

COUNTY EXTENSION PLAN OF WORK

SUSSEX COUNTY

1960

E. B. Parson, Jr.

County Agent

I. Description of County

Sussex County lies in the Southern Coastal Plain area of Virginia except the extreme western corner which is in the Piedmont area. It is south of Richmond and approximately midway between Richmond and the North Carolina line.

The topography varies from flat to undulating, to rolling. Soils are derived from unconsolidated beds of sand, silt and clay, except the small area of Piedmont soils in the western tip of the county. Soils vary according to texture, depth, slope and drainage.

The county contains 496 square miles or 317,400 acres. In 1954, 57.4% or 182,210 acres were in farms. Of this 66.9% was in woodland; 23.3% cropland; 3.4% pasture; 3.4% idle land; and 3% other.

There were 1,099 farms in the county in 1954. Four hundred sixty-eight were operated by white farmers and 631 by colored. Approximately 75% of the gross farm income is derived from the sale of crops, 23% from the sale of livestock, and 2% from the sale of forest products. Crops produced in order of their importance are peanuts, corn, tobacco, cotton, soybeans, and small grain; livestock raised in order of importance is hogs, beef cattle, dairy cattle and sheep. Poultry is found on most farms for home use.

The 1954 census gives the following interesting information about Sussex County. Of the 1,099 farms, 814 are classified as commercial, the rest being part-time and residential. Thirty-six per cent of the commercial farms have a gross farm income of less than \$2,500.

Forty-seven per cent harvested less than 30 acres of cropland. The average size of the farms were 165.7 acres and the average value of land and buildings per farm was \$12,954.

In 1950, the population of the county was 12,785. This was an increase of only 685 in the last 20 years. The natural increase for this period of time would have been about 4,000. Sixty-five per cent of the population was negroes. Rural farm population represents 55.2% and rural non-farm 44.8%. The educational level of the people is below the state average with a median of 6.1 school years completed. The median income of families was \$1,437.

There are four small towns in the county ranging in population from 500 to 1,400. These towns form definite centers. Each has a white high school, churches and trading centers, although the farm people purchase much of their supplies from outside the county. All the towns have wood industries ranging from pulp mills to saw and planing mills.

II. Changes in the Situation

Allotments on peanuts, cotton, tobacco, and wheat will be approximately the same as last year.

Allotments and smaller profits per unit have caused a reduction in the number of farmers in the county, but when a farmer leaves, his farm is usually worked by a neighbor which gives a larger and more efficient unit.

A number of farmers are shifting from corn to small grain and grain sorghum. Several previous dry years have made corn production unattractive; but at the same time, grain sorghum yields have been fair to good.

Farmers are interested in efficiency. Interest is growing in farrowing houses and feeding floors for hogs. They are also interested in the feed efficiency of their hogs and beef cattle.

III. Development of Plan

The Extension program was developed with the assistance of the members of the County Agronomy Committee and the Livestock Committee. The h-H program was developed by the County Council and adults.

IV. General Problems and Needs

The most important need is to increase the net income of the farm families. Low crop yields and inefficient production of livestock on many farms are two of the major factors in low farm income. Prices received and prices paid are another major factor.

Crop yields vary greatly over the county. Some farmers, with normal rainfall, are making 80 to 100 bushels of corn and 2500 to 3000 pounds of peanuts per acre; others with normal rainfall will make 40 to 60 bushels of corn and 900 to 1000 pounds of peanuts per acre.

Livestock numbers vary greatly from farm to farm as well as net income derived from the sale of livestock. Hogs provide our major source of

income from livestock. Type and efficiency of production need to be improved on many farms. Sheep numbers are gradually increasing each year. Sheep producers need assistance in marketing of lambs and wool. They also need the services of custom shearers. There is an opportunity for further expansion in sheep numbers.

Pastures should be improved. Many need to be reseeded. All should be fertilized. Management practices should be improved.

Seventy-six per cent of the land in Sussex County is in forest with 50% of this owned by farmers. Farm forest woodland as a rule is in dire need of improvement. Much of it is covered with undesirable hardwoods instead of pines.

V. Activities

A. Peanuts

1. Situation

Peanuts are produced on practically every farm in Sussex County. The acreage is controlled by allotments. Yields for the past several years have been increasing, but each year there is a considerable difference in yields from farm to farm and community to community. The difference in yields of peanuts is due to many factors which include spacing; varieties; liming; fertilization; cultivation, including chemical weed and grass control; and disease and insect control. Proper cultivation practices are probably the most important single factor affecting the yield of peanuts.

