INCREASING THE PROFITS OF SOUTHWESTERN DAIRYMEN

A recent publication of the United States Department of Agriculture, *Dairying in War and Peace*, discusses some of the problems of dairy farmers generally and offers some suggestions for increasing efficiency in milk production which should be of particular interest to dairymen of the Southwest. The author of this publication, Mr. Olav F. Anderson, says, "Dairymen can help to assure themselves continued profitable operations through intensive efforts to reduce production costs per unit of product. This can best be achieved by: (1) Producing more and better roughage, pasture, and feed grains; (2) improving feeding practices; (3) increasing output per worker; (4) improving breeding practices; and (5) using more effective sanitation."

There is much that dairymen of this area can do along each of these lines. The production of a sufficient quantity of high-quality roughage is an essential to low costs in milk production. Fortunately, there are many crops, including legumes, adapted to various areas of the Southwest which can be grown to meet this requirement. Corn and grain sorghums can be grown for silage in all crop-producing sections. Hay also can be produced successfully in most parts of the area. In the eastern and central portions lespedeza, clover, and grain hay can be grown, in addition to the native or wild hay. In the arid western sections, alfalfa can be produced on irrigated fields. Production of all these crops can be increased through the proper use of barnyard manure, lime, phosphates, and potash.

Good pastures also are essential to the profitable operation of a dairy enterprise. Such pastures can be developed in the Southwest, but all too often, they are over-grazed and neglected, resulting in their gradual depletion and in the supplanting of the more desirable grasses by weeds and nonedible grasses. In restoring and developing pastures, dairymen will need to select grasses and legumes adapted to the area, and in this selection, as well as in the selection of crops to be grown for roughage, the advice of the county agent will be helpful.

Corn, grain sorghums, oats, and barley are good feed grains for dairy cattle. They can be produced in many parts of the Southwest, and on dairy farms they can reduce the need to buy high-protein concentrates, especially if the dry roughage fed to milk cows consists of generous quantities of high-quality legume hays.

Proper feeding of dairy cows means the use of balanced rations and feeding a cow in accordance with her production. A common and costly fault in the management of most dairy herds is underfeeding the potentially high-producing cows and overfeeding the low producers. Some cows are underfed in the sense that, if they were given more feed or better feed, the increase in milk production would more than pay for the increase in costs of feed bought. On the other hand, some cows are overfed. Thus, scientific feeding of milk cows, as is practiced on many of our better dairy farms, is predicated on knowledge of individual cows, how much milk and how much butterfat they are producing each day, each month, and each year. This involves frequent testing and maintenance of records such as are now kept by members of Dairy Herd Improvement Associations. With the proper feeds fed at the proper rates to each cow, the
dairyman may be able to increase his milk production far above its present level.

Since the costs of labor are second only to feed costs in dairy farming, it is imperative that labor be utilized most advantageously and that the output per worker be increased as much as possible. The achievement of this depends upon such factors as maximum use of machinery in production of crops to reduce the costs of feed grown, mechanization of milking and feeding operations, arranging the dairy barn for convenience and saving of time, and adjusting the dairy herd size to the labor supply on the farm.

An obviously important step towards more efficient milk production is the development of good dairy herds. This has usually meant stocking with better purebreds, although recent experiments by the Bureau of Dairy Industry indicate that milk production may be increased by crossbreeding of dairy cows (Agricultural News Letter, July 15, 1947). The goal of the dairyman, who must also play the role of animal breeder, is to obtain cows which have a high production rate and which produce high-grade milk. He must ascertain the production of all his cows individually, then cull the unprofitable, low producers, and replace them with better cows. Such work as that of the Dallas Artificial Breeders Association (Agricultural News Letter, February 15, 1947) and the Louisiana Artificial Breeding Cooperative will be extremely helpful to dairymen in the improvement of dairy cattle and in increasing the efficiency of dairying in the Southwest.

