

COUNTY AGENT'S PLAN OF WORK

JAMES CITY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 1, 1954 to NOVEMBER 30, 1955.

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I. Brief Description of James City County.

A. Physical Conditions.

James City County is a long, narrow county in Eastern Virginia. As a rule the farm land is flat and there is little erosion problem, altho, there is some small amount of rolling land. Deep gorges extend in from the rivers and creeks in many places, but most of this land is in some kind of timber growth. It is one of the smaller counties. The roads are excellent which facilitates the travel of the extension agent. The soil varies from east to west, being of a heavy type in the eastern part of the county with a tendency to be wet. In the western part of the county the soil is dry and drainage is adequate.

This variation in soil type determines to a great extent the type of farming followed in various sections of the county. The eastern part of the county has always been given more to livestock farming with pastures and grain crops. In the west is more truck crop farming. Throughout the entire county corn is one of the most important crops. Soybeans probably occupy second place and pastures, third. During the past ten years there has been a marked tendency for farmers to turn to some type of livestock farming. Beef cattle has lead in this change with hogs and poultry, also, showing some tendency to increase. Dairying has been decreasing for some years.

James City County is made up of a diversity of people. Much of the farm population and to an even greater extent the non-farm population are relatively new comers to the county. These new comers have a different attitude toward the county than people who have been long residents of the community. The county is not a unit from any standpoint. There are really no well defined communities. There is relatively little inter-  
course between the different sections of the county. The social, religious and economic life of the county is carried on by individuals and relatively small groups. There is no county center. Williamsburg is the county seat and is located about half way the county from east to west. Williamsburg has no real agricultural interest. There are no agriculture markets in Williamsburg either to sell or to buy. This means that the trading centers for the farmers of the county are out of the county—Richmond, West Point, Newport News, Norfolk, etc.

This creates problems for the extension agent as well as for all the other agencies in the county.

James City County is fast becoming an urban county. The population of the county is increasing very rapidly, but all the increase is in non-farm population. The farm population has shown less at each census since 1910 and the trend was downward even before that. Farms have become larger and more land is being cultivated now than a few years ago, but by fewer farmers. James City County is also located in the center of a military area which has greatly affected the agricultural development during the past few years. There are, also, industrial developments. A few years ago labor was super-abundant. Today, labor is very scarce. This shortage of labor has been the cause of many shifts in agriculture during the past few years. The indications are that these trends will continue far into the future.

## II. Changes In The Agricultural Situation Which Influences 1955 Extension Plan of Work.

### A. County Agent's Plan.

The most important short term changes which will affect agriculture in James City County is the drought which began in James City County in 1952 and has not been completely broken up to the present time. The ground is probably drier in James City County at the present time than it has been in a good many years at this season of the year. The drought condition has seriously affected the pastures of the county and has had some affect upon the general cropping system of the county.

The second most important change which affected agricultural is the drop in prices of practically all agricultural commodities which the farmer produces in this county. This means that the more efficient farmer will immediately take steps to reduce his cost of production wherever practical. The least efficient farmers are likely to cut the cost of production where it will actually reduce the efficiency and the total income of the farmer.

The third item which will affect the county's farmers is the change which has been made in the government programs regarding agriculture. This is especially true of wheat acreage allotment and will be even more true should there be allotments on corn and soybeans.

A fourth factor which will affect the agriculture of the county is the softening of the labor supply to a certain extent.

### III. How the County Extension Plan of Work for 1955 was Developed.

The most important planning unit in James City County is the James City County Board of Agriculture. The James City County Board of Agriculture is made up of a group of approximately thirty-five farmers who meet once a month to discuss various agricultural problems. This group plans through its committees to a large extent, the county agent's work for the year.

The following committees of the County Board of Agriculture were appointed by the president at the beginning of the year and have already worked out much of the program for the extension agent for the year of 1955.

A Young Mens' Committee made up of six of the younger men of the County Board of Agriculture to meet and study the problems of the young men of the county and to make suggestions to the County Board of Agriculture as to how the county board would be of the greatest benefit to the young farmers of the county.

The Agronomy Committee made up of nine farmers from the Board of Agriculture to meet and work out an Agronomy Program for the County.

A Truck Crop Committee composed of five members of the Board to meet and work out a truck crop program for the truck crop growers of the county.

