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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
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STATE OF OKLAHOMA

W. A. CONNER, Director

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SAFE FARMING FOR 1925*

BY BRADFORD KNAPP,
President Oklahoma A. and M. College

Prosperity is of great importance to Oklahoma and to all this country. With it we are all cheerful and happy; without it we go in debt and become unhappy or even miserable. I want to talk to you for a little while on a subject affecting the prosperity, not only of Oklahoma, but of the entire cotton territory: WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT COTTON IN 1925?

The prosperity of the South depends very greatly upon the prosperity of our farming. What I am saying is really vital, not alone to our farmers, but to the general business interests of the south, for it is true that if the farmers of Oklahoma and of the south are not prosperous in 1925, if they now make a serious mistake in their plan of farming, the result will be a lack of prosperity on the part of the business man, the banker and the professional man. We have come to understand perfectly now that the success of farming is reflected in the prosperity of business, and hence the safety and security of agriculture in Oklahoma and in the southwest particularly is of vital importance to us all.

FARMING A BUSINESS

Farming is a business and as a business it must follow the same sound laws of economics which other lines of business follow. As we are about to plant our fields, I am just a little bit worried for fear we are all going to plant them to one thing, namely, cotton, for the simple reason that cotton has been quite

*This is the substance, with slight additions, of an address by President Bradford Knapp, of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, radiocasted from Station KFRU, Bristow, Oklahoma, at 7:30 p. m., February 23, 1925, and taken down by stenographers sitting at receiving sets in Stillwater.

satisfactory during the past two years and therefore we are prone to believe that that success will continue and that the thing to do is to put the entire farm into cotton. Some of us, I am sure, are going to throw away every business precaution in the world and make one grand plunge or speculation by planting everything to cotton.

I want to inquire of farmers, bankers and merchants whether that is a wise program for 1925? I said, a moment ago, that farming is a business and that it must follow business laws. No manufacturer ever willingly or knowingly makes more of his products than he believes he can sell. Henry Ford doesn't manufacture any more Ford cars and tractors than he feels positive by his business system he can market to the people of the world. Whenever the buying power of the world is low, you can depend upon it that manufacturers will somewhat limit the production of their plants and will not produce to the utmost. The same identical principle applies to agriculture. If, in 1925, by planting an enormous acreage of cotton we should have a good season and produce an enormously large crop, we will have to take a lower price for that crop. There is no indication in the business of the world to warrant us in thinking that a very large crop would still sell for a good price or even for cost of production.

We planted enough acreage in cotton in the past year to have produced, in a good season throughout the entire cotton territory, more than 16 million bales of cotton. Going back to 1914, you will remember that we had less than 37 million acres of cotton that year. That was a good season and we produced in excess of 16 million bales of cotton. In the past year we had 40 million acres in cotton and the prospects are now that in 1925 we will have more than 40 million acres in cotton. (See table of figures). It is true that in 1924 we had a good season in Oklahoma and Texas and the southwest in general, but this was not true throughout the entire cotton belt. If the season in 1925 should be good from one end of the cotton territory to the other, we should easily produce 16 or even 17 million bales of cotton on the acreage that will be planted. If we do, the question to be asked is this: Can the world and will the world absorb that great cotton crop and pay a big price for that production?

Oh, my banker friends, my merchant friends, my farmer friends, let us think just a little bit about this proposition. Are we going to risk everything on a gamble this year, flood the market with an enormous production, and run around this fall begging the world to buy our cotton and complaining because it is selling below the cost of production? It seems to me that such a situation would be folly indeed.

Just recently the president of the United States appointed a great Agricultural Commission and I want to call your atten-

tion to one of their recommendations. It is that in a few years the farmers of America should contemplate producing for the home markets only and not for exportation. They say that the United States is the best market for our products and that we ought not to think of the European market and foreign markets but rather of our own market. I am not going to say, at this time, whether that program is wise or otherwise. There is not time for me to go into that subject. I only call it to your attention to remind you that the world is thinking upon this subject and that the problem of international trade, the problem of marketing our products in other countries, is a difficult and a rather hazardous problem at the present time.

And so here we are faced with this kind of a proposition: What are we going to plant in the next sixty days? The measure of what we plant, plus the season, plus the economic condition of the world, will be the measure of our prosperity in the year of 1925. I would like to see a continuation of the present happy condition in the southwest. We have been paying our debts, cleaning up the past, and getting ourselves in a much better shape. I should hate to see a repetition of what has come to the farmers of this country time and time again in the cotton territory---the producing of a crop and the sale of it for less than the cost of production, and, therefore, debts, misery and dissatisfaction. "Well," you say, "are you asking the farmers of Oklahoma and the southwest to cut down their acreage in cotton?" No, I am not! I am simply asking them to look the whole situation squarely in the face and make up their minds as to what program ought to be pursued.

