these sections were weekly farm pages devoted to general news about farming and agriculture. Others were identified market price listings of agricultural commodities. The analysis revealed few special multi-page sections devoted to agricultural news.

Content analysis agreed closely with editor responses in this regard. Table 21 shows that about half the editors (53 percent) said they printed agricultural news often and within a specific section.

According to the survey of editors, identified farm sections were most common among east-central and southern Illinois dailies having a circulation of 5,000 to 30,000. At the other extreme, only about one-third of the editors in northern and south-central Illinois used them.

In terms of newspaper circulation, Table 22 shows that two-thirds to three-fourths of the dailies having 5,000–30,000 circulation printed agricultural news in specific sections. Less than one-third of the editors of papers with less than 5,000 circulation reported doing so.

Table 21. — Setting for agricultural news in various parts of Illinois, as indicated by editors

Setting indicated	Northern	West central	East central	South central	Southern	All papers
Print agricultural news often, and in a specific section..	2(29%)	2(50%)	6(86%)	2(33%)	3(75%)	15(53%)
Print agricultural news often, but not in a specific section	4(57%)	2(50%)	1(14%)	4(67%)	1(25%)	12(43%)
Seldom print agricultural news, and not in a specific section.....	1(14%)	....	....	....	....	1(4%)
Total.....	7(100%)	4(100%)	7(100%)	6(100%)	4(100%)	28(100%)

Table 22. — Setting for agricultural news in papers of various sizes, as indicated by editors

Setting indicated	Circulation of papers				All papers
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more	
Print agricultural news often, and in a specific section.....	2(29%)	6(75%)	5(62.5%)	2(40%)	15(53%)
Print agricultural news often, but not in a specific section.....	4(57%)	2(25%)	3(37.5%)	3(60%)	12(43%)
Seldom print agricultural news, and not in a specific section.....	1(14%)	....	....	....	1(4%)
Total.....	7(100%)	8(100%)	8(100%)	5(100%)	28(100%)

Agricultural news topics

News about events and market prices made up more than 60 percent of all agricultural news printed by the sampled papers. Events accounted for about 32 percent of total agricultural linage and markets 28 percent (Table 23).

Items dealing with the production of agricultural commodities comprised 16 percent. News about farm legislation and marketing and human interest items accounted for most of the remainder.

Table 23. — Topics of agricultural news items

Topic	Number of items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Production	933	15	8,076	16	8.7
Markets (prices)	1,883	30	14,777	28	7.8
Marketing	294	5	2,445	5	8.3
Legislation	266	4	2,647	5	10.0
Events	2,144	34	16,765	32	7.8
Human interest	140	2	2,101	4	15.0
Safety	4	..	53	..	13.3
Other	613	10	5,390	10	8.8
Total	6,277	100	52,254	100	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (8.88) was less than $x^2_{.05}$ with 7 d.f.

Sources from which papers got their agricultural news material

Wire services were biggest suppliers of agricultural stories and linage. More than 36 percent of all news items and 38 percent of all linage originated from a wire service (Table 24). This study did not analyze sources from which wire services got their agricultural news.

Table 24. — Sources from which papers got their agricultural news material

Source	Number of news items	Percent of total items	Linage (col. in.)	Percent of total linage	Average length (col. in.)
Wire service	2,260	36	19,876	38	8.8
University of Illinois	299	5	2,422	5	8.1
Other universities	66	1	531	1	8.0
County farm adviser	336	5	3,154	6	9.4
University of Illinois via farm adviser fill-in	55	1	591	1	10.7
Newspaper staff	492	8	9,164	17	18.6
Other local (noncommercial)	1,496	24	7,809	15	5.2
Syndicates	67	1	825	2	12.3
Commercial and trade groups	782	12	4,490	9	5.7
Unidentified	424	7	3,392	6	8.0
Total	6,277	100	52,254	100	8.3*

* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square (17.1) was greater than $x^2_{.05}$ with 9 d.f.

Local sources, other than farm advisers and commercial groups, ranked second in number of news items supplied. These sources supplied nearly 24 percent of all printed agricultural news items (Table 24). Another 12 percent came from commercial and trade groups.

However, news covered by newspaper staff ranked second in total linage. Although local sources had more stories printed, the amount of linage generated by staff coverage of agricultural activities surpassed that of the local sources. As Table 24 indicates, although newspaper staff coverage accounted for only 8 percent of all agricultural news items, it accounted for 17 percent of all agricultural linage. And while local noncommercial sources provided 24 percent of all news items, they accounted for only 15 percent of total linage. In other words, their items tended to be relatively short.

