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AGRICULTURAL LETTER  
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A Government purchase program on culled hens to speed up the "grain-saving" drive by the poultry industry has been announced. In response to requests by the poultry industry and the four major farm organizations the Government will buy culled hens until further notice to reflect prices to producers of 20 cents for birds over  $4\frac{1}{2}$  pounds live weight and 15 cents for birds from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. Pricing of purchases of dressed fowl (New York style) will be at 28 cents for birds averaging over four pounds and  $22\frac{1}{2}$  cents for three to four pounds.

USDA reports that a survey of cattle feeding to the end of October shows that marketings this fall and winter will show a reduction from last year but not as much as previous surveys had suggested. In the Corn Belt states showing a decline the most marked is reported for Iowa. Feeding normally carried on wheat pastures is negligible this fall due to drought, but feeding operations in Colorado, Western Nebraska, and California are larger because of relatively large supplies of grain, hay, and by-products from sugar beets.

A beef research project has been announced by USDA. Object is to produce lines of beef cattle that will consistently produce offsprings that will be superior in vitality, rate of growth, efficient use of feed, and quality of dressed meat. The research will be based on known and proven principles of genetics and will be based on recognizing superior breeding lines and then further developing these lines and crossing them for better results.

Figures on U.S. trade for September show a decline from August of four per cent in exports, but most of the decline was in factory goods, such as textiles, trucks, machinery, and chemicals. Exports of crude materials and of crude and manufactured foodstuffs, mostly cotton, tobacco, wheat, and meat products, rose by more than two per cent.

Vegetable farmers' prospects for 1948 appear to be generally favorable, according to USDA. Given normal weather, the outlook is for production and prices generally (but with some exceptions) to be at about the same level as 1947, with demand for vegetables (both fresh and for processing), potatoes, dry edible beans, and dry field peas to be about as strong in the first half of 1948 as this year. But the report does hint at the danger of surpluses in onions and cabbage. Meanwhile, prospective production of fall harvested commercial truck crops this year will be about seven per cent above 1946.

One feature of the Harriman report on our ability to furnish extensive aid to Europe was the emphasis placed on the American freight car situation. Pointing out that freight cars are being depleted and discarded faster than they are being built, the report says that the export program cannot be met, especially with regard to coal and grain, unless the downward trend in the number of cars is reversed. Otherwise a crippling bottleneck will develop.

The recent annual report of REA covering operations through June 30 estimates that 400,000 farms obtained central station electric service during the year. This makes the year the biggest on record for rural electrification and brings the percentage of electrified farms in the nation to 61 per cent, or 3,575,000 of the country's six million farms.

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