

ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS CONTENT PREFERENCES  
OF FLORIDA NEWSPAPER EDITORS AND  
SELECTED FLORIDA READERS

By

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The purpose of this study was to ascertain the agricultural news preferences of Florida newspaper editors and a selected group of Florida readers. This information would enable Florida editors to provide newspaper readers with the type of information they prefer and would enable agricultural news services to provide both editors and readers with their preferences for agricultural news. This study, then, is intended to enhance the diffusion of agricultural information throughout the state of Florida.

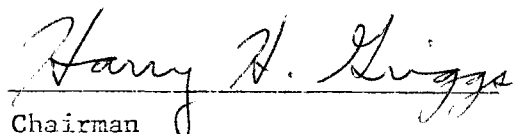
The study surveyed 235 newspaper editors and 400 newspaper readers by mail questionnaire. A content analysis also was performed on agricultural news stories appearing in all Florida newspapers from September, 1974, through November, 1974.

A response rate of 66 percent, or 263, was achieved for the reader survey, and the responses of 127 editors, or 54 percent, were obtained from the editor survey. Analysis of 170 agricultural news stories was performed.

Reader preference was for stories between 5 and 10 paragraphs in length, and pertaining to research, how-to-do-it, or gardening themes. Little preference was indicated for stories with pictures or which stressed local events.

Editors, on the other hand, overwhelmingly expressed a preference for stories with pictures and a local theme. A majority of editors preferred stories under 10 column inches and expressed a desire for agricultural news fillers. Family and how-to-do-it stories were the preferred themes.

The content analysis showed that less than 25 percent of the newspapers in the state printed some agricultural stories during the period of analysis. Only 32 percent of the stories published had a local theme, in spite of the stated preference by editors for local stories, but over 45 percent of the stories were under 10 column inches in length. Contrary to the stated preferences of the editors, the vast majority of the stories did not contain pictures, and the most frequently published agricultural theme was that of the future event.

  
Chairman