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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The latest report on farm prices, as of October 15, shows that prices received by farmers advanced to a new high point, rising one per cent from the September level. Prices paid by farmers rose at a similar rate, putting farm product prices at a level 21 per cent above parity. Reports on cash income from farm marketings show a gross return for the first 10 months of 1947 at 26 per cent above the same period of 1946.

As a summary of the outlook for agriculture in 1948 as discussed at the annual Outlook Conference in Washington last week, the discussions indicated less food production from both livestock and food crops in 1948 and higher prices than this year, especially in the first part of 1948. Per capita food consumption is not expected to show much change from '47; there will be more of some things and less of others. High consumer incomes and strong domestic demand coupled with urgent food needs abroad are expected to keep prices high.

Meeting the world grain situation has become essentially a grain conservation program, especially for this country, due largely to the smaller corn crop. The grain conservation program announced recently by USDA and the Citizens Food Committee will combine all state, Federal, and private farm organizations and agencies in a drive to save grain. Emphasis of the campaign will be: (1) saving feed grain by feeding a larger proportion of roughages to livestock in areas where roughage supplies are abundant; (2) reduction of feed grain losses by more careful handling in both harvesting and storing; (3) marketing of hogs at lighter weights in order to save corn; (4) shorter grain feeding of beef cattle; and (5) close culling of dairy and poultry animals.

After considerable controversy the Citizens Food Committee last week canceled poultryless Thursday as a part of the food conservation program. Eggless Thursday will still be observed. Poultry industry representatives emphasized that the poultryless Thursday was not saving grain but actually increasing grain consumption by backing up poultry on farms. Crates of birds were shipped to the White House and to the Committee by farmers who said they couldn't sell the birds or afford to feed them.

In place of the poultry holiday producers pledged themselves to a grain saving plan which involves a one-third reduction in broiler chicks by the end of January; a drop in baby chick production; a decline of one-eighth in turkey poults below 1947 levels; and a reduction of 30 per cent in the poultry population by the first of the year. This feed conservation program is estimated to save 56 million bushels of grain.

USDA scientists announce a new method of processing fresh cut green alfalfa by concentrating the most valuable part of the plant first and then dehydrating the concentrate. In view of the manifold increase in alfalfa meal production during the last decade and the progress being made in processing, scientists foresee a bright future for alfalfa, especially in expanded industrial uses of pigments, vitamin A, and protein obtained from the plants.

Many of the research projects approved under the administration of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 are to explore new uses for specific farm products. Finding new uses for existing resources and products is usually a constructive technological development. However, there is danger that too much can be expected from all this valuable research. The "new uses" may put the product in competition with existing products, and there is net gain to agriculture as a whole only if total demand for farm products is increased.

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