An Overall Planning Committee which has met and made out an overall program for the County Board of Agriculture to follow during the year. This committee is composed of seven men. This committee's report has more to do with what is taken up at the discussion period of the meetings than with demonstrations actually carried out in the field. Although, the committee did make some recommendations in regard to field demonstrations.

The Board of Agriculture has, also, discussed at its meeting the matter of appointing a 100 Bushel Corn Club Committee

and a Pasture Committee. These committees will probably be appointed in the near future.

The County Agent feels that the greater part of the extension program in the county will be carried out by the County Board of Agriculture and the agent will probably spend more time working with this organization as an organization than on any other single item of work. The agent will consult with the officers of the organization, at least, once a month in regard to agriculture work in the county. He will help the program committee in planning the programs and in trying to see that each meeting has a good program. He will, also, endeavor to help the officers carry out the program in a business like manner, beginning and closing on time and holding various parts of the program to the time allotted for that particular part of the program.

#### IV. Major Lines of Work.

The major lines of work which will be carried on in the county in 1955 are mainly a continuation of the work which has been carried on in the county for the past few years. These lines of work are:

##### A. Agronomy.

The agronomy program which will consist of soil improvement, the testing of soils for pH content; proper application of fertilizer and crop rotation.

##### B. Corn.

The improvement of the corn crop in the county. This work will be carried on mainly through the 100 Bushel Corn Club. The question has arisen of dropping this work, but the group of farmers who have taken part in the 100 Bushel Corn Club in the past want to continue the 100 Bushel Corn Club. The committee has decided to continue the 100 Bushel Corn Club, but to try to broaden the work of the corn club to include related work such as proper fertilization, variety test, weed control, etc.

##### C. Pasture.

Pasture improvement. This work will consist of proper pasture mixtures, testing of the soil, proper preparation of the land, and proper management of the pastures.

D. Soybeans.

Soybeans are one of the leading cash crops of the county. The work carried on with this crop will have mainly to do with weed control, varieties, and proper land preparation and the right seeding date.

E. Truck Crops.

The growing of various truck crops is a major agricultural enterprise in this county. Work will be continued with the most important of these crops such as Irish and sweet potatoes, watermelons, cantaloupes and cabbage.

F. Chemical Weed Control.

Another major line of work which will be continued will be the work with chemical weed controls. This work will cut across the various crops and there will be demonstrations of weed control chemicals on different crops.

G. Methods Used.

The general method used to carry out the above work will be as follows:

The work will be discussed by the County Board of Agriculture, or by a committee of the County Board of Agriculture. If the work is with dairying or some other group which has a separate organization in the county the work will be discussed with that group or a committee of that group. At this meeting the project will be outlined, demonstrators selected and the project gotten under way.

The actual work will be carried out by discussing the work at a general meeting of the County Board of Agriculture or other organizations which are carrying on that line of work, by visits to the demonstrators, giving them instructions on the project.

The outline of the project will be sent to those who are conducting the demonstrations. The agent and leaders will visit these demonstrators to see that they understand the project, what is being demonstrated and the results which we hope

to accomplish. The agent will send out circular letters from time to time on the demonstration. Where possible the agent will get movies to show at meetings which will illustrate the work at least to an extent. News articles will be written on the project, field meetings will be held as far in as possible and reports will be made on the progress and results of the work.

#### H. Forestry.

The work with forestry will be continued as a major line of work. The main lines of this work will be a field meeting at the farm of Mr. E. J. Hofmeyer, Williamsburg, Route #1, who has been cooperating in this work for the past several years. The work which Mr. Hofmeyer has done in the past is beginning to show results. The purpose of this field meeting will be to show as many farmers as will attend the results which they can expect from this type of forestry improvement.

Mr. Forest Patton, Forestry Specialist, V.P.I., will also help the agent in putting on a chemical weed tree killing demonstration. This will be a continuation of the work which has been done in the past. A general night meeting will be held to discuss the forestry problems of the timber owners of the county. Circular letters and news articles as well as movies will be used in carrying out the forestry program.

#### I. Livestock.

With livestock the main lines of work will be with poultry, hogs, beef and dairy cattle.

All of this work will be a continuation of the work which has been carried on in the past. In most cases the only changes made will be the addition of new demonstrators in cases where it is thought necessary, or some demonstrators may be dropped for various reasons.