Improved sanitation in production of high-quality milk is important to dairymen of the Southwest from the standpoint of obtaining and holding the most profitable outlets for their products. In addition, proper sanitation aids in preventing cattle diseases and infections, which annually cost dairymen of this area millions of dollars. The control of disease will depend mainly upon the precautions exercised by the individual dairyman; upon him rests the success of disease control programs sponsored by Federal and state agencies and by dairy organizations.

At least a partial solution to many of the problems of southwestern dairymen lies in producing milk as cheaply and as efficiently as possible. Economies in production resulting from steps taken along any one or more of the lines suggested above may be reflected in lower prices to consumers and increased profits to producers as they supply a larger share of the local market for dairy products.

FARM CREDIT

Farmers Using More Bank Credit—Repaying Loans More Rapidly

Farmers are using a substantially larger volume of bank credit than a year ago, but are repaying their loans more rapidly, according to a recent survey made by the Agricultural Commission of the American Bankers Association. The higher costs of producing crops and the availability of more equipment are important factors in stimulating the use of more credit, but continuing high farm incomes have made it possible for farmers to repay their short-term loans and mortgage credits within a comparatively short time.

This national survey shows that during 1946 the 11,246 banks serving farmers made $709,287 agricultural loans to 2,544,025 farmers. The aggregate amount of these loans was $4,195,491,000, of which one-half remained outstanding on January 1, 1947. A breakdown of the figures shows that 86 per cent of the total amount loaned was short-term credit. Banks extended production credit to 2,265,683 farmers in the aggregate amount of $3,479,486,000, of which only a little over one-third remained outstanding at the first of the year. They also loaned 40,077 farmers $122,920,000 on crops in storage under the CCC guaranteed-loan program. From the results of this study, the short-term debt position of farmers appears favorable, for although farmers borrowed more money last year, outstandings at the end of the year were low.

Mortgage loans totaling $593,085,000 were made to 238,265 farmers, bringing the out-
standings in long-term mortgage credits held by banks to $707,378,000 at the beginning of this year. Meanwhile, however, farmers are reported to be paying off their mortgages from production income in an average of less than three years.

COMMODITY NOTES

Carryover Stocks of Grain at Midyear

Carryover stocks of wheat, barley, and rye were relatively low on July 1, while those of corn and oats were relatively large, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Because of heavy millings and export, stocks of wheat were reduced to about 83.5 million bushels, the second smallest carryover since 1925. The figure was one-sixth below the 100 million bushels on hand at the middle of last year and only one-eighth of the peak stocks of July 1, 1942. Of the 83.5 million bushels on hand on July 1, it is estimated that about 40.5 million bushels remained on farms, 24.5 million bushels were held by merchant mills, and nearly 10 million bushels were stored in elevators and warehouses and at interior mills. Also included were about eight million bushels of old wheat in commercial stocks at terminals and half a million bushels owned by the Commodity Credit Corporation. The barley carryover of 56 million bushels is slightly below the carryover of 59 million bushels of last year and is the smallest in the five-year series of total stocks. Rye stocks of 2,343,000 bushels were slightly above those on July 1, 1946, but were only one-fifth of the carryover of two years ago and one-twelfth of that of July 1, 1943.

Reserves of 727 million bushels of corn in all positions on July 1 were large compared with the carryover of 532 million bushels last year. Of this year’s total about 688 million bushels were on farms and slightly less than 40 million bushels were in off-farm storage positions. Carryover stocks of oats totaled 278 million bushels, of which all but 19 million bushels remained on the farms. The total carryover of oats is about 4.5 per cent smaller than a year ago.

Wheat and Vegetable Goals Proposed for 1948

The United States Department of Agriculture has announced a revised goal of 75,000,000 acres of wheat to be planted for harvest in 1948. This is about equal to the indicated acreage for this year and about eight per cent more than the average planted in the prewar years of 1937-41. Another bumper wheat crop is needed next year to help meet overseas shortages until mid-1949, according to Secretary Clinton P. Anderson, who said that, although under “normal peacetime conditions” a much smaller acreage would be desirable, foreign needs dictate a maintenance of wheat production at high levels.

