PLAN OF WORK

1961

LANCASTER COUNTY

VIRGINIA

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COUNTY AGENT

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I. Description of Lancaster County

Lancaster County is located in that part of Tidewater Virginia known as the Northern Neck. It is a long, narrow county of 128 square miles. The land area is 90,880 square acres. Twenty-nine percent, or 26,730 acres, was in farms in 1959. The number of farms that year totaled 253 and they averaged 105.7 acres in size. The average value of land and buildings per farm was $20,983.00. About half of the farms are operated on a part time basis.

The climate is mild. Frost free period averages 212 days, or from April 5th to November 3rd, and the normal precipitation exceeds forty-five inches.

In 1959, 7,237 acres of cropland was devoted to soybeans and 4,773 acres was devoted to corn. These are the two most important crops.

II. Situation (General)

The economy of Lancaster County has been built on agriculture, sea food and forest products. All of these endeavors have undergone great changes in recent years and the transition continues. As we go into the sixties many feel that all three industries are in a critical stage of change. In the county these industries are tied rather closely together. Farmers are engaged in producing and harvesting forest products and many are engaged in some form of the sea food business. Many people engaged in the sea food business also own forest or farm land. The problems of one group affect the others.

Employment opportunities in the sea food industry and agriculture are declining and we do not have sufficient forest resources to take up the slack.

Lancaster farmers in recent years have been plagued by poor weather conditions at a time when prices of the products they sell are declining and at a time when the things they buy are increasing in price. Many farmers are in debt for land, fertilizer, machinery, homes and buildings. The sea food industry has problems of declining markets due to foreign competition, labor problems and marketing problems. The forest industry has the problem of depleted woodland and changes in production and marketing which require additional capital.

III. County Agricultural Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Lancaster farm income is the main problem of Lancaster farm people. We think farm income can be raised by changing some methods and attitudes, by acquiring some new skills and by acquiring better farm management techniques. In general, we think the changes suggested below should be given consideration by Lancaster families.

1. The production and feeding of more cattle, hogs and laying hens on grain producing farms.

2. The treatment of woodland as though it were a farm crop.

3. The increasing of crop yields through more efficient production methods.

4. The development of better farm storage facilities for grain.

5. We think certain farmers should develop specialties, particularly for products with local demand or those for which local demand may be developed.

6. We think many farmers need to make land use adjustments, clearing some land for crops, putting some land now in crops to pasture or woodland.

7. We believe farm income will increase as our farmers develop improved farm management techniques including the keeping and analysis of records and the using of these records to make adjustments in their production and marketing programs.

8. As many of our farms are not large enough to be economical units under the present systems being followed we think that many of these need off farm employment, either full time or part time. We believe our whole economy would benefit if more off farm employment can be found.

IV. Items To Receive Special Emphasis In 1961

1. The development of better farm storage facilities for grain.

Most Lancaster farms do not have adequate storage facilities on the farm. Prices of grains are depressed at harvest time

because commercial facilities are overtaxed. The development of livestock and poultry feeding is dependent upon the holding of more grains on the farm.

Our goal is to inform Lancaster farmers of the opportunities for increasing income through the use of modern bins, drying equipment and laborsaving devices in handling grains. We hope to help at least ten farmers to make a start towards improving their storage capacity.

Methods to be used include meetings, tours, newspaper and radio publicity. Each farmer's grain storage problem is different. We expect to help individual farmers to solve problems of financing, location, selection of equipment, selection of materials and to help them with learning how to properly use drying equipment.

2. The production of feeder pigs and the feeding of market hogs

The demand for feeder pigs in this area is very good. The feeder pig association serving the area needs more pigs. Most pig producers in the county need to improve farrowing facilities, and adopt better management practices with their sows and pigs.

Our goal this year is to help ten pig producers improve their facilities and management.

Methods to be used include newspaper, radio, and personal contacts to acquaint farmers with the problem and what can be done to improve facilities and management. Among items to receive individual attention with individual farmers are planning and locating farrowing houses, the selection and use of equipment, the use of farrowing stalls, management of sows before and after farrowing, baby pig health, vaccination, castration, selection of breeding stock, labersaving feeding devices, watering devices, farrowing house cleaning equipment, sanitation, parasite control, and record keeping.

3. The treatment of woodland as though it were a farm crop

More than forty percent of Lancaster County is in woods. Practically every farm has some woodland. Most of this land is producing marketable timber at a rate of less than half of its potential.

Our goal this year will be to help farmers and others to recognize potential which this woodland has as a source of future income and in helping at least ten of them to make an actual start towards improving their woodland.

