

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

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Suggestions For a State Policy in Agriculture

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Those in a position to influence agricultural tendencies and practices can ill afford longer to postpone the adoption of a definite policy in agriculture. The delay already has placed unnecessary burdens on the next generation. It is a well known fact that the stronger peoples of the earth have always been those occupying the new and most productive soils. It is here that human hopes run highest, where worthwhile ambitions are born and where civilization receives its greatest impetus. It also is a well known fact that when the soil loses its ability to turn out its products at a profit we find a deterioration in human ideals and a decrease in human achievements.

The present generation has taken from our new state far more than our just portion of her natural resources. In many cases our farm enterprises are unprofitable even where the soil fertility is unimpaired. Some of this is due to false economic standards, perhaps, and some to world conditions that cannot be controlled.

WE NEED A UNIFIED PROGRAM

Despite the fact that various farm organizations, bankers financing agriculture, commercial organizations, the farm press and agricultural colleges have accomplished some splendid results in a sort of detached way, it yet remains for these agencies to unite on a policy in agriculture that would bring about unity of effort in dealing with the problems of agriculture and result in better living conditions and permanent profitable production.

Such a policy should be simple, clear and definite. It should enumerate the more important fundamentals to be dealt with in one two three order and should be committed to memory like the ten commandments. When these fundamentals are firmly fixed in our minds and by force of repetition we are able to fix them in the minds of the public, our problem then resolves itself into evolving plans and methods for putting these essential fundamentals into operation.

An illustration of this last statement will perhaps better convey the meaning intended. Some of our instructors in agricultural economics are inclined to neglect the human element in our farm problem and to consider only land, chattels and profits. This class of economists believe that the desirable goal is increased acre profits from things grown and sold on the world's markets. They contend that the

most economical production is had when farms are kept in large units and a large number of men and a great deal of equipment is controlled by one management. While it is true that this arrangement might result in greater acre profits it might not contribute to the comfort and contentment of the families living on this land, who are paid a wage for their labors and who are considered merely a part of the farm equipment. The other class of economists contend that the chief function of the land is to provide comfortable homes and a substantial living for those who occupy and till it, before any considerable portion of the products are dumped into the channels of commerce.

Before we can adopt a state policy in agriculture we must agree on this important point. If we can agree that a prosperous contented rural population is essential to the welfare of society as a whole and that it is just as important from the standpoint of economical production to keep the farm family in prime condition as it is to keep the farm equipment in good condition, we have made a start toward adopting a policy in agriculture. Since a given quantity of farm products at this time will buy a much smaller quantity of merchandise than it would buy in 1913, it becomes necessary to restrict our purchases to those necessities that cannot be produced on the farm. In this case the first job is to make the farms produce an abundance of wholesome food for the family before anything is sent out to the world markets. The second job is so to manage the soil, the crops, and the breeds of livestock that we may turn them over to the next generation producing as efficiently or a little more so than they were when we took charge of them, for on this depends the future of our race.

FOOD AND FEED COME FIRST

Changing world condition will affect every farm plant that is organized exclusively to cater to world markets. But, changing world conditions do not influence the nature or the amounts of food the farm families will need to consume. If everybody thoroughly believed this and constantly talked it, soon it would become fashionable for folks to take the matter into consideration when laying out their plans for production. We then would be agreed on the first section of our program for agriculture which we would state about as follows:

There must be the minimum requirement of family feeding livestock, which is a milk cow capable of producing all the milk and butter the family will use; a brood sow to insure meat and lard at all times of the year, and at least two dozen hens good enough to produce at least an average number of eggs.

The next consideration would be to make ample provision for this family feeding livestock as well as for the work stock to guard against the possibility of their becoming unable to produce to best advantage. It is easier to raise the feed than it is to buy it. Abundant home grown feeds adapted to the locality, including green pastures through as great a portion of the year as possible, proper housing facilities and plenty of clean fresh water should be provided.

Such fruits and vegetables as can be grown in the locality especially those that have a value in the diet, are relished by members of the family, can be put up and used during most of the year must be given serious consideration in our plans for providing the living on the farm.

PLAN CAREFULLY FOR THE CASH INCOME

After these things have been taken care of, provision must be made for a cash income and it is here that we encounter the most difficult and the most uncertain phases of the program. The human factor, soil and climatic conditions, location, roads and market conditions all have a bearing on the outcome of the undertaking. One man will find that in addition to keeping one milk cow for family needs he can keep a few others for commercial production. A neighbor under very similar conditions is of a different temperament and will do better with poultry or hogs, while still another will grow field crops for the market to better advantage.

We may safely advocate that at least two major sources for the annual income be arranged. The income from at least one source should be distributed as nearly as possible throughout the year. Such a distribution of income will take care of many of the current expenses as they accrue and will encourage thrift and economy.

Best of all it makes unnecessary the extravagant method of running store accounts or adding interest on borrowed money to the already heavy expense of production.