Last year stem rot infestation was very severe, reducing yields on many farms. Internal damage was a factor in the reduced yields and value of peanuts. Nematodes were a problem on a few farms.

2. Goals

- a. To have 100 farmers take soil samples.
- b. To improve the cultivation practices on 50 farms.
- c. To create an awareness of nematodes.
- d. To encourage recommended production practices.
- e. To encourage the production of 50 acres of certified peanuts as seed source.

3. Methods

Farmers will be encouraged to take soil samples. Boxes and soil record sheets will be furnished by the agent. Recommendations as to lime and fertilizer will be made based upon the results of each soil sample. Dealers and professional workers will assist in motivating farmers.

Two peanut planting and cultivating demonstrations will be held in April. An alternate method developed by the research station will be shown. Peanut practices which effect stem rot will be discussed. Specialists from V.P.I. will assist with the demonstrations. Local farmers will prepare land and furnish tractors.

A nematode control demonstration will be conducted. Assistance will be received from research personnel. A field meeting will be held at the demonstration.

Production practices will be publicized through news articles, circular letters, meetings, personal visits and through the assistance of local dealers.

B. Soybeans

1. Situation

Soybean acreage is increasing. Yields are adversely effected by close spacing and late planting. This year germination of some soybean seed is very low.

2. Goals

- a. To have soybeans spaced properly.
- b. To have soybeans planted during recommended date.
- c. To have farmers plant germination tested seed.

3. Methods

Two soybean demonstrations will be conducted, using various rates of seed per acre.

Letters and news articles will be used to publicize recommended practices.

Letters, news articles and posters will be used to encourage farmers to have soybeans tested.

C. Other Agronomy Crops

1. Situation

Corn is grown on practically every farm in the county. Acreage of small grains for harvest is increasing, particularly barley. Grain sorghum acreage is increasing. Pasture acreage is constant.

2. Goals

- a. To furnish production information on the above crops.

3. Methods

Newspaper articles, letters, personal visits and meetings will be used. Professional workers and farm supply dealers will be asked to help in the publicity.

D. Livestock

1. Situation

Swine are found on practically every farm, with 660 farms selling hogs or pigs during 1954 (census). Increased interest is being shown in improving the type of hogs, feeding, management and facilities.

Beef cattle are found on many farms. Steer feeding and cow herds are found on about an equal number of farms. Sheep numbers are increasing.

2. Goals

- a. Fifty farmers purchase meat type boars.
- b. Ten farmers to construct new or improve existing facilities.
- c. Farmers market 500 pigs through feeder pig sales.
- d. Two farmers to market calves through feeder calf sales.
- e. Five farmers to purchase purebred bulls.
- f. Twenty farmers to market lambs and wool through pools.
- g. To have custom shearers shear sheep in county, thereby encouraging sheep production.
- h. Assist 5 farmers in beginning a pig identification and gilt selection program.
- i. Publicize recommended livestock production practices.

3. Methods

A swine tour will be held during the winter at which farrowing facilities, feeding facilities will be viewed and discussed. Steps in gilt selection will be demonstrated.

A swine school will be held in the winter. Program will be on feeding of all ages of hogs.

Individual farmers will be assisted in design of new or converted facilities. Farmers will be encouraged to visit certain farms and see for themselves before beginning construction.

Farmers will be contacted and encouraged to consider marketing feeder pigs through organized sales.

Management, feeding, and gilt selection will be publicized through meetings, news articles, letters, and personal visits.

Specialists will assist as available.

Goals related to sheep and beef cattle will be carried out through the use of letters, news articles, and personal visits.

E. 4-H

1. Situation

4-H Clubs are organized in each of the four white schools in the county. There are fourteen clubs with boys and girls meeting together. The enrollment of boys this year is 114. The 1950 census revised for 1955 shows that there are 625 boys and girls in Sussex County of 4-H Club age. Approximately 60% of our present enrollment are non-farm boys.

2. Goals

- a. To have 80% of boys completing their projects.
- b. To have 15% of club members give demonstrations in County Contest.
- c. To have 20% of club enrollment attend camp or short course.
- d. To have one boy nominated for All Stars.
- e. To have a county Achievement Day.
- f. To have an active county council.
- g. To secure leaders for all 4-H clubs.
- h. To secure local support for 4-H club program.

3. Methods

The clubs are organized in each of the four schools on a grade basis. Fifth grade boys are enrolled in Safety Project, the seventh grade boys are carrying Electric, Unit I Project and the high school boys are studying Soils as their project. Boys in the sixth grade clubs have selected their individual projects. Many boys from the other groups are carrying additional projects of their own choosing.