To carry out these objectives we expect to work with and through a forestry committee and with 4-H Club members.

Demonstrations under way will be visited and tours conducted.

Newspaper and the radio will be used to attract the attention of the general public. This will be followed up with help on an individual basis to interested people.

The ACP, Virginia Division of Forestry, and the Northern Neck Soil Conservation District are all interested and have services to offer to help timber owners improve their stands. Publicity will be given to these services.

V. Items To Be Maintained (Special Attention in Some Phases)

A. Agronomy

Field crops, principally soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, hay and pasture contribute considerably more than half of Lancaster farm income.

Our goal is to help farmers increase their crop yields through more efficient production methods. Our efforts this year will be directed as follows:

1. Helping farmers understand fertilizer and lime requirements of the crops they produce and in interpreting test results of soil samples.

2. Helping farmers to secure the best information available on use of chemicals in crop production, weed control, insect control, disease control, and protecting the crop in storage.

3. Helping farmers make needed land adjustments, including selection of land for crops, pasture and woodland so that each acre may contribute the maximum to which it is capable in farm income. Information on outlook and market demand as well as soils information will be supplied to individuals to help in making decisions.

We expect to reach all the full time farmers with as much of this information as possible during farm visits. Many part time farmers will also get this information first hand. We expect to supplement that method with newspaper and radio, tours and demonstrations as needed.

B. Livestock

In general, Lancaster farmers are not livestock minded. Only twenty farms reported selling cattle in 1959. Eighty farms reported selling hogs in 1959. We think that many Lancaster farmers need to give consideration to increasing livestock production on their farms and that a number of cash grain farmers should start in the livestock business in some form.

Our goal in 1961 is to interest farmers in some form of livestock and to help those already in the business to enlarge and improve their operations.

We expect to contact farmers through visits to the farm, through radio and newspaper. As interest is aroused we expect to take tours to see successful operations in this and surrounding counties.

C. Poultry

Sixty-seven Lancaster farms reported selling eggs in 1959. In 1954, 196 farms reported selling eggs. Many small poultry flocks have gone out of existance. We think this trend will continue. We believe some Lancaster farmers should reappraise the laying hen enterprise in the light of recent developments.

Our goal is to help poultrymen to increase their income from poultry through efficient production practices and by helping them to market their products to the best advantage. The facilities and problems of commercial poultrymen are very different and so we expect to work with poultrymen on an individual basis.

D. Dairying

There are four grade A dairies in the county. These farmers have problems of their own as well as those of the industry. We expect to work with them on an individual basis trying to help them solve their problems.

E. Tree Fruits

There are three commercial orchards in the county with about 15,000 peach trees and some 3,000 apple trees. We work with these growers on an individual basis. We use specialist help for demonstrations and in conducting an area fruit school in the county.

F. Vegetables, Mostly Tomatoes

The decline in commercial vegetable production in the county continues. Our goal is to help those interested in such crops to make adjustments to fit the present market demand so that vegetables may contribute more farm income. As prices of field crops have declined, and as prices for heavy machinery have advanced, there seems to be some increase in interest in vegetable crops.

We expect to work individually with farmers on problems of production and marketing of tomatoes, small fruits, sweet potatoes and possibly other vegetable crops.

G. 4-H Club

We plan to enroll about 350 boys and girls in 4-H Clubs in 1961. Projects in forestry and electricity will be carried by the boys.

VI. Farm and Home Management

We believe that most farmers will increase their incomes as they develop farm and home management skills. Good farm records are a necessity when adjustments are made in management. Many farmers are not keeping adequate records. Therefore our goal is to help farmers set up and keep adequate farm records so that they will have good information on which to base management decisions.

This year we will emphasize the importance of adequate records in all of our work. In addition we will make a special effort to help six farmers set up the electronic record system.

VII. Economic Problems and Public Policy

We recognize a responsibility here. Farmers are concerned about these policies and problems. At this time we plan no program but will be prepared to take advantage of any opportunity offered by an organized group, which may occur during the year.

The agents will make an effort to keep informed on problem of public policy.

VIII. Farm and Home Buildings

Maintenance basis including assistance to individuals on problems of building and remodeling farm structures.

IX. Cooperation With Other Agencies

Maintenance basis, including regular meetings of ASC Committee, regular meetings of Northern Neck Soil Conservation District of which the agent is secretary. We shall also cooperate with other agencies, Virginia Department of Forestry, State Department of Agriculture, FHA, County Health Department and others.

X. Professional Improvement

The agent will try to keep informed on the experimental work being done at the Warsaw Research Station. The agent will read and study bulletins, books, farm magazines so that he may pass on to Lancaster people the best information available.