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Preparedness
and
The Farmer

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WHETHER or not we become involved in a full-scale war, farmers will be called upon to keep up and even increase production in some lines. They will be asked to do so in the face of the many difficulties that always arise in an emergency.

Right now we can see some of the implications of the situation.

- Labor will be scarce.
- Shortages will arise.
- A long period of emergency looms ahead.
- Demand for farm goods will be high.
- Unless vigorous steps are taken, inflation is likely to continue.
- Family life will be put to test.

All these call for positive planning. In this folder we have outlined the situation as it looks today. The facts are given. Your decisions could well be based on these facts and on your own farm situation.

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• **Farm labor will be scarce.** The needs of the armed services and defense plants will cause farm labor shortages.

• **Materials will be increasingly hard to get.** At first only a few things may be scarce, but more and more of the things considered essential may become hard to get. This means that conservation of your machinery, buildings, and fences may be imperative. Maximum utilization of manure and legumes; seed treatment and good seed beds for conservation of scarce legume and grass seeds; good soil management to conserve soil resources; accident prevention to conserve man power—all these will be increasingly urgent. Continued use of the soil-testing laboratory is needed to make best use of available fertilizers.

• **Prepare for a long pull.** Many farmers have gone through two serious wars. Both times we expected only a few years of hostilities, and both times the war was over before we seriously depleted our farm equipment and resources. Now we may expect a much longer period of strain, so adjust yourself and your farm to the probability of a long drain on available resources. Soil conservation should be an active reality. More use of hay and pasture should be planned because hay and pastures are necessary to soil conservation. Don't be too eager to cash in on the good income items all at once at the expense of future yields. Good yields may be worth more in the future than they are today. Keep a good line of well-bred livestock, and control diseases and parasites.

• **Civilian employment is very high** and probably will go higher. Out of the total United States population of about 153 million, over 61 million are employed at civilian activities. These workers at good wages represent a steady and growing pressure for food. Moreover, with more money to spend, they want plenty of meat, eggs, and dairy products of all kinds.

• **Unless vigorous steps are taken, inflation is likely to continue.** Price ceilings and rationing may suppress inflation for a time. They deal with consequences, not causes. Inflation results when money supply, i.e., spending means, outruns the supply of goods and services. The armament program adds to money supply and decreases supply of goods. The effective way to stop inflation, is to reduce money supply by increased tax collections and credit restriction. Unless the armament program is put on a pay-as-we-go basis, it will be difficult to stop inflation.

Wheat

It takes about 725 million bushels annually to supply the domestic needs of the United States. The wheat carry-over July 1, 1950, was 420 million, the 1950 crop was 1,010 millions, and, allowing for probable exports, the carry-over next July 1 may be about 450 million bushels. This does not allow for emergency situations such as special military demands or partial crop failure.

Acreage allotments have been eliminated for 1951. Support prices for 1951-52 will be a national average of \$1.99 per bushel (same as 1950-51) or 90 per cent of parity, whichever is higher.

A threat that hovers over wheat production is the possible damage from the new strain of rust, race 15B. If the epidemic in the southern states should be bad and prevailing winds just right, we might have serious losses no matter what we do. If the outbreak in the south is light or the winds do not carry the spores, we might escape.

The best protection, until resistant varieties are ready, is to plant early. None of the recommended varieties now in use are known to be resistant.

(Continued from previous column)

Farmers should be alert to the dangerous nature of this rising inflation. Rising prices may seem desirable at first, as long as the farmer is mainly engaged in selling. But the farmer must also buy—machinery, tractor fuel, fertilizer, labor, building materials, household necessities, a long list of pressing needs. Farming today is a long way from a self-contained unit; it is a business concern. Moreover, as inflation gets worse, the farmer's customers find themselves in turmoil with their spendable dollars, so that the whole program of orderly merchandising tends to be upset. As inflation increases, the defense program costs more. Under serious inflation everyone suffers.

• **Family life will be put to test.** The tense world situation will leave its mark on everyone. Added to these tensions will be the irritations of shortages, controls, and possible rationing.

Fathers and mothers will need to use all their powers to keep the home life strong and wholesome. The moral and spiritual strength of the family will need to be real and genuine. Good family life is the center of democracy; this will be a time of trial, testing whether this central core can survive and flourish under adversity.