A TICKET FOR HOME

In that connection, I want to recite a little circumstance that used to interest me very greatly when I was a boy. We lived down in the good old State of Louisiana years and years ago. The young fellows used occasionally to go to New Orleans and bet their money on the races. I noticed a very interesting thing which they often did. The moment one of them arrived in the city, he went immediately to the ticket office and bought himself a ticket back home; then he went to the race track, and if he lost all his money he still had "the ticket for home" and returned home with a degree of self respect. I wonder if it wouldn't be a pretty good thing for us in the southwest and in the entire cotton territory to buy a "ticket for home" in 1925.

No business man goes into a great undertaking unless he insures his business. He does not take on the risk there is in putting in a stock of goods or in constructing a building; he takes out insurance against unnecessary risk which he ought not to

carry upon his own shoulders. I am simply suggesting that we take out an insurance policy upon our farming business for 1925.

SAFE FARMING

A good many of us have been calling this system I have been talking about, "safe farming." I like it better than the word diversification. Diversification does not mean anything. "Safe farming," I define as a system which

1. Maintains the fertility of the soil, so that we may continue to have economic production.
2. Produces on each farm, as nearly as possible, the feed for the livestock and food for the family.
3. Provides for more than one farm product to sell in the market of the world for cash.

I firmly believe that if such a system is followed---and many farmers do follow it---the result will be a greater degree of safety, security and good sound business. We make our profit on the acre value of cotton and not on the greatest possible number of acres. If the price be the same, our profits come from producing the largest possible amount per acre on our particular farm at the lowest cost, and that isn't always brought about by having a very large acreage in cotton. Look at the table I am putting into this bulletin for your information. In 1923, with a yield of 103 pounds of lint on the average, we had a price of 23 cents and an acre value of \$23.69. In 1924, we made more per acre on an average or 183 pounds and hence with slightly less price (22.2 cents), we had a much greater acre value on the average and made more money, namely \$40.63. So a good program, it seems to me, for 1925, would be to think about the food and the feed.

FEED CROPS NECESSARY

A good many of us have been talking about livestock and dairying, poultry production and various other lines of work---all of them most excellent and entirely necessary for permanent agriculture, but we cannot build a livestock industry without the feed necessary to feed that livestock and feed it well. Even the best of livestock, purebred high-producing stock, does not do well on a scarcity of feed, and the supply of feed and forage and good pasture is the one great necessity of the livestock industry. Let me go further and say: **FEED IN THE BIN IS WORTH MORE THAN MONEY IN THE BANK IF FEED HAS TO BE SHIPPED IN.** I mean that the farmer who has feed on his own farm in ample supplies in the fall of 1925 will be better off than the man who merely has money in the bank in the fall

of 1925 and has to ship feed in. The livestock industry never prospers by hauling feed and hay from the retail stores in town out to the farm in order to support that industry. It will prosper only in case we produce an adequate supply of feed in Oklahoma. So I am urging that we think first of the safety and security of our program and therefore take steps to supply ourselves this year with these necessary things, the feed and forage necessary for every head of livestock we have on our place and every head of stock we expect to have on the place during the next year. That is a program absolutely necessary for our success.

A SAFE FARMING PROGRAM

Let me run over the items that compose what I have called "the ticket for home" or "an insurance policy":

1. A good home garden for every farm family, including potatoes, either Irish or sweet or both, for home use, and where possible a patch of cane for syrup. I am not sure but that in many places in Oklahoma and other cotton states it might be well to have a few potatoes for sale.
2. I think we ought to plant enough grain crops to feed our livestock.
3. Hay and forage and pasture for the livestock should be provided.
4. We should grow our own food, our own meat, milk and eggs for the family by keeping good cows, sows and hens and improving the quality through good breeding, care and management. The family that has the milk, meat and eggs, plus the garden with the good work of the housewife and the daughter, who may be in the home demonstration club, in canning the surplus of the garden for the winter's use, is infinitely better off than the family which buys all of its necessary food at the grocery store in cans and paper sacks. Let me just say, in this connection, that I think cotton is one of the greatest crops God Almighty ever gave his people. It is a wonderful crop to grow, but it is the poorest crop to eat I ever saw and the poorest people in the world are the people that have to swap low priced cotton for high priced food.
5. In addition to the cotton crop the wisest plan for the efficient farm family is to have some other cash product to sell. In such a case even if the cotton crop fails, or if we produce so much that the world will not buy it at a satisfactory price, we still have something else to fall back on. Isn't that after all the wisest thing in planning our work for this year?