While there is danger in being too positive or definite about what will make money on the farm when produced in commercial quantities, it also is certain that a great deal of the risk can be taken out of the enterprise by following the best methods as determined by farm practices and by our experiment stations. These methods are constantly being made available through the farm press and by the agricultural colleges through local county agents. A part of our program should be to encourage the study and use of the best methods of production, conservation and marketing.

The agricultural fair is an institution that is doing a great deal to establish standards and types of field crops and livestock that produce to the best advantage. It creates a desire among the exhibitors to excel in quality and quantity of products. Plans for the promotion of the fair system should be incorporated in any constructive state program for agriculture.

Grades of livestock that under pioneer conditions were considered good enough will not pay for their keep under present standards. Many individuals and some communities have made the costly mistake of "buying into" the better livestock business on a basis entirely unfamiliar to them. Few of them could become constructive breeders or sellers of that class of stuff. A safe and profitable method of procedure is the grading up method. This method gives the producer an opportunity to improve his equipment and adjust his practices as he grows into the better livestock business.

In lending money on farms, bankers can insist that these farms be handled in such a way as to insure permanency of production. They could insist that sloping fields that are washing be terraced; they should encourage and assist farmers in the production of their own living. The proper feed crops for the livestock will include a legume which assists in building up the soil or in retaining its productivity. Many of these poor hillside farms can be greatly benefited by terracing and growing legumes.

WE MUST LOOK TO OUR MARKETS

No effort at economical production can offset extravagant marketing systems. When bonds and stocks sink far below par, the entire financial world is disturbed. Likewise when the value of farm products falls far below their normal purchasing power as compared to other commodities, the agricultural industry is faced with a serious situation.

Efficient marketing alone cannot be considered a "cure-all" for all farm ills. It is, however, one of the phases of the industry that must be given immediate sympathetic attention or other industries in time will be forced to pay the price of this injustice.

Cooperative marketing of farm products through commodity organizations is one of the methods being attempted to improve the relative value of these products. This method of marketing is entitled to a fair trial. All industries should be interested in seeing farm products restored to their normal purchasing power for the beneficial influence it will have on the world's business.

Not all attempts at cooperative marketing are likely to succeed. When cooperative marketing organizations attempt to control the supply of any product and fix an arbitrary price for it, the same disastrous results will follow that result from all other violations of economic laws.

In our efforts at cooperative marketing we should attempt only to increase our efficiency in moving these products from the producer to the consumer and in no instance set out to injure the legitimate business of any man or industry. If in this sincere effort to better serve society with an improved marketing system it is found that services rendered by certain persons in the old system of marketing are unnecessary or unduly expensive and must be discarded, the surplus machinery should be eliminated in the same business-like manner that an unnecessary department is eliminated from a concern being reorganized.

All chambers of commerce, bankers' associations and other organizations interested in agricultural development should give these farm marketing movements the advantage of their best experience and thought if they would contribute to the contentment and prosperity of those with whom they must live and do business.

A valuable service can be rendered even where no effort is made at cooperative

marketing by talking freely and frankly with farmers relative to their local marketing problems and by assisting in making favorable local marketing conditions. Occasionally a curb market in the larger towns will expedite the handling of fruits and vegetables to the advantage of both producers and consumers.

Cooperative marketing of farm products cannot be brought about by a few promoters or by legislation favoring this movement. It will best succeed where the members of the marketing association are thoroughly convinced that their method is the most profitable one for them to use and where the loyalty and enthusiasm of the members are such that propaganda will not arouse their suspicion and distrust. If it is found in the course of these marketing activities that certain laws place undue restrictions on cooperative marketing, it then is time to seek a remedy through legislation.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK AND THRIFT ONLY WAY OUT

Much has been said during the last few years about country life movements. For the most part, these movements originate in institutions, corporations or city organizations far removed from the locality they seek to serve. They suggest various nostrums for the relief of country burdens. Among these suggested remedies are social organizations to promote church activity, recreation and other social functions. Failing to understand the relation of the economic to the social condition, they deal largely with the psychological phases of community life. These would be reformers from their dizzy aerial positions extol the beauties of the farmer's natural environment and recite advices in terms of their own experiences without getting close enough to earth to observe that his feet are buried deep in the slough of despond.

Strange to say the folks who are engaged in the serious job of battling with the conditions met in rearing, feeding and educating a family far out in the open country, have failed to work up a great deal of enthusiasm for such movements. Social uplift remedies, as such, must remain the toys of those who look upon from afar but do not feel the heart throbs of life out where men battle with the elements for existence. Farm folks believe that the fundamental problem is the economic problem; that if the farm could be made to pay enough to make it possible, they would gladly improve their living and social conditions. Surveys show that in the richer agricultural communities where farmers own their own homes and are prosperous, church problems, school problems and social problems are less complicated.

Also we must admit that in the poor communities composed largely of tenant farmers with farms worn out and unproductive because of lack of system, no amount of enthusiasm which may be worked up can overcome the lack of resources in building up schools, churches and roads. Let us recognize the fact that the burning rural problem is an economic problem and that we must deal with this problem from an economic standpoint. In accomplishing all things desirable in rural development we have a long hard pull. It will take hard work, economy and thrift to get results. There is no quick or easy way out.