

FILED

1955

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PLAN OF WORK
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

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Prince William County Agriculture

Of the 222,080 acre land area of Prince William County, approximately 49% is in farms. The average farm size is 125.3 acres. Operators of 810 of the 867 farms in the county live on their own farms but 360 operators were reported by the 1950 census to be working 100 days or more off their farms during the year. Of the total number of farms, 793 are operated by whites and 74 by non-whites. Some 727 farms are owner, 58 part owner, 17 manager and 65 tenant farmer operated. There were 441 farm families reported as having other income in excess of the value of agricultural products sold due to members of the families holding positions and operators doing work off the farms. The number of people on farms remains practically stationary but there is a rapidly increasing growth in non-farm building and population which is, however, taking an appreciable amount of land out of farm production at the present time.

Because of the overlapping of the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain, there is a great variety of soils. The land is gently rolling and diversified crops are grown which are used almost entirely for animals kept on the farms. Dairying is the leading enterprise but beef cattle production is gradually increasing along with dairy production.

Changes in Agricultural Situation

With lower prices for farm products, the short crops of the past two years, and the necessity for extensive reseeding to replace grass and forage crops destroyed by the past year's drought, farmers are starting into 1955 under a rather tight squeeze. It will be necessary to make every dollar spent for seeding and fertilizing go farther. Fertilizer prices are high in proportion to the price received for products, seed prices are excessive and little new farm machinery and equipment will be purchased. Many who were attracted to farming during the period of higher returns are returning, or trying to make a return, to their old lines of business and employment. An indication of the squeeze is the fact that all ACP benefits available to the county for 1955 were applied for before the end of the initial sign-up period in December, 1954.

Development of County Extension Plan for 1955

Local farm problems were discussed and general county agronomy plans were made for 1955 at a well-attended meeting of representative farmers at the County Agent's office on Tuesday, January 11. It was decided to have an over-all county agronomy committee for the coming year rather than separate committees for pasture and forage, corn, etc.

An agronomy committee, made up of from five to seven members from each district, was elected at this time. Vegetable and small fruits committeemen were named and a home food production program planned at a county meeting and school for gardeners and small fruit growers at Manassas on January 21. General dairy plans for 1955 were made at a meeting of the directors of the two Dairy Herd Improvement Associations, who serve as the county dairy committee, in December. A county chairman with a committee of three additional men, elected by the county members of the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers' Association which is responsible for marketing approximately all of the milk produced in the county, together with the regularly elected Association director, make up an able marketing committee to represent the interests of local producers. A county committee of four men has helped in setting up general livestock plans. Four adult men 4-H club leaders, together with a few older club members, have helped in setting up 4-H club plans and can be depended upon for helping to carry out the 4-H program in 1955. Twenty-six (26) Veterans' Farm Club members comprise the County Agricultural Fair committee which is not only responsible for holding the annual fair but cooperates with different extension activities. Agricultural committees of the three Ruritan and two Kiwanis clubs of the county have adopted various agricultural projects for 1955, the most active project being that of the Gainesville Ruritan Club which is sponsoring the 4-H beef cattle project in Gainesville District.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES AND GOALS PLANNED FOR 1955.

Pasture and Forage Improvement

1. Hold regular meetings of agronomy committee to check on pasture and forage improvement program and to make further detailed plans for the year.
2. Place special emphasis on the 12-months' Feed Program.
3. Offer all farmers an opportunity to enroll in the County Pasture and Forage Club.
4. Attend meetings at, and conduct tour to, the Middleburg Forage Research Station. Hold seeding and fertilizing demonstrations and district and county tours.
5. Work up material for a special newspaper supplement and furnish local weekly with current stories and news pertaining to program.
6. Conduct district and county contests. Award trophies to county winners and present certificates to qualifying farmers at a final achievement banquet.

7. Invite county civic clubs, farm bureau, chamber of commerce and farm supply dealers to serve as associate members of the county committee.
8. Hold County Agronomy School with special emphasis on 12-months' Feed Program.
9. Arrange for a 12-months' Feed Program booth at County Fair.
10. Work closely with farmers signing up for permanent vegetative cover practices in the ASC Program. Encourage farmers to sign up for these practices.