##### 1. Poultry.

The work with poultry is intensive and is more or less with individuals who are the demonstrators. With the help of Mr. L. W. Herrick, Poultry Specialist, V.P.I., there are nine poultry growers in the county who are keeping records and carrying on a general poultry improvement program. Mr. Herrick and the agent visits these demon-

strators about once every three months to help them with their records and to give them information on the work which they are doing. To publicize this work general poultry meetings are held.

## 2. Hogs.

The main lines of work with hogs will include better feeding practices, hog pasture, better breeding, disease control and sanitation.

This work will be carried on with individual farmers, discussion groups of the hog growers of the county, visits to the Experiment Station at Holland, Virginia to study the work being done there with swine, by tours and general publicity.

## 3. Beef and Dairy Cattle.

The main work with beef cattle and dairy cattle will have to do with improved pasture and feed production. With dairying, considerable work will be carried on through the Dairy Herd Improvement Association and the Artificial Breeders' Association. A Tri-County Dairy meeting in connection with the other county agents on the Peninsula will be held to give the dairymen information on the dairy problems of this area.

## J. Minor Project Work.

Minor project work will be carried on with several other projects such as buildings, irrigation, land clearing, orchards, gardens, small fruits. This work will be carried on in less detail. In many cases the same procedure as outlined above will be used in developing the project or in carrying out demonstrations of the best methods with a particular project. In other cases the work with the minor projects will be done on a mass basis by the use of circular letters, news articles, meetings, movies, etc.

## K. Miscellaneous Work.

The agent will also be called on to do a great deal of work with farmers on a call basis or a day to day basis. As

a rule, this type of work takes about one-fourth of the agent's time and it is hard to predict the exact nature of this work. It may be an outbreak of disease among some of the livestock of the county or the control of an outbreak of disease or insects on crops. A good illustration is an outbreak of army worms which we have sometimes. The methods used to cope with these situations have to be formulated when the trouble arises. Generally, much valuable assistance is given by the County Board of Agriculture when such emergencies arise.

L. Marketing.

The agent is also attempting to do some work with marketing this year with watermelons and with sweet potatoes. The plans are not thoroughly worked out for these projects at the present time.

M. 4-H Club Work.

The agent is attempting to improve the 4-H Club work in the county with the boys by getting a few 4-H boys as Junior 4-H Club leaders. These boys will all be older 4-H Club members. Up to the present time, the agent has four boys who have agreed to act as Junior 4-H Club leaders. The agent hopes to get about four more boys to act in other communities as Junior 4-H Club leaders.

The plan is for the agent to meet with these Junior 4-H Club leaders about once a month and to give them instructions as to the carrying on of the project. The leaders in turn will pass the instructions on to their club members.

The agent hopes that these leaders will be able to increase the interest of the boys in their project. He also hopes that through these leaders he will be able to give the club members a better understanding of club work and a better understanding of the opportunities which there are in club work.

The agent also hopes that if he does not have to spend his time giving detailed instructions to individual members on their projects that he will have time to train these leaders so that a larger number of club members can be carried in the county. Also, that he will have more time to put on such

things as judging teams, demonstrations, tours, camps and etc. These features of 4-H Club work have been neglected in this county partly because the agent did not have time for the individual project work and for other lines of work.

To begin with, the projects will probably continue to be garden projects which have made up the bulk of the projects in the past. The agent hopes, however, that some of the Junior leaders will be interested or become interested in other lines of 4-H Club work and that the work can be broadened.

Each leader will organize his group into a 4-H Club and it is hoped that some competition will develop among the groups which should stimulate the interest.

Below the agent is giving a brief outline of some of the work which will be carried on to show briefly how the work will be done.

V. Main Activities of the Extension Agent.

A. Corn.

The main problem in corn production is:

1. To increase the economic production of corn.
2. To be sure that all corn land is followed by some kind of crop during the winter.

The main work with corn will be carried on through the 100 Bushel Corn Club, which at the present time is made up of thirty-three members.

The following field demonstrations will also be carried on with corn:

1. Fertilizer Demonstration.
2. Variety hybrid corn tests.

The production of corn will be discussed at one of the meetings of the County Board of Agriculture, at which time the latest recommendations by the Experiment Station will be given to the group.

At the end of the year a banquet will be given for the members of the 100 Bushel Corn Club at which a review of the year's work will be made and recognition will be given to those who have produced a hundred or more bushels of corn per acre.

