

Global Diffusion of Agricultural Youth Organizations: Strategic Communication and Institutional Partnerships in FFA and 4-H International Adoption, 1920s-1970s

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Introduction & Purpose

Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H began in the United States and later expanded internationally. This study examines how these agricultural youth organizations diffused across countries from the 1920s through the 1970s, before digital communication, through exchange programs, study tours, and institutional partnerships. The purpose of this study was to document what communication strategies and institutional partnerships supported the international diffusion of FFA and 4-H.

Theoretical Framework

Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation theory guided the study, with a focus on **communication channels** and **social systems** that supported international adoption.

Innovation: FFA and 4-H youth programs

Communication Channels: Face-to-face

Social Systems: Government & Local Institutions

Time: 1920s-1970s



The first international exchange program for FFA member begins with young farmers club of great Britain



1976 U.S.-Soviet 4-H Exchange: American and Soviet farm experts meet during an agricultural exchange program.

Methodology

The study reviewed 11 historical and scholarly sources that described international exchanges, communication strategies, and institutional partnerships on FFA and 4-H activities. Sources were checked for credibility and then analyzed using Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovations framework.

References



Conclusion

- The international diffusion of FFA and 4-H was facilitated by the combined use of interpersonal communication and institutional partnerships.
- Exchange programs, farm visits and study tours built trust and cross-cultural understanding.
- Government ministries and formal organizations provided legitimacy, resources and platforms for local adaptation.

Implications

- **Agricultural education:** Scalable youth programs benefit from relationship-based learning and cross-cultural interactions.
- **Extension:** Trusted local institutions increase credibility and improve adaption in new settings.
- **International development:** Effective transfer of youth programs requires both interpersonal engagement and organizational legitimacy.

Key Findings

Interpersonal Communication

- Exchange programs, farm visits and study tours served as major communication channels.
- Host-family stays, farm visits, and youth travel strengthened trust and cross-cultural understanding.

Institutional Partnerships

- Government ministries and formal organizations gave programs legitimacy and structure.
- Institutional backing supported local adaptation across national contexts.



4-H in South Korea with over 100,000 members -1950



1955: Amarjit Singh , 2nd from right with Roy Tate family of Gettysburg, PA