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# An Annual Agricultural Missions Conference to be Started by ECHO

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For several years we have dreamed of hosting an annual conference that would bring together people from our overseas network to share technical knowledge and experience in community development. Our staff has finally grown to the size that we can handle the logistics of such an endeavor (I hope). There will be a Christian atmosphere, though we trust that those who do not share those beliefs will be comfortable and would want to share the technical side of the work that we have in common.

We will set the dates years in advance so you can plan to attend during your next trip to the States. The first one will be November 8-10, 1994. We chose Tuesday - Thursday because many missionaries are busy speaking in churches on weekends while in the States. Already it is too late for many of you to plan for that date. We are going ahead and starting next year anyway. It does not matter if only a dozen or so are here, for that will give us a chance to get our feet wet before larger groups begin coming.

Americans are usually in this country at least every four years. This might become something you look forward to during each furlough. Foreign members of our network would be welcome. Each conference will be held sometime during the first half of November. By then kids of missionaries are settled into school, our rainy season has just ended, our tropical crops are at their prime and the temperate ones are starting to grow. Also Florida's famous winter weather is becoming an attraction by then, but the tourists are not yet here *en masse*. (ECHO is located in a prime tourist area in southwest Florida).

We are still forming our ideas, and welcome your input. The main attraction will be the delegates themselves. Visitors from our overseas network have especially benefitted from their stay when more than one happened to be here at the same time, sharing experiences, successes, failures and dreams. Consequently, much time will allotted for 15 minute presentations by delegates.

Each conference will have a few invited speakers. Dr. Frank Martin and Dr. Carl Campbell, two people whose names are familiar to readers of EDN, have already agreed to make a presentation and to be available to interact with you.

Probably workshops will be offered on specific subjects, depending upon the expertise available to us at the time. Delegates are welcome to stay after the conference to study in our library.

I hope that a few delegates will come from the scientific community, both to share their knowledge and to get ideas for practical research needed to support those doing development work. It will also be open to a limited number of people who are considering development or research related to Third World needs but need help in understanding what is involved and how to begin.

Every effort will be made to keep the cost low. We hope that members of local churches will offer housing to those not staying in motels.

Does this sound like something you would like to be part of? I would love to have feedback (the sooner the better, while many details are still flexible). What do you think of the idea in general? The dates? Is there a workshop topic that would be especially helpful? That you would want to teach? Special problems that need answers?

If you might want to attend in 1994, please send a preliminary expression of interest. (There is no obligation, of course, but it will help in planning and we will be able to tell other inquirers that you might be there too). Include the date when you will leave for the States and the USA address to contact you with further details.