

given a number of people on the proper use of weed and brush killers. The agents answered many calls on fly and mosquito control, mole and rat eradication, identification and control of various insects and diseases.

The agents have advised many people who plan to buy summer homes and retirement homes on such subjects as water supply, plants useful for preventing erosion, termite control, road building, land clearing, gardening and similar subjects.

XV. Final Statement

Extension work in Lancaster County has been designed to meet the wants of the people. High on the list of wants are better living conditions, higher incomes, more attractive homes and farms. We have tried through demonstrations and other work with groups and individuals to show these needs can be satisfied. We believe that the accomplishments speak for themselves.

X. Social Relationships, Adjustments and Cultural Work

No special work was planned and any accomplishments were incidental and reported elsewhere.

XI. Rural Organization and Leadership Development

We planned to maintain the 4-H program but with renewed emphasis on livestock and crop project work with the boys. General activities such as camp, Short Course and County Council were to be continued. It was planned to continue 4-H work in the schools and on a club and grade basis.

Monthly meetings of the 4-H Clubs were devoted to project work, tours, demonstrations, movies and similar activities. Specialists were used in planning and carrying out some programs. Monthly meetings of the clubs helped to develop leadership among the members.

The County 4-H Council met four times during the year to plan county-wide activities. Members attended Jamestown 4-H Camp, the State Short Course and the 4-H Electric Congress. Achievement Day was held, National 4-H Club Week celebrated and National 4-H Sunday observed.

XII. Farm and Home Buildings

No special work was done in 1955. Requests for individual assistance were handled on an individual basis.

XIII. Cooperation With Other Agencies

The agents have continued to cooperate with and to do educational work for other agencies of the Department of Agriculture and various state and local organizations.

XIV. Miscellaneous

The agents have supplied personal service, information or other assistance to groups and individuals not included elsewhere in this report. Demonstrations and information were

The slow steady gain in the use of practices designed to conserve soil and water continue with considerable gain on a number of farms.

VIII. Farm and Home Management

Lancaster is a pilot county for the Farm and Home Development approach to farm and home management problems. Our 1955 goal was to help twenty families to develop rather complete farm and home plans.

Results - The district agents and county workers explained farm and home development to the Board of Supervisors who then gave their approval provided that it would not interfere with other work.

Then a special committee of leaders, men and women selected by the county workers, met and were given an explanation of farm and home development. They endorsed the idea and agreed to help select the families on a county-wide basis. A committee of three selected fifteen families from a list of about fifty families which had been suggested.

The county agent and home demonstration agent then started visiting the selected families. We have worked with eleven families. The families worked with are in the twenty to forty age group and are fairly representative. All of these families are in debt to varying degrees. To date all families contacted have shown interest and they have requested our help in solving their farm and home management problems.

The agents believe that this method is a sound approach to farm and home management and we expect to increase the amount of such work in 1956.

IX. Economic Problems and Public Policy

Lancaster farmers, in general, are poorly informed on matters of public policy. Our goal was to hold one series of meetings on public policy with the help of specialists.

Results - No tangible start was made on public policy in an organized way. The goal will be continued.

Sweet Potatoes - There has been no market for local uncured sweet potatoes. This year a tomato canner built a thirty thousand bushel sweet potato storage house and bought uncured potatoes. We have assisted growers by holding two meetings on sweet potato production. We have assisted the buyer with problems of building, heating and storage. Sweet potatoes were graded by a Federal-State grader. The small potatoes were canned providing a market for potatoes otherwise unsuitable for market.

Beef Cattle - The agents have helped Lancaster cattlemen with marketing of fat cattle and feeder calves by contacting buyers, assisting with grading and providing other marketing information.

VII. Conservation of Natural Resources

A. Forestry

The agents planned to organize a forestry committee to study the situation of Lancaster woodland and draw up any necessary long time goals.

Results - We have not organized a forestry committee. However, we have made some progress toward that goal by interesting timber landowners in their individual problems. The forestry practices of the agricultural conservation program have been a help in interesting more people in their woodland.