The Department of Agriculture also recommended for consideration by its State Councils for Arizona, Louisiana, Texas, and other winter-garden states a reduction in plantings of winter vegetables in 1948 amounting to three per cent of the acreage planted for the 1947 season. The acreages recommended for the year would, with average yields, produce 16 per cent more vegetables than the average for the last ten years and six per cent more than in 1947, when the crop was sharply reduced by winter freezes. With reference to specific crops, a reduction in the acreage of snap beans, carrots, cauliflower, celery, escarole, kale, and green peppers was recommended, but an increase was proposed for lima beans, beets, lettuce, and shallots.

Wool Price Support to Be Resumed

A bill signed by the President August 5 provides for support of the prices of domestic wool until the end of 1948 at the 1946 average price level of about 42 cents per pound, grease basis. However, premiums for fine wools and discounts for low-grade wools will be increased compared with last year. Under the present program, local wool handlers will act as agents for the Commodity Credit Corporation in purchasing wool from the producers. The new legislation removes the restrictions on the sale of Government-owned stocks of wool, and it is now possible for the CCC to dispose of such stocks at prices below parity.
1947 Cotton Loan Program Announced

The loan program announced recently by the Department of Agriculture covering upland cotton produced in 1947 provides for an average loan rate of 27.94 cents per pound for 15/16-inch middling cotton. This rate, which equals 92.5 per cent of the August 1 parity price, is considerably below the average market price of 35.76 cents per pound for this staple length on that date. Premiums and discounts for grade and staple in the 1947 loan program will be calculated in relation to the loan rate on the 15/16-inch middling. The loan rates will vary according to location, and loans will be made on cotton represented by warehouse receipts issued by warehouses approved by the Commodity Credit Corporation. Loans will be made direct by the CCC or through lending agencies, principally banks, approved by the Corporation. Requests for approval as lending agencies should be directed to the New Orleans Office of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Time of Cutting Hay Important to Protein Content

The protein content of hay crops increases during the period of plant growth, but generally declines during the period of bloom, according to a recent statement issued by the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station. As protein is the most valuable constituent of hay to animals and usually the most expensive to supply, it is in the interest of the farmer that he cut his hay at the time which will assure him the greatest possible amount of protein. For example, the protein content of red clover hay cut at bud stage is about 22 per cent, but only 15 per cent at full bloom. The farmer gets more tons of hay by waiting until the clover has reached full bloom, but he gets less protein. As a compromise between tons of hay and pounds of protein, the farmer is advised to cut his clover hay when it is at 50 per cent bloom stage. Alfalfa has about 23 per cent protein at the bud stage, about 20 per cent when one-tenth in bloom, and only 17 per cent when in full bloom. However, because the gross volume of hay to be harvested increases as the alfalfa continues its growth, the yield per acre of protein rises until one-tenth bloom. After that it decreases until full bloom. Mixed hay crops should be cut in accordance with the favorable time for protein in whatever legume predominates, but when selecting the various legumes for a mixed crop, it is advisable to consider the proximity of dates at which the various legumes reach their maximum in protein content.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congressional Hearing to Be Held at Temple, Texas

Beginning about October 15, a subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee will conduct a series of 12 hearings at points scattered throughout the country. One of these hearings will be held at Temple, Texas, on a date to be announced later. It is expected that at these hearings committee members will consider the questions of parity, government control of farm prices and production, foreign trade, and other agricultural problems, in an attempt to find out what kind of farm program the farmers and farm leaders of the country want and how to adjust the program to the interest and welfare of the nation.

Recent Publications

New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station, New Mexico A. & M. College, State College:
Combination Ranching in Southeastern New Mexico, Bulletin 332, by H. B. Pingrey.

Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, Oklahoma A. & M. College, Stillwater:
Good Pasture for Oklahoma, Circular C-125.

Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A. & M. College, College Station:
Organization of Irrigated Farms on the High Plains of Texas, Progress Report 1085, by A. C. Magee and others.

Copies of these bulletins may be secured by request to their respective publishers.