Flax

The 1950 flax crop was 39.3 million bushels, against a 1949 crop of 43.9 million and a 1939-48 average of 34.8 million. Carry-over on July 1, 1950, was 16.8 million bushels. In addition, there were 579 million pounds of linseed oil on hand (the equivalent of 29.2 million bushels of flax). The United States used 526 million pounds of linseed oil during the year ending June, 1950.

Soybeans

Stocks of soybeans on farms on January 1, 1951, totaled 97.7 million bushels, the highest on record. On January 1, 1950, the amount was 61 million, and the 1944-49 average was 51 million. Large stocks are the result of (1) the largest crop on record and (2) a relatively high percentage of the crop still held on farms.

The big 1950 crop was partly due to acreage diverted from corn by farmers complying with corn acreage allotments. But even though farm stocks are large, the use of 191 million bushels during October through December, 1950, is the highest on record. The 1950 production of cottonseed was extremely small (about 60 per cent of 1949), and both the oil and the meal of these two seeds are competitors in many respects.

Grass and Legumes

Maintaining the physical strength of the soil by grass and legume roots and residues and supplying the nitrogen needs of succeeding crops by the production of legumes—these are two of the great essentials if good crop yields are to be long continued at minimum cost. To do this some sort of rotation, either regular or irregular, is needed on every farm. A program of seedings as extensive as this would mean a large increase in hay and pasture acreages, and many farms would need to make extensive adjustments in utilization. Yet serious consideration is needed toward realizing this objective.

For 1951 there is a fairly good supply of red clover and sweet clover seed, but alfalfa (the hardy northern varieties) and alsike seed are more scarce. There are good supplies of brome seed and Kentucky blue grass.

Farmers in a position to do so should consider producing legume and grass seeds, as there is a growing need for these seeds.

Corn

The 1950 U. S. corn crop of 3.1 billion bushels was the fourth largest on record, but, in spite of that, the quantity on hand January 1, 1951, (2,160,000 bushels) was smaller than the quantity on hand a year earlier (2,405,000 bushels). We still have a large reserve of corn, but we have dipped into that reserve. We may find ourselves dipping still deeper in 1951. Another increase in pig numbers is expected this spring. Carry-over of corn next October 1 may be around 500 to 600 million bushels, compared to 859 million last October 1.

Hogs usually consume about 50 per cent of the corn crop of Minnesota and a very large share of all corn produced in the United States. The 1950 United States pig crop of 100.7 million pigs was 5 per cent over 1949, and an increase of this size results in a big increase in corn consumption. An increase of 4 per cent in sows farrowing this spring is indicated.

In Minnesota, with 8 per cent more pigs in 1950 than in 1949 (19 per cent more fall pigs) and with a reduced 1950 corn crop due to frost damage, the reduction in corn reserves has been even greater than in the nation as a whole. An expanded acreage in 1951 appears to be justified.

Hogs

With a huge increase in hog numbers in 1950 and a still further increase expected in 1951, we seem headed toward the peak numbers of 1942 and 1943. Farmers would do well to heed the lessons learned from that last period of rapid expansion.

One of the best measures of success in hog management is the quantity of corn and other grain required to produce 100 pounds gain in weight of hogs. Farmers in the Southeast Minnesota Farm Management Service, who kept careful records, showed a steady increase in the average amount of feed required to produce 100 pounds gain, from 426 pounds in 1939 to 554 pounds in 1946. Beginning

Table 1. Pounds of corn and other concentrates fed per 100 pounds live hog produced—average of all farms*

Year	Pounds	Year	Pounds	Year	Pounds
1939	426	1943	547	1947	535
1940	454	1944	545	1948	491
1941	468	1945	551	1949	478
1942	497	1946	554		

* From annual reports of Southeast Minnesota Farm Management Service, Division of Agricultural Economics, University of Minnesota.

with 1946 that figure has been steadily going down from 554 pounds in 1946 to 478 pounds in 1949.

Checking with these farmers as to why the quantity went up during the war and down since, they mention the following practices as better in the past few years:

More purchased protein is available and farmers are disposed to feed it more liberally; some farmers have turned back to feeding of skim milk; sanitation practices are being observed more widely; hogs are being sold at lighter weights; more pigs per litter are being weaned (although losses of little pigs are still very great); numbers are being kept in closer relation to available facilities.

Good hog management practices can easily result in saving more than a bushel of corn per hog. The saving in corn can be so huge, if these better practices are generally followed, that every effort should be made to learn and to follow them.