The agents had some part in the planting of thirty-six thousand pine seedlings used last season. Other forestry work included the poisoning demonstrations, demonstration of heavy disking before cutting timber for reproduction and a Christmas tree planting project. We are cooperating with the Virginia Forest Service and Virginia Forests Incorporated in educational work on forestry.

B. Soils

No special work was planned on soils this year. We have cooperated with the Northern Neck Soil Conservation District, the Agricultural Conservation Program of the ASC, and others interested in soil and water conservation. The work has included selecting sites and pond building, land clearing, soil testing, fertilizer recommendations, surveys for irrigation and other similar work.

breeding services in the county. The agents, with the help of dairy specialists, secured the information and held a number of meetings to explain various alternatives to the dairymen. Lancaster is now being served by the Richmond - Westmoreland Association but few dairy cow owners are using the services. Additional educational work is needed to properly inform the owners of small herds.

The agents have worked with the dairy interest group on marketing, breed work, DHIA, and have given individual assistance on breeding, feeding and management problems.

The agents have done educational work on the Brucellosis eradication program including a circular letter, individual contacts and radio. Apparently this work has not been very effective because only the commercial dairymen are on planned programs. This work will continue at a stepped up pace.

VI. Marketing and Distribution

The geographical location of the county is a factor in our marketing problem. Another factor is that Lancaster people have not learned to grade many of their products, particularly eggs and vegetables. Small quantities of some products, while too great to be absorbed by the local market, are difficult to market outside of the area.

Results - Market standards on soybeans were changed during the year. The agents tried to inform farmers of these changes before the combining season.

Tomatoes - One Lancaster canner continues to buy canning tomatoes on a grade basis, the grading being done by a Federal-State grader. We have worked with this canner and his growers trying to improve the quality and prices of tomatoes.

Fruit - The agents assisted the commercial vineyard with all phases of marketing.

Eggs - The agents are cooperating with the egg grading station established this year in an adjoining county. We are trying to demonstrate that producing quality eggs will pay. A circular letter was written and individual work done on how to handle eggs.

Results - We believe that most of the Lancaster cattlemen are in the business in a sound way as demonstrated by the fact that few have gone out of the business in spite of low prices. However, we have this year worked individually with cattlemen to improve the management in an effort to make the operations more profitable.

Three cattle feeding demonstrations are underway. Conditions vary at the three farms and each is keeping records in an effort to determine which system will prove most profitable for Lancaster farms. One farmer is feeding heifers, the other two are feeding steers. All are using Stilbestrol in the protein supplement.

Meetings were held at cattle feeding demonstrations with assistance from the State Department of Agriculture on grading and marketing.

One farm is under the Beef Cattle Improvement Association program which makes use of performance testing to select fast-gaining bulls for herd sires. We held a meeting of cattlemen at the farm to observe the weighing and grading of the calves.

Other beef cattle work included assistance to farmers with registering purebreds, treating cattle for worms and lice, and treatment of minor ailments.

11. Dairy Cattle

There are eight dairy farms in the county. The census of 1950 shows about six hundred dairy type cattle in the county. Home milk cows continue to disappear from many farms and especially part time and non-farm places. From a health standpoint the people of the county are not getting enough milk to meet minimum health standards. At a time when the national dairy outlook is not bright our eight dairymen find that their units are too small to be economical units. We planned to carry dairy work on a maintenance basis in 1955.

Results - Lancaster dairymen requested that agents investigate the possibilities of securing artificial

We have conducted culling and vaccination demonstrations and visited a number of flocks which were sick or otherwise in trouble to give help or advice.

9. Swine

There are twenty commercial hog feeders in the county, three purebred breeders, twelve farmers who make a specialty of selling feeder pigs and several hundred others with pen hogs. Erysipelas and internal parasites are common. Cholera is an ever present danger. Our 1955 goal was to organize an "interest group" of hog producers which might lead to some assistance in meeting the problems.