Cotton with the dairy industry and some poultry makes a good combination. Cotton with some hogs, some fruit or something else that we make a definite plan to produce for marketing either locally or on the markets of the world is a worth while program. Let me just say this: I have been in every cotton state and in most of the cotton-producing counties of the United States, and I have never seen in my life anyone who was what I called "a safe farmer" unless the local people assured me that he was a good business man, respected in the community and far safer than the ordinary farmer. I remember I had a good friend in North Carolina, Old Major Graham, who, for many years was Commissioner of Agriculture in the old "Tar Heel" State. I asked Major Graham, a man 80 years of age, some years ago, whether I was right or wrong in my contention that the man who had a safe system in which he produced his own food and feed and had something else to sell besides one cash crop was not a better risk and a better farmer than the man who risked everything on one crop. I remember the old Major looking off across the fields of North Carolina and saying, "Mr. Knapp, I am an old man and have lived many years; yet I have never seen a man sold out by the sheriff who had hay in the hay mow, corn in the crib and meat in the smoke house." In other words, the man who provides for his family against the evil days of failure of his crop is infinitely better off and safer than the man who does not.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING

I cannot close what I have to say without referring to cooperative marketing. I believe in the great cooperative marketing system. It is a straightforward business plan by which a large group of people, who are farmers and whose interests are in common, have bound themselves together to market all of their products of a certain kind. In Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and other cotton states, we have these great cotton cooperatives. Their obligation is to take their members' cotton and deal with it as it has to be dealt with in the markets of the world and market it like a great product and return to the members the largest possible proportion of the money paid by the consumer. I subscribe to that and believe in it, but no system of cooperative marketing can take more cotton than the world needs and get a high price for it unless the ability of the world to pay for that cotton is tremendously increased during the next year. That is the proposition. The success of a cooperative marketing association depends upon a good business system and hence we must see to it, in so far as we possibly can, that our business as individual farmers is somewhat safe-guarded, and I believe that we ought not voluntarily and knowingly to try to produce a larger crop than the world can take care of at a fair price.

Not very long ago I set down what I call "The Gospel of Safe Farming." In Biblical language, it would run something like this:

1. Remember the fertility of thy soil that thy days may be long on the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee.
2. Take heed of thy garden and thy cow, thy sow and thy hen that thy wife and thy children may eat though all else shall fail thee.
3. Put not thy trust in one crop only upon thy farm, but provide against the evil days by producing thine own food and feed.
4. Despise not the day of small things. Thy bread grain, thine own vegetables, meat, milk and eggs are thy sure rock of safety in time of trouble. Neglect them not upon thy farm.
5. The wise man leaveth nothing to chance, but produceth for his family their food in season and for his livestock their feed and forage. The foolish man risketh all upon one crop and great is his sorrow and the lamentations of his family when disaster cometh to that crop.

Think it over. It is worth your very earnest consideration. I am thinking of the future. I am thinking of the families upon the farm. I am thinking of the necessity of their prosperity and happiness. I am thinking of the children and of their going along the roadway to the school house. I am thinking of the happiness that is to come at Thanksgiving time and at Christmas time if we have prosperity. I am also thinking of the sorrow and distress to come if the season in 1925 should throw us back in debt and bring us into that slough of despondency through which we went in 1914 and again in 1920. The prosperity of the farmers of Oklahoma and of the southland depends very greatly upon our having a balanced system of farming, upon our producing the necessities of life at home and being independent of other sections. With plenty of food and feed we can sell to the world this great crop and the other products of our farms so much needed to supply the clothing and food of the world.

THE COTTON CROP

Acreage, production, estimated farm value, yield per acre and value per acre in the United States and in Oklahoma by years from 1914 to 1923, inclusive. Data taken from U. S. Census and U. S. Department of Agriculture publications.

Cotton in the United States

Year	Acreage	Production in 500-lb. Bales	Estimated Farm Value	Average Farm Price Dec. 1	Yield Lbs. Lint Per Acre	Value Per Acre
1914	36,832,000	16,135,000	\$ 549,036,000	6.8	209.2	
1915	31,412,000	11,192,000	631,460,000	11.3	170.3	\$19.46
1916	34,985,000	11,450,000	1,122,295,000	19.6	156.6	30.64
1917	33,841,000	11,302,000	1,566,195,000	27.7	159.7	45.12
1918	36,008,000	12,041,000	1,663,633,000	27.6	159.6	45.03
1919	33,556,000	11,421,000	2,034,658,000	35.6	158.2	59.00
1920	35,878,000	13,440,000	933,658,000	13.9	170.8	25.14
1921	30,509,000	7,954,000	643,933,000	16.2	124.5	21.05
1922	33,036,000	9,762,000	1,161,846,000	23.8	141.3	35.03
1923	37,123,000	10,140,000	1,571,815,000	31.	130.6	42.17
1924	40,115,000	13,153,000	1,487, 225,000	22.6	156.8	36.94

Cotton in Oklahoma

Year	Acreage	Production in 500-lb. Bales	Average Farm Price Dec. 1	Yield Lbs. Lint Per Acre	Value Per Acre
1914	2,847,000	1,262,000	6.5	212	
1915	1,895,000	640,000	11.3	162	\$17.52
1916	2,562,000	823,000	19.	154	29.26
1917	2,183,000	959,000	26.5	165	39.75
1918	2,998,000	577,000	25.5	92	21.68
1919	2,424,000	1,016,000	35.2	190	66.88
1920	2,765,000	1,300,000	10.5	225	23.62
1921	2,206,000	481,000	15.4	104	16.02
1922	2,915,000	627,000	23.	103	23.69
1923	3,197,000	656,000	29.6	98	29.01
1924	3,791,000	1,450,000	22.2	183	40.63