Northern and central papers relied more heavily on wire services and staff; southern papers on local sources. The wire services ranked as the top source of agricultural news in all five districts of Illinois. Yet wire service material accounted for a greater share of linage among dailies in northern, west-central, and east-central districts (average of about 40 percent) than among dailies in south-central and southern Illinois (average of 29 percent). Table 25 shows these differences. It also indicates that whereas the county farm adviser provided only 4 to 6 percent of agricultural news in northern and central Illinois, he provided twice that in southern Illinois.

Table 25. — Sources from which papers got their agricultural news material, by section of the state

Source	Northern	West central	East central	South central	Southern
Wire service.....	5,187(39%)	5,851(50%)	6,024(34%)	1,620(30%)	1,195(28%)
University of Illinois.....	420(3%)	538(5%)	901(5%)	349(6%)	213(5%)
Other universities..	0(0%)	37(...)	160(1%)	37(1%)	296(7%)
County farm adviser.....	552(4%)	479(4%)	1,023(6%)	571(10%)	529(13%)
University of Illinois via county fill-in....	158(1%)	54(1%)	114(...)	167(3%)	98(2%)
Newspaper staff...	3,007(23%)	1,302(11%)	3,692(21%)	521(10%)	644(15%)
Other local (non-commercial)....	2,041(16%)	1,848(16%)	2,411(14%)	921(17%)	589(14%)
Syndicates.....	226(2%)	117(1%)	283(2%)	22(...)	175(4%)
Commercial and trade groups....	844(6%)	808(7%)	1,866(10%)	746(14%)	227(5%)
Unidentified.....	762(6%)	563(5%)	1,297(7%)	470(9%)	299(7%)
Total.....	13,197(100%)	11,597(100%)	17,771(100%)	5,424(100%)	4,265(100%)

In a sense, the farm adviser may have served as a substitute for paper-employed staff. More than 20 percent of the news in northern and east-central Illinois dailies originated from newspaper staff cover-

age. In south-central Illinois, on the other hand, staff coverage provided only 10 percent.

Little agreement was found between editors' verbal ranking and their actual use of agricultural news sources. Personal interviews combined with content analysis offered a unique opportunity in this study to compare opinion with results.

In this case, editors were asked to name their "most important" source of agricultural news. On the basis that an "important" source would be used more than a less-important source, we would expect content analysis to reveal a high positive correlation between verbal opinion and actual linage.

However, Table 26 shows that such was not the case. In fact, Spearman rank-correlation measurement revealed almost no correlation (+0.09) between editors' verbal ranking and the amount of space devoted to news from individual sources.

Table 26. — How editors' verbal ranking for most important source of agricultural stories compared with ranking by linage analysis

Source	Number mentions[a]	Verbal ranking[b]	Linage (col. in.)	Ranking by linage analysis
Wire service	2	4.5	19,876	1
University of Illinois	10	2	2,422	7
Other universities	1	7	531	9
County farm adviser	16	1	3,746	6
Newspaper staff	1	7	9,164	2
Other local (noncommercial)	1	7	7,809	3
Syndicates	0	9	825	8
Commercial and trade groups	4	3	4,491	4
Unidentified	2	4.5	3,392	5

[a] Some editors cited more than one source as most important.
[b] Spearman rank-correlation measurement showed a coefficient of .09 between the two rankings.

These results may be an example of "bias of auspices." Editors knew they were being interviewed by representatives of the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. They most often named county farm advisers or the University of Illinois as the "most important" source of agricultural news. Yet content analysis showed that these sources provided a relatively small share of the agricultural news printed.

Other possible reasons for this discrepancy were not the object of analysis in this study. However, the results offer an interesting example of how findings may vary by method of data collection.

Use of localized news

About 38 percent of printed agricultural linage was localized. Table 27 shows that localization did not appear to vary greatly among newspapers of different size.

Local linage varied little by newspaper size. Although Table 27 may reveal a tendency for smaller papers to use a smaller share of local news, the evidence is slight. Local news made up 35 percent of agricultural linage in papers having less than 5,000 circulation. That compared with 39 percent in papers having circulation of more than 30,000.