Results - The hog interest group did not organize as there was not sufficient interest, probably because of low hog prices.

The agents used radio and newspaper and individual contacts to inform hog producers of recommended practices.

Eight farmers were assisted in purchasing purebred breeding stock.

The agents vaccinated hundreds of hogs against cholera and trained a number of farmers to treat their own hogs. We also helped some farmers use erysipelas vaccine.

Other hog work included helping individuals with rations, hog fences, hog feeders, pastures, castration demonstrations, record keeping and registering purebreds.

10. Beef Cattle

Beef cattle are important on thirty-five Lancaster farms. All of these have cow-calf herds. Many Lancaster cattlemen attempt to carry more cattle than is good for their pastures. In some cases the herds are so small that they are not economical units. Our goal in 1955 was to bring cattle numbers more in line with feed, and improve other management factors such as culling, castrating and dehorning on time, more mid-summer and winter grazing.

The practice of seedling winter crops for grazing is recognized by farmers as being important but is limited in practice because of lack of fencing.

For the most part Lancaster farmers understand how to get good permanent pastures but the maintaining of permanent pastures is more of a problem. We are now working on this problem mostly in individual contacts. The problem is complicated by the cost of lime, fertilizer and seed compared to livestock prices and the press of other work at times when pastures should be clipped.

Another complication is the lack of fencing of cropland which would permit grazing of crop residues which would help relieve pressure on permanent pasture at critical times. We are working on these problems on an individual basis with farm and home development families and with the livestock men.

8. Poultry

Poultry is of some importance on about a third of the Lancaster farms. In general, the larger the operation, the better the management. The small flocks are subject to much mismanagement and are not believed to be very profitable. Poultry offers an opportunity for farmers to increase the size of their business and in many cases would market home produced grains to advantage. Poultry might also fit into operations of many of the part time farms. Work with farm and home development families leads us to believe that improvement in management and increase in the size of flocks could be a partial answer to a problem on many farms.

Results - a farm and home development family with fifty laying hens is seriously considering a flock of five hundred. We have tried to supply the family with the best information available to help them make the decision.

Most of the eggs in the county are marketed through hucksters who buy on an ungraded basis. This year the hucksters of the area opened an egg grading station and are now buying eggs on grade. The agents are working with producers to try to raise the grade of eggs through better practices.

Three years ago a commercial vineyard was established in the county. The small fruit specialist has been most helpful in guiding this producer. This grower also has a commercial planting of raspberries and blueberries. The agents worked closely with this grower in 1955 helping to find other profitable crops for farms with small acreage.

The vineyard was hit by black rot in spite of spraying. The marketing of fresh slip-skin grapes in quantity is also quite a problem. In spite of the difficulties I am told the vineyard broke even on this year's operation. The grower is now pulling out five hundred of the Buffalo variety which is the most difficult to market and expects to replace them with better varieties. We have a test vineyard with some twenty varieties trying to find a good grape for Lancaster conditions which will sell.

The blueberry and raspberry plantings are not in production but they do not look as they should and they may be discarded.

7. Pastures

Most Lancaster livestock farmers have been sold on the value of ladino clover - grass mixtures. When cattle prices were high some class one land was put in these pastures. It now seems that better use could be made of this land and pastures developed on less desirable land. It was planned to work with the livestock men to get better land use when establishing new pastures. Further work was planned on temporary pastures - summer and winter. This fits into better land use and is needed for better livestock management.

Results - The practice of seeding sudan and soybeans for grazing is now considered a sound practice on Lancaster dairy and beef farms. Two years ago it was being used on few farms. The agents decided two years ago to concentrate on getting farmers to try sudan and soybeans. In individual contacts, letters and radio and in cooperation with the ASC the practice was pushed again this year with good results.

Results - The Lanaster tomato crop was not of high quality nor were yields high. The meeting on tomato production was held but few farmers attended. Most of the better farmers have quit growing tomatoes.