Dairy

The current program of full employment has stepped up the demand for fluid milk and cream and for the time being has removed much of the surplus stocks of manufactured dairy products. The butter and cheese surpluses have disappeared. Some surplus dried milk is still on hand, but it is disappearing rapidly. Stronger prices for manufactured dairy products can be anticipated.

However, basic conditions are still unstable. A reduction in defense spending could quickly result in rising surpluses again. It takes a high level of national demand to equal the capacity of existing plants and to supply markets for areas that prefer to sell manufactured dairy products.

The competition from other areas continues to grow as a long-time threat to Minnesota dairying. Dairy production has increased in all of the south-east states during the past five years, and it has decreased in all of the north central states except Wisconsin. Minnesota dairy farmers should intensify their efforts to decrease costs both in production and in marketing and to adapt their products to the needs of consumers.

On the production side, the present good price of beef encourages dairy farmers to cull out the poorer cows. Dairy herd improvement associations should be retained and increased in number so that this culling may be most effectively done.

Improved pastures and good hay management are vital to best dairy results. Much wider use of established practices is still needed.

The tremendous strides in better breeding, especially through artificial insemination, should be maintained and extended steadily.

The present interest in elimination of bovine brucellosis is wholesome. In addition to the important health aspects locally, the market outlook for Minnesota dairy products makes it imperative that the brucellosis clean-up be finished rapidly.

Poultry and Eggs

Per capita consumption in 1950 was about 388 eggs, 26 pounds of chicken, and five pounds of turkey. Supplies of eggs and poultry meat for consumers in 1951 will probably exceed 1950 consumption, and these supplies will temper the effects of the prospective increase in consumer demand.

Farms on which chickens are a profitable part of the farm business will, and should, continue with the usual number of chicks up to the capacity of the equipment, especially the laying house. But efficient production, low costs of production per egg or per hen, is a must this year. Competition is getting keener. More people are learning the secrets of lower production costs so every producer must learn them too, or be forced out.

With support prices removed, producers and marketing agencies have an opportunity to develop improved market channels. Improved marketing practices should be discussed on a community level, with the objectives of adequate volume of good quality products as a help to better income.

Beef Cattle

The best beef is produced from cattle bred along beef lines and properly fattened for market. But a substantial part of the total beef supply comes from cull dairy animals; another large share comes from range cattle that go directly from the western range to slaughter.

When national employment is at a high level, as at present, good beef is in great demand, and a very large volume may move at good prices. Quality beef has the advantage, of course, but the plainer kinds are in good enough demand so that the cattle producer may make a good profit at a smaller investment in feeder cattle with these lower grades.

Feeder cattle prices seemed high in the fall of 1950 and some operators stayed out of the market or bought fewer than usual. The total on feed on January 1, 1951, however, was 5 per cent larger than a year ago and was the largest on record.

If the present level of sale prices continues, the margin between purchase and sale prices should be enough to give most feeders a good profit. That in turn would tend to encourage feeders for next

year's operations, especially if employment and economic conditions should continue at a high level.

The farmer who now has a beef cow herd is in a favorable position, as he can fatten and sell his own calves without the risk involved in annual purchase of feeders. But the man who starts now to buy heifers to set up a beef herd is starting at a high level of cost. It will take about two years, at best, before he will be on the market with cattle from heifers bought now.

Yet if he is willing to wait and is willing to take the chance of any down turn in the market, he may find a beef cow herd a very practical program. Such a herd will use large quantities of hay and pasture, will require very little labor, and can be housed in very modest shelters.

Sheep

The outlook for sheep is very favorable. The number of sheep in the United States is still small. There were 31 million on January 1, 1951, against a 1937-41 average of 51 million.

Prices of both wool and lambs are high compared to all usual standards, and it will apparently take quite a period of years to build United States sheep numbers up to a point where domestic needs will be satisfied.

Sheep come closer than any other class of common livestock to subsisting entirely on roughage. A beef-breeding herd needs only roughage for the cows, but the calves usually need to be finished off with corn. In sheep production the breeding flock uses only a little grain at lambing time, and the lambs, if on good pasture, can go directly to market off pasture with no grain at all. A well-planned sheep business can fit well with soil conservation by utilizing large amounts of hay and pasture with a minimum of labor.

Farms that are adapted to sheep production may well consider sheep as one of the major roughage-consuming enterprises. A substantial increase in the number of farm flocks in Minnesota would be a welcome help in meeting the severe shortage of wool.

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