"More Corn Per Acre Project"

1. Continue County Corn Club organization.
2. Hold meetings and distribute bulletins and mimeographed material giving recommended practices for increasing corn yield.
3. Continue with county corn production contest and make official yield estimates available to all farmers upon application.
4. Make a tour of county farms having outstanding corn crops during the late summer.
5. Arrange for giving recognition and awarding 100 Bushel Corn Club certificates to qualifying farmers.

General Agronomy

1. Supply all farmers with instructions for taking soil samples and filling in soil data sheets. Make sample boxes available and emphasize importance of submitting samples for testing early. Follow through with fertilizing and liming recommendations.
2. Cooperate with work of Soil Conservation District.
3. Distribute and give widespread publicity to Experiment Station varietal and fertilization results and recommendations.
4. Look into possibility of having another Land Appreciation School.
5. Hold further meetings for coordinating the different agronomy plans to help farmers produce necessary feed and forage to take care of their needs for the entire year.

Dairy Herd Improvement

While there has been a gradual increase in the average production of dairy cows of the county, DHIA reports indicate that we have not kept pace with a number of other counties and concern is felt by the County Dairy Committee about this situation. Plans made by the committee, in an effort to try to bring about greater and more efficient production, include:

1. Work for increased membership in the local Dairy Herd Improvement Association groups.
2. Have committeemen and extension workers give closer supervision to the work and records of supervisors.
3. Encourage DHIA members to check more closely their records from month to month and to make better use of records by culling the lower producers and feeding according to production.
4. Encourage still wider use of the artificial insemination service that is available. With few exceptions, it is felt that better offspring may be expected through artificial breeding than from the bulls that the dairymen normally keep and that the cost for breeding artificially will be less.
5. Hold annual Dairy School and special informational meetings from time to time during the year.
6. Continue cooperation with the disease control program.
7. Cooperate with marketing and distributing agencies.
8. Work for larger participation in dairy shows and fairs.
9. Place more emphasis on h-H dairy project work. The committee feels that h-H projects have done more toward leading in dairy herd improvement than is generally realized.

General Livestock

The establishing in the county of several of the leading beef cattle breeding herds in recent years has furnished an incentive for improving commercial herds. The farmers can now see and observe how good cattle are bred and managed, and breeders have been cooperative in making good bulls and breeding stock available to neighbors. h-H and FFA revolving breeding pig projects have been largely responsible for swine improvement in the county. The following plans and activities have been planned by the Livestock Committee for 1955:

1. Hold County Livestock School and special informational meetings.
2. Continue to arrange for consignments to feeder calf sales.
3. Keep all farmers advised of the better purebred sales in area.
4. Continue to work closely with purebred swine breeding projects, particularly with those of h-H and FFA members.
5. Work toward development of more and better purebred and commercial beef cow herds in the county.
6. Encourage the keeping of more sheep in the county. Assist with wool pool.
7. Continue assistance with livestock disease control program.
8. Encourage larger participation in shows and fairs. Work for larger number of entries in swine carcass contest at County Fair.

h-H Club Work

The following objectives for h-H Club work were set up by local leaders and the agents at the beginning of the 1954-55 club year last fall:

1. Organize five additional community clubs.
2. Enroll 300 members for agricultural projects.
3. Work for a higher percentage of project completions.
4. Have 40 boys to attend the Jamestown h-H Camp.
5. Fill quota allowed at State h-H Short Course.
6. Train dairy cattle, beef cattle and egg judging teams.
7. Encourage the County Honor Club and h-H County to accept more responsibility for assisting with club program.

8. Hold a County Summer Rally, a County Achievement Program and observe National 4-H Week.
9. Work for larger participation in fairs and shows. Plan for 4-H Day at County Fair.

Miscellaneous

1. Hold a County Small Fruits and Vegetable School. Promote home food production of vegetables, small fruits, dairy products, meat and poultry.
2. Cooperate with holding of County Agricultural Fair. with poultry sanitation and disease problems and supply all producers
3. Hold poultry culling demonstrations in each community. Assist with list of Va.-U. S. Approved Hatcheries.
4. Cooperate with county wildlife and conservation programs.
5. Continue to assist with ornamental disease and insect problems.
6. Help farmers to locate farm workers and available workers to find farm employment.
7. Keep farmers advised of available building plans and blueprints and supply these upon request.
8. Do their work and start other projects when a need and demand arises.