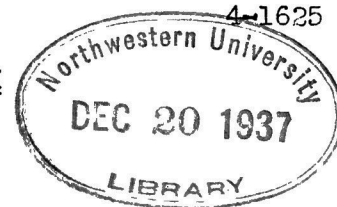


THE WORKS PROGRAM

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WPA Sees Limited Benefits From Part-Time Farming by Industrial Workers

Industrial workers may, under certain conditions, profitably supplement their wages by some farm work or gardening, but the settlement of workers in garden communities does not provide a solution of the general problems of unemployment and low wages, according to a survey of "Part-Time Farming in the Southeast," made public today by Aubrey Williams, Deputy Works Progress Administrator. The survey was conducted by the Division of Social Research of the Works Progress Administration in cooperation with the Land Utilization Division of the Resettlement Administration, now incorporated in the Farm Security Administration. It compares living conditions of 1,113 industrial workers in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina who were doing some gardening or farming on the side with those of 1,334 industrial workers from the same regions who were not engaged in farming.

The authors of the report conclude that some already employed workers may profitably supplement their wages by farm work, but that industrial employment with adequate wages and suitable hours must be available and the workers who move to the land must be of a type that can make a success of farming. Otherwise part-time farming, when it involves a change in residence or a new investment, should not receive public encouragement, they find.

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Workers already farming part-time, however, should learn to make better use of their land, the report recommends. Government agencies, it adds, would do well to launch an educational program especially directed toward part-time farmers.

"Part-time farm programs that have actually been undertaken by public agencies are too new to allow an adequate appraisal of incomes and living in the resulting communities," Mr. Williams said in releasing the report. "In this study of part-time farming in the Southeast, we directed our attention toward industrial workers who had already, as early as 1933, established themselves as part-time farmers either on small farms near industrial communities, or with garden plots on which they could raise part of their food.

"While workers who already have jobs frequently can improve their living standards through part-time farming, it is our conclusion that the opportunities for extension of part-time farming are sharply limited. Not all industries provide the kind of jobs which give workers a chance to farm on the side, and not all workers have the energy, industry and initiative required for success in this double-time work. A small farm or garden enterprise such as those studied in the Southeast cannot be expected to support a family in times of unemployment or even to furnish the major part of the family's income. At best, it can only supplement a cash wage from employment in industry. Certainly in the Eastern Cotton Belt unemployed workers should not be encouraged to establish themselves on farms with the view of eventually obtaining industrial employment to provide the necessary cash wage. The possibilities of increased industrial activities over the next few years in that area are found to be small. None of the industries studied, including cotton textiles, naval stores, lumber, and coal and iron, gives promise of any marked early increase in employment."

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Speaking of the proposal to launch an educational program for workers already engaged in part-time farming, Mr. Williams said, "People have become familiar with various government activities and should be responsive to a program of education now as never before. Many agencies now in existence have facilities for putting such a program into effect. This is especially true in the Southeast. There are today more agricultural extension workers--farm and home demonstration agents--in the Southeast than in any other region in the United States. The services of these agents, which have aided commercial farmers so greatly for many years, would be equally valuable to part-time farmers.

"Most of the people in the Southeast came originally from farms, but they were brought up in the tradition of growing a single cash crop, rather than foodstuffs. Many vegetables of which they have never even heard might be grown. This ignorance of the possibilities of their farms is almost as important in limiting their production as their lack of experience with a variety of crops and their lack of land and capital. Elementary instruction in farming methods would help them select and produce crops that would give their families a more varied diet over a longer period."

Although it would be possible for the workers in the Southeast to produce several crops for eight months out of the year at slight expense, few of the families surveyed had more than two varieties of vegetables for this length of time, the survey showed. Most of them were not familiar with winter vegetables other than collards and turnips.

Defined as "part-time farmers" in the survey were industrial workers employed for at least 50 days off the home farm in 1934 and operating at least three-quarters of an acre of tillable land or growing at least \$50 worth of produce during the year. Most of the part-time farms surveyed had less than

three acres of cropland and many of them consisted only of a garden a quarter acre in size. The majority of the workers kept chickens and about half of them had a cow and one or more hogs. The workers were producing mainly for home consumption, but a few with larger enterprises were regularly marketing some produce. Their earnings from wage employment amounted in most cases to less than \$500 a year.

Their farming enterprise was a financial advantage to the workers, the report showed, since their investment was slight and they were able to save in grocery bills anywhere from a few dollars to as much as \$20 a month during the summer. For the entire year the value of the products consumed by typical part-time farm families ranged from about \$70 to about \$400.

Part-time farming improved the diet of the workers' families, since their gardens produced more and better food than they would have been able to buy. The farms usually yielded three or more summer vegetables for three to five months, and most of the families stored or canned some of the vegetables for winter use.

The labor required on the strictly non-commercial farms or gardens amounted to from three to five and one-half hours a day from April through August. Usually more than one member of the family shared in the work.

Compared with non-farming industrial workers, the part-time farmers had to live at greater distances from their work, but in only one of five sections studied did this distance seem to interfere with their chances of getting jobs. They had larger homes than the non-farming workers, but since their families tended to be large their homes were somewhat more overcrowded than those of the non-farmers. They were also less likely to have modern conveniences, such as electric lights, running water, and bathrooms.