Tomatoes are a crop which could fit into increasing the size of the farm business. However, some way must be found to improve quality and yields.

This year yields and quality were down because southern plants were late and weather conditions were unfavorable. Prices were also low. The trend to fewer tomatoes will probably continue.

5. Home Gardens

Many Lanaster families are without adequate vegetable gardens. In individual contacts and on a mass basis, the agents planned to try to interest more people in gardens.

Results - There has been little change in the garden situation during the year. The agents have given individual assistance to gardeners on production practices including insect and disease control, varieties, and fertilization programs.

Farm and Home Development Families are being assisted with rather complete garden plans.

6. Fruits

Fruit is produced commercially on about a dozen Lanaster farms. Peaches, grapes, apples and small fruit are produced. For the most part those growers are doing a good job. In the past they have received considerable help from Extension agents. Now we are chiefly concerned with problems of marketing and keeping up with recent research developments.

The Hunton orchard near Kollink is being used as a continuing result demonstration in pruning, spraying, fertilizing, thinning, grading and marketing of apples and peaches.

d. Red Clover

Red clover is grown for hay and seed on a large number of Lancaster farms. This crop has been in the better rotations on the better farms for generations. During the war years it was replaced by soybeans. It is now coming back on more farms as the price of soybeans declines. It is believed that this trend should be encouraged as it fits into better rotations, produces more hay and gives more winter cover than lespedeza. The agents spent some time in individual contacts, radio talks and in newspaper articles advocating the seeding of red clover with orchard grass or with timothy for hay and seed.

e. Lespedeza

Lespedeza is grown for hay and seed on many Lancaster farms. No special work was planned or completed during the year. We have helped some farmers with individual problems of production. Lespedeza as a seed crop compares favorably with soybeans. Lespedeza sericea does well on land too wet for other crops. Therefore, it has a place on some farms. Many Lancaster farmers delay cutting lespedeza for hay until after it has dropped many leaves and lost food value. Perhaps future plans should include some special work on these phases of production and marketing.

4. Tomatoes

Tomatoes for canning have long been an important Lancaster crop. In recent years Lancaster acreage has declined and fresh market production has increased slightly. It seems that the only way Lancaster farmers can make money on tomatoes is to increase yields of high quality fruit. Our goal in 1955 was to increase the yields of high quality fruit. We feel that this can be done by proper fertilization, cultivation and insect and disease control. We planned to get the best information to growers through meetings and individual contacts and result demonstrations.

In addition to the other troubles, chickweed, German moss, cress and turnips are serious on August seeded alfalfa.

Alfalfa is needed on the livestock farms of the county because it, in effect, releases land for other crops and helps increase the size of the individual farm business. However, it seems unwise to go out and recommend alfalfa on a general basis. Fields must be considered on an individual basis if we are to have fair success.

b. Soybeans

In Lancaster County soybean work the primary need is for higher yields. Soybeans are our leading cash crop. Our goal is a county average yield of twenty bushels per acre in 1955. We planned an educational campaign to familiarize farmers with recommended production practices.

Results - It is believed that we are approaching our goal of twenty bushels per acre. Most farmers are using recommended varieties, are planting early beans in rows and cultivating to control weeds. Some few farmers are trying chemical weed control. In general soybeans are put on poorer land than corn and other crops and further increases in yield will depend on raising the fertility level on such land.

About thirty-five Lancaster farmers visited the Warsaw Research Station to observe the soybean variety tests. Individual contacts, the radio and newspaper were used to acquaint farmers with recommended production practices.

c. Crimson Clover

The practice of seeding crimson clover as a cover crop and for winter grazing is fairly well established in the county. No special work was planned.

Results - In individual contacts and radio talks farmers were given information on the value of cover crops and spring grazing of crimson clover.

2. Small Grains

Seventeen Lancaster farmers have wheat allotments of over fifteen acres. Some small grain is grown on about two hundred farms. Small grains are grown for market, livestock feed and because it fits into rotations well. No special work was planned this year other than a tour of the research station to observe varieties, fertilization and weed killing work.

