

Ernest J. Nesius



Ernest J. Nesius, a native of Indiana, contributed to the development of agriculture and rural development in Kentucky, West Virginia, and overseas during his 40 years of active service to the agriculture industry. He has a bachelor's degree from Purdue University, a master's degree from the University of Kentucky, and a doctor's degree from Iowa State College.

From 1937 through 1960 (except for service with the U.S. Navy and a three-year stint as Deputy Food and Agriculture Officer in Austria in 1944-46), Dr. Nesius was on the staff at the University of Kentucky. He served for six years as Associative Director of the Cooperative Extension Service. He came to West Virginia University in 1960 as Dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics. During the next 17 years he also served varying periods as Director of the Cooperative Extension Service, Vice President for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Development, and

Benedum Professor of Agricultural Economics.

During 1970-72 he was Assistant Director for Agricultural Economics for the U.S. Mission to Vietnam AID.

Contributions made by persons in major administrative positions fall into the area of leadership and vision and of encouraging co-workers to plan and implement programs based in local, regional, and state needs and concerns. A good administrator has to serve as a catalyst and this is a function Dr. Nesius served exceptionally well.

These are some major accomplishments in West Virginia:

1. Instituted a comprehensive and continuing program development process within the Cooperative Extension Service involving local citizens and committees and the Cooperative Extension Service staff.
2. In cooperation with the West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Nesius instituted a "logical directions" conference for agriculture to identify major agricultural issues and concerns affecting agriculture in West Virginia and implemented programs to deal with them.
3. During a period of economic depression in the 1960s and early 1970s, Dr. Nesius, as Director of the Cooperative Extension Service, placed heavy emphasis on economic development as well as social and human development.
4. Soon after being appointed Dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics in 1960, Dr. Nesius revitalized the state-wide rural development committee and activated several rural development projects.
5. Initiated and served as administrative officer of the Allegheny Highland Project which has been carried out since 1970 (originally in cooperation with the Rockefeller Foundation).
6. Developed and taught the first courses at West Virginia University in Rural Economic Development and International Agricultural Development.

He received many awards and honors including the Gamma Sigma Delta Award for Senior Faculty of Merit; the American Country Life Association Award for Outstanding Contribution to Agriculture; Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science; and Fellow, National University Extension Association.

He served on many state and national committees, including the National Extension Committee on Organization and Policy of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges; Member, USDA "Think Tank" for Rural Development; Administrative Advisor to the Northeast Agriculture Economics Research Committee; Chairman, Northeast National University Extension Association Region II; and others.

He has been successful force in West Virginia agriculture because of his dedication of purpose, pursuit of excellence, analytical mind, and his concern for his fellowmen.