

# Santa Cruz farm bureau celebrates 50th birthday

WATSONVILLE — The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, which represents some 1,350 member families and is the largest agricultural organization in the county, celebrates its 50th year of incorporation today.

The organization was started in the county in 1917, but wasn't officially incorporated with the Secretary of State until Jan. 17, 1933, according to Bureau Manager Jess Brown.

Although no special events were set to be held today, President Don W. Haggerty announced plans have been made to celebrate the anniversary as a part of all regularly scheduled events throughout 1983.

Haggerty praised the local bureau as being among the most progressive in the state. "The 19 members on our board of directors," he said, "represent 12 major commodities, farmers from the north coast to the Pajaro River, women and organic growers.

"We are proud to have been incorporated for 50 years, as well as having the distinction of being the 'Voice of Agriculture' in Santa Cruz County," he said.

Since the number of farmers are constantly decreasing, Haggerty believes it is

more important than ever for farmers to be organized.

"The bureau is meeting the challenge through its organizational structure, which is designed to best represent the farmers and to act in their interest," he said.

The farm bureau's original purpose was to teach better farming methods, said Brown.

In 1914, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act creating a Cooperative Extension program to be operated by the Secretary of Agriculture through land grant colleges, such as the University of California. The intent was to bring the latest findings in agricultural research to farmers.

Local farmers' organizations were formed in each county to disseminate such information. Local county farm bureaus and the Agricultural Extension Service were separate organizations from the beginning, although there was a close working relationship.

In 1919, the California Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federations were created. The pattern of organizational structure adopted then closely aligns that seen in the organization today.