Tractor Maintenance Project will be offered for older farm boys. Meetings will be held for project instruction. Instruction will be given by older 4-H members who have attended the State Tractor Clinic, adult leaders, implement mechanics and the agent. The project will conclude with a Tractor Operators' Contest with the county winner competing in the District Contest. Farm implement dealers will cooperate with the project.

Training in demonstrations will be given in club meetings. Club members will be given an opportunity to give demonstrations in club meetings.

County contest will be held in March. Club members will be encouraged to enter.

Senior winners will enter district contests and the winners, if any, will compete in the state contest at V.P.I. The agent will assist the county demonstration winners in improving their demonstrations. Local assistance will be secured from teachers and qualified businessmen.

County Achievement Day planned by county council will be held in November. The program will be executed with the assistance of local leaders and junior leaders.

Camp attendance will be encouraged. Older h-H members will serve as leaders at our junior camp.

A county council will be organized and will assist with the planning of county program and activities.

Local support of the county h-H program will be solicited. It is hoped that this support will be camp scholarships and recognition of members for their over-all achievements.

Local leaders will be obtained. Training will be given to the leaders by the agents.

F. Farm and Home Development

1. Situation

There are approximately 468 white farmers in Sussex County. Over a period of years the agent has worked with nearly every white farmer in the county, either through livestock, crops or 4-H club program. In the Farm and Home Development Program the agent will consider the entire farming operation.

2. Goals

a. To report work being done.

3. Methods

Some families will be worked with by both county and home agent. Others will be assisted by one of the agents on either the farm or home problems. The assistance will be in form of personal contacts, specialist help and printed material. These families will be visited regularly and assisted with various problems.

G. Agricultural Engineering

1. Situation

Interest is developing in swine facilities and grain handling and storage facilities. Peanut combines will increase; therefore, dryers will be installed.

2. Goals

a. To help individual farmers obtain as much information as possible before beginning a new construction or improving an old one.

b. To encourage improvement of facilities and methods.

3. Methods

- a. Tours of swine facilities will be conducted.
- b. Tour of peanut dryers will be held.
- c. Individual contacts will be made.
- d. News articles and letters will be used.
- e. Local power supplier engineer and specialist from V.P.I. will assist.

VI. Calendar of Work

January

Soil Samples
News Articles
4-H Club Meetings (Projects and Demonstrations)
District Tractor Clinic
Annual Camp Meeting

February

Peanut Production Meeting
Soil Samples
News Articles
Swine Tour
Swine School
Tractor Meetings
4-H Club Meetings (Projects and Demonstrations)

March

Soil Samples
News Articles
Publicity on need of soybean germination tests
County Contest
Tractor Meetings
4-H Club Meetings (Projects, Camp, and Demonstrations)
Camp Pre-Planning Meeting

April

Peanuts: 2 Planting and Cultivating Demonstrations

1 Nematode Demonstration
Soil Samples
News Article
Custom Sheep Shearers
Assist Senior 4-H Members with Demonstrations
District Contest
Work with club members having baby beeves
4-H Club Meetings (Project Instruction, Camp)

May

News Articles
Letter on chemical weed control and cultivation
Wool Pool
4-H Club Meetings (Check Records)
Baby Beef Show
Work with District Demonstration Winners

June

News Articles
Soybean Spacing Demonstrations
Swine Facility Tour
Judge Records for Camp Scholarship
Senior Camp
Short Course
Visit 4-H Members
Work with District Demonstration Winners.

July

Weekly News Articles
Institute of Rural Affairs
4-H Picnic
Junior Camp Leader Training Meeting
Visit 4-H Members

August

Weekly News Article
Farm Picnic (Farm Bureau and Farmers Union)
Extension Conference
Junior Camp
4-H Electric Congress
Plans for Club Meetings
4-H Committee Plan and Assemble 4-H Exhibits

September

Meetings at Peanut Demonstrations
Inspection Committee to inspect feeder calves
Organize 4-H Clubs
Visit prospective baby beef club members
Assist with the location of suitable 4-H clubs
4-H exhibit at State Fair

October

Feeder Calf Sale
Meetings at Soybean Demonstrations
4-H Club Meetings (Projects and Demonstrations)
4-H Exhibit at Local Fair

November

Annual Reports
4-H Club Meetings (Projects and Demonstrations)
Visit 4-H Calves
News Articles