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*About the Institute*

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

SUCCESSFUL FARMING

THE MAGAZINE OF FARM BUSINESS AND FARM HOMES



MEREDITH PUBLISHING COMPANY  
DES MOINES, IOWA

EDITORIAL  
DEPARTMENT

November 22, 1940

Dr. Wilson Popenoe  
United Fruit Company  
LaLima  
Republic of Honduras, C.A.

Dear Doctor Popenoe:

This is a belated "thank you" for the very pleasant visit I had with you and Mrs. Popenoe at LaLima. Honduras is a fascinating country and I hope that I may have a chance to again visit it.

I noticed in a recent article that efficient substitutes for quinine (atobrin and plasmoquin) are being synthesized by industry on a large scale. Will that affect the value of the Merck cinchona planting in any way? (By the way, probably both you and Hans will be interested to know that I am no longer pursuing Fifth Columnists!)

Since returning to the States I have been pondering the practicability of publishing a monthly agricultural magazine in Spanish (and possibly in Portuguese) for Latin-American countries. I have discussed the matter with Dr. Bressman and he is very enthusiastic. Because of your wide experience in Latin-American countries I would greatly value your opinion of the merits of such a project. As I visualize it now, the majority of articles would be obtained from special correspondents in each of the countries in which the magazine circulated, and from contributors in this country who would slant their reports of United States experimental results, etc. to fit Latin-American conditions. Articles for the most part would be general in nature, altho some departmentalization might be achieved.

Do you think Latin-Americans would be interested in a magazine of this nature? What type of editorial content would you think most effective? Would circulation be difficult to obtain? Would Latin-American manufacturers, stockmen, etc. be favorably disposed toward such a magazine as an advertising medium?

I have approached our publisher and he has authorized me to undertake a preliminary investigation. Of course, we would prefer to keep our plans as secret as possible in order to forestall any possible competition. If you will hold this letter confidential I will be very appreciative.

Of course the whole idea may be utterly ridiculous but then there is no harm in investigating. If the magazine should seem practical and we undertake to publish it, we most certainly will attempt to avoid the smugness and superiority complex which I understand is a characteristic of so many American firms doing business in Latin America. In other words, the magazine we visualize would be strictly for Latin-Americans and unselfish interest in their welfare would be the dominating editorial policy. Only thus, I believe, could we hope to succeed.

Sincerely yours,

*Cameron Hervey*  
Assistant Editor

Cameron Hervey  
gr

*P.S. I am sending you a complimentary subscription to Successful Farming. OK.*

Antigua, Guatemala, 14 Dec. 1940

Mr Cameron Hervey,  
Assistant Editor, Successful Farming,  
Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear Mr. Hervey:

It was a great pleasure to receive your letter of 22nd November. Especially so in view of your interest in a popular agricultural magazine in Spanish. I think such a magazine has real possibilities and that this is the right time to start it. And your letter shows that you have the right outlook concerning it - at least what I consider the right outlook.

As far as I am aware, we have never had an agricultural magazine which met with a popular response in Latin America. Naturally there are many reasons for this, and I cannot analyze them all: but I feel that the main trouble has been this: there has been no effort to humanize, material and presentation has been too stereotyped in nature, and too limited in scope. You folks up there have had lots of experience in writing for the farmer. You must know by this time what interests the farmer, and what will make him subscribe to a magazine. I don't think Latin American farmers are very much unlike North American farmers, except perhaps in the circumstance that they have not yet formed the habit of subscribing to magazines, as have our farmers. It will take some time to cultivate that habit, and I think one of the best means of cultivating it, would be to make the subscription rate low enough so that they could afford to cultivate it. I do not think a three-dollar magazine would get very far. Keep the magazine small at the start, and sell it for a dollar if possible.

To do this, you would naturally have to get a lot of advertising. This will be difficult, so far as Latin American firms and individuals are concerned. For, just as these people have not formed the habit of subscribing to magazines, they have not formed the habit of advertising to the same extent that we have. But it will come.

You will find it difficult to get sufficient good material from the Latin American end. And as you point out, material re-hashed from American publications won't make a popular magazine. You will have to build up a series of contributors down here who can provide material from the Latin American angle; then add to this material written by North Americans who know Latin America and can present things from this angle. For you will need a goodly leaven in the loaf. Latin Americans look up to us, on most matters of agricultural technology, and take more notice of technical writings by our people than by their own. This is not always true, of course, but I think it is true in a general way; and I think good sound articles of a popular nature, written by North Americans with tropical experience, will probably do more than any other one thing to carry the magazine to success.

You ask what type of editorial content is desirable. This is hard to answer, but on glancing over an issue of Successful Farming with this in mind, it seems to me you have it there. As I have said above, what interests a North American farmer is in a general way likely to interest one down here, for farmers are farmers without geographical limitation; and if your magazine has attracted North American readers, it stands to reason that the same sort of thing will succeed down here - making due allowances for Latin American conditions and requirements.

Above all, the magazine must have life. It must be the sort of thing that appeals, apart from the technical information it contains. Most of the Latin American governments have done a great deal to popularise technical agricultural information, but the results are not wholly satisfactory. They translate and re-publish information from the temperate zone - usually without adaptation to local conditions. Scores of bulletins are available in most of these countries, but they are not widely read. I think your magazine should be humanized even to the extent of carrying quite a bit of non-agricultural matter; but it must be good literature. The Latin has, perhaps, a keener appreciation of good writing than does your North American reader.

All in all, the project impresses me as an ambitious one, with plenty of difficulties in the way of making it a success; but with real possibilities. In fact, the sort of magazine I vaguely visualise in my own mind would, I believe, become a howling success in the course of five to ten years' time. Certainly there is a field, and certainly it is not occupied at present.

I scarcely need to say that you can count upon my assistance in any way within my reach. This may not mean much, but whatever help I can give, I will give with the greatest pleasure.

The Cinchona project is coming along well. We do not think there is much likelihood of synthetic substitutes taking the place of quinine. That, at least, is the opinion of those who ought to know. Lately I have been spending some time assisting the men who are down here from the USDA with a view to establishing rubber cultivation in tropical America. I believe it promises well. But it will take time.

Best regards always.

Sincerely yours