Table 27. — Extent to which agricultural news items were localized

Status[a]	Circulation of papers				All papers	Average length (col. in.)
	Under 5,000	5,000–9,999	10,000–29,999	30,000 and more		
	(column inches and percent in each category)					
Local.....	1,875(35%)	4,993(36%)	7,599(40%)	5,409(39%)	19,876(38%)	7.0
Not local....	3,110(57%)	7,794(56%)	10,122(54%)	7,960(57%)	28,986(55%)	8.6
Unknown....	451(8%)	1,197(8%)	1,121(6%)	623(4%)	3,392(7%)	57.5
Total.....	5,436(100%)	13,984(100%)	18,842(100%)	13,992(100%)	52,254(100%)	8.3*

[a] Includes 2,849 local items, 3,369 not local, and 59 unknown.
* Analysis of variations in average item length revealed that computed chi-square was greater than $x^2_{.05}$ with 2 d.f.

Amount of bylining

Only 10.6 percent of the news items were bylined. In terms of linage, bylined stories accounted for a somewhat larger share — nearly 20 percent. Bylined items averaged 15.1 inches and those not bylined averaged 7.5 inches.

County farm adviser columns were the most common form of bylined items.

Bylining seemed to vary by type of story. News items dealing with agricultural events tended to be bylined less often than non-event news items.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Results of this study agreed in a number of ways with findings of past newspaper content analyses:

- Agricultural news made up less than 4 percent of all editorial space.
- Most agricultural news was aimed toward farmer readers.

- Event stories and items dealing with markets and economics were the most-used types of agricultural news.
- Photographs comprised a small share of total agricultural linage.
- Most agricultural news appeared in back sections of the paper.
- Subject-matter stories were more likely to be bylined than were event stories.
- Larger newspapers relied more on wire services and staff coverage than did smaller papers.
- Agricultural news items are becoming shorter.

On the other hand, findings of this study differed in several respects from past research results.

Illinois dailies proved to rely more heavily on wire service material and less heavily on Cooperative Extension Service material than newspapers studied in prior research. Agricultural news arising from newspaper staff coverage also made up a smaller share of total agricultural news in the current study than was found in earlier studies.

Results emphasized that although editors prefer local news, much of what they print is not local. And somewhat surprisingly, the smaller papers do not seem to use proportionately more local agricultural news than papers with greater circulation. This implies that the larger paper may not suffer one disadvantage often attributed to it — weaker local coverage. This may be because smaller papers lack the staff needed to generate thorough coverage of local agricultural activities.

Results of this study differed in other respects from past research. They disagreed about which days of the week are "biggest" in terms of agricultural news. And a greater share of agricultural news found in this study proved to be a part of identified sections than was true in prior research.

Also, this study suggests that any conclusions about trends in length of news item should be qualified. Length appeared to vary considerably by type of material, intended audience, setting, source, and other factors. Results imply that it is dangerous to generalize about news item length.

For those interested or involved in supplying daily newspaper with agricultural news material, the findings of this study may suggest ways to improve their services to dailies. For example, news about events appears to be of special interest to daily editors. Bylining might help make non-event news material more newsworthy to editors. Also, editors' apparent preference for picture stories and for pictures with cutlines implies that an agricultural news source can be of greater value to daily editors if it supplements copy with illustrations where possible.

Results show that those who supply agricultural news to Illinois daily newspapers may benefit from taking circulation into account. They might use different release patterns for large dailies (whose "big" agricultural news day is Sunday) than for smaller papers publishing six times a week (whose "big" agricultural day is Tuesday).

Newspaper circulation also might influence the way in which a supplier of agricultural news provides his news to the paper. He can rely more heavily on newspaper staff coverage in dealing with larger newspapers. Staff-gathered material commands a high priority, as the study showed. Some news ordinarily sent unsolicited to an editor might lend itself to staff coverage.

The vital role of the wire services in supplying Illinois daily newspapers with their agricultural news bears consideration. Other sources of agricultural news at times may have news which could be channeled through the wire services.

Results showing the average length of agricultural news items may offer some guidance, but they warn against writing to one rule of thumb. As the study showed, a usable item may range from a few inches (for many events) to more than 20 column inches (for a picture story).

For researchers, this study shows how sampling method can influence results. The low correlation between what editors said was their "most important" source and what they actually printed from various sources offers pause for thought.

SUMMARY

Personal interviews and content analysis were used to determine how editors of a probability sample of Illinois daily newspapers use and view news about agriculture. Editorial representatives of 28 dailies were interviewed. Nine weeks' issues of each paper also were analyzed, stratified to include a 12-month period. More than 6,200 agricultural news items were analyzed, representing 52,254 column inches of such news.