Results - Thirty Lancaster farmers visited the Warsaw Research Station to observe the small grain experiments. Individual visits were made to give advice on small grain varieties, cultural practices, grazing, storing and marketing.

In our effort to increase the size of Lancaster farm businesses we have done educational work to increase the acreage of small grain for grain and grazing, and the use of small grain in livestock feeding, and at the same time provide winter cover for the soil.

3. Legumes

a. Alfalfa

Alfalfa is being grown on very few Lancaster farms. Our goal is to increase alfalfa acreage and promote better management of established stands. We planned publicity on successful stands and help to individuals becoming interested in seeding alfalfa.

Results - Lancaster alfalfa growers have had troubles this year. Alfalfa weevil and clover weevil caused serious damage in the spring. On an individual basis the agent assisted farmers with identification of the pests and recommended control sprays. Later we were having trouble with stands on two farms where recommended practices had been followed. A soils man was called in and he found the troubles. In one case a hardpan at about a two foot depth and in the other case he found the soil poorly drained at the fifteen to twenty foot level. Both of these soils had been considered suitable for alfalfa. Since these experiences we have a soils man recheck each field which a farmer plans to put in alfalfa.

IV. General Problems and Needs of the County

1. There is a great need to increase the size of the individual farm businesses. In most cases this cannot be done by purchasing land.
2. On many farms there is need for better farm management, particularly better labor distribution.
3. Erysipelas and parasites in hogs are prevalent in every section of the county.
4. Marketing of most farm products produced in the county needs improvement.

V. Activities

A. Agricultural Production

1. Corn

Corn is an important crop in Lancaster County. It is used for hog, cattle and poultry feeding and is sold as a cash crop. Higher yields are needed. To meet the need we planned to use the newspaper, radio and personal contacts to see that all Lancaster farmers knew the recommended varieties, spacing and fertilization practices. The agents planned to contact seed and fertilizer dealers to insure that they were making the same recommendations. Our goal was a county average yield of fifty bushels to the acre in 1955.

Results - The work on corn was carried out as planned. More farmers used 2,4-D for weed control than last year. This practice is well on its way to general acceptance among the larger corn growers.

In cooperation with the Agronomy Department we ran a demonstration using the Virginia 126 variety of corn. This variety yields well and if it is released for general use will be tried in other demonstrations.

Corn yield figures are not in but it now seems that we fell short of our 1955 goal of fifty bushels per acre.

I. Brief Description of County

Lancaster County is located in the southeastern end of the Northern Neck. Lancaster has a land area of 90,880 acres. About forty-two percent, or 38,118 acres, was in farms in 1990. The number of farms that year totaled 627, averaging 60.9 acres in size and \$7,848 in value of land and buildings.

The topography of the county is low and level. The climate is mild and the growing season long, averaging two hundred twelve days.

Soybeans are the county's leading crop from a standpoint of acreage tilled. Corn and wheat acreage have declined, but higher yields have resulted in no reduction in total production. Tomatoes for canning, once an important crop, have declined since the 1930's but the volume of tomatoes sold to the fresh market trade has increased.

The most recent figures show values of farm products sold was about equally divided between crops and livestock. Poultry is the most important livestock enterprise, accounting for 31.6 percent of the total farm income in 1989.

About seventy percent of the county's 627 farms are operated on a part time basis.

II. Situation - General

Lancaster farmers are being squeezed by the decline in prices of products sold and increases in things they must buy. Many established farmers are in fair shape but many young farmers have no reserves and they are financed near the maximum permitted by local credit agencies.

III. How The County Extension Plan Was Developed

The plan of work was developed by the agents with the help of commodity committees, the Board of Supervisors and individuals interested in agricultural progress of the county, including the editor of the county paper and a banker.

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Annual Report

COUNTY EXTENSION WORK

Virginia Agricultural Extension Service



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Lancaster

county

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