Results showed that although most editors did not consider farm news pages as "money-makers," they planned to continue printing about the same amount of agricultural news. Nearly one-half felt that nonfarm readers are becoming increasingly interested in such news.

Content analysis showed that the 28 dailies printed an average of 4.5 agricultural news items per issue. Agricultural news made up 1.3 percent of total issue linage (including advertising). Agricultural linage was greatest in late summer and early fall, least in early spring

and summer. The amount of agricultural news printed varied significantly from day to day. Among papers printed every day, Sunday issues had more agricultural news than any other day. Among papers printed daily except Sunday, Tuesday was the biggest day. Least agricultural news appeared on Saturday.

Agricultural news in the 28 papers averaged seven-eighths copy, one-eighth illustration. Larger papers used a higher ratio of illustrations. On the whole, 10 percent of the agricultural news items were illustrated, and a major share of these appeared in the front sections of the papers.

Counting illustrations, the agricultural news items averaged 8.3 column inches. Copy-only items had a mean length of 7.1, although median length was only 4 to 5 column inches. Picture stories averaged 24.4 column inches, while picture-cutlines items averaged 15.4. Story length seemed to vary by type of material, audience, author identification, degree of localization, and source. It did not vary with newspaper circulation or geographic location, day of week, location in the paper, setting, or topic.

About four-fifths of the printed agricultural news items were directed mainly toward farmers. And about one-half of them were in identified agricultural news sections. Nearly one-third of all items were in the fourth quarter of the editions in which they were printed.

News about events and market prices made up more than 60 percent of all agricultural news items printed by the sampled papers.

In personal interviews, editors said they prefer sources that provide local agricultural news regularly. They named county farm advisers as the "most important" source, followed by the University of Illinois. However, content analysis showed that these two sources ranked well behind other sources as suppliers of agricultural news. More than 36 percent of all printed agricultural news items had been supplied by wire services. Local sources other than county farm advisers and commercial or trade groups ranked second, supplying nearly 24 percent. Papers in northern and central Illinois relied more heavily on wire services and staff writers; southern Illinois papers turned more to local sources.

About 38 percent of all agricultural linage was localized. Twenty percent was bylined, with most of the bylining found on non-event news items.

LITERATURE CITED

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APPENDIX: FARM NEWSPAPER QUESTIONNAIRE[a]

Date_____

Name of paper_____

Location_____

Frequency of printing_____

Person interviewed_____

1. On what basis do you publish agricultural news (that is, news about agriculture aimed toward farmers, businessmen, and other interested readers)?

   a) Often, and within a specific ag news section
   How often is the section printed?

[a] Space for writing in answers, part of the original form, has been omitted here for convenience.

b) Often, but within no specific section of the paper
c) Seldom, and within no specific section of the paper
d) Never

2. IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED "A" OR "B" TO QUESTION 1:
   a) What do you consider your most important single source of news about agriculture? Why?
   b) Of the sources that supply you with news about agriculture, which one do you consider least valuable? Why?
   c) How do you decide whether or not to use a particular agricultural story?
   d) How would you evaluate the agricultural news you get from the University of Illinois College of Agriculture?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't get any	Don't know
Subject matter						
Expression						
Story length						
Timing						

COMMENTS ON ABOVE:

   e) Would you prefer getting more_____ same_____ less_____ agricultural news material from the University of Illinois? Why?
   f) How often do you prefer getting agricultural news from the University of Illinois: Daily
      Several times a week
      Weekly
      Every 2 weeks
      Monthly
      Other (specify)
   g) What suggestions would you have for making University of Illinois agricultural news more useful for you?

3. IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED "C" OR "D" TO QUESTION 1:
   a) Why has your paper decided to run little or no agricultural news?
   b) Do you think the University of Illinois College of Agriculture

has any type information available that you would want to receive and use? Yes_____ No_____
IF "YES" WHAT?

4. ALL RESPONDENTS: Would you consider a farm news page or section in your paper as a money-maker, in terms of attracting advertising and circulation? Yes_____ No_____
5. If not, why not?
6. Do you expect to use more_____ same_____ less_____ agricultural news next year? Why?
7. How interested do you feel nonfarmers are in news about agriculture?
8. Do you think they are becoming more_____ same_____ less_____ interested in such news?
9. Do you know the farm adviser in this county? Yes_____ No_____
IF "YES"
   a) When did he last provide you with news material?
   b) What suggestions would you have on ways he might help you more as a news source?

OTHER DATA AND COMMENTS:

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