B. Pastures.

The goal of the pasture work will be:

1. To improve the pastures of the county.
2. To introduce the farmers who do not have adequate pasture to provide more pasture.
3. The pasture problem will be discussed at one meeting of the County Board of Agriculture.
4. Information will be sent to all the livestock growers of the county on pasture production.
5. Pasture Improvement Club will be organized, if possible.
6. The County Board of Agriculture has already suggested a pasture tour sometime during the year.

C. Truck Crops.

In the western half of the county most of the farmers grow some type of truck crops. The problems of the truck crop growers are a great many. Some of the most important are economic production, control of insects and disease and marketing.

1. During the summer if possible to get the help of specialist from V.P.I., a disease clinic will be held to give the truck crop growers information on truck crop diseases.

2. The Truck Crop Committee of the County Board of Agriculture has asked that the extension agent and a group of growers which have been appointed for that specific purpose, make a special study of sweet potato production and marketing from this area. All growers will be urged to treat their seed before bedding and to carry out the very best cultural practice.

3. Marketing information will be given to the truck crop growers in the form of outlook reports, market reports, grades, demand etc., of truck crops. It is hoped that a definite project may be carried on in the marketing of watermelons and sweet potatoes.

D. Soybeans.

1. A planning committee of the County Board of Agriculture has suggested that, at least, two pre-emerge spray demonstrations for the control of weeds in soybeans be carried out. These demonstrations have been arranged for.

2. Variety tests will be carried on with some of the newer varieties and the older varieties which are being grown in this county.

E. Forestry.

Owing to the fact that forests occupy at least two-thirds of the land area of James City County, the County Board of Agriculture and the county agent has always insisted that there be a reasonable amount of work done with forests each year. Although, it seems the land owner is not as interested in the care of his forest as he should be.

1. The forestry problems will be discussed at one meeting of the James City County Board of Agriculture.

2. A forestry demonstration will be held to show interested owners how to kill scrub trees with chemical weed control.

3. There will, also, be a considerable amount of educational work done with forests.

F. Cover Crops and Legumes.

1. To increase the seeding of legumes and cover crops, especially winter cover crops.

2. A campaign will be put on in the fall of the year to try to get every acre possible seeded to some type of cover crop for the winter.

3. Legumes and cover crops will be discussed at one of the meetings of the County Board of Agriculture.

G. Beef Cattle.

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1. To help the beef cattle grower in more economic production of beef cattle by the use of better pasture, better management and better breeding stock.

2. One meeting of the County Board of Agriculture will be given over to the problems of beef cattle growers, a beef cattle specialist of V.P.I., leading the discussion.

3. Visits to beef cattle farmers, giving them any help which can be given on the farm.

4. To conduct a beef cattle tour of the better beef cattle farmers of the county.

H. Dairy Cattle.

1. To try to popularize among dairymen the work of the Dairy Herd Improvement Association and the Artificial Insemination Association.

2. To improve pastures on the dairy farms and to encourage better herd management.

3. To hold during the winter a one day dairy school with the help of specialist from V.P.I.

4. To work with the Peninsula Dairy Association, giving it all the help possible with its problems.

I. Poultry.

1. To increase the interest of poultry growing in the county in better flock management.

2. To hold at least one meeting of a county wide nature of those most interested in poultry production with a specialist of the Poultry Department of V.P.I., to lead the discussion.

3. To aid at least nine poultrymen to keep cost records for the purpose of helping these individuals to make adjustments which will make their poultry more profitable. These account records to also be used for the improvement of the poultry of the county. Mr. L.W. Herrick, Poultry Specialist, V.P.I., will give valuable assistance with this project.

4. General work on sanitation and disease control.

#### J. Swine.

1. To continue educational campaign which has been carried on in the county in the past several years to reduce disease in external and internal parasites.

2. To increase the pastures for hogs on the farms where hogs are kept.

3. To get the farmers to take better care of their sows at farrowing time.

4. To encourage the building of individual farrowing houses which can be moved to clean land each season.

5. To put in the hands of each hog grower in the county information on worm control, disease control, parasite control.

6. To encourage a trip to the Holland Experiment Station, by as many hog growers of the county as we can get to make the trip.

7. To encourage, at least, four farmers to get better breeding stock.

#### K. Insect and Disease Control.

The county agent will be called on for a great deal of help in insect and disease control. Nematodes are becoming a considerable problem in James City County. The county agent has been called on more for information on nematodes during the past year than he had been in probably the previous ten years.

1. To carry on, at least, two demonstrations in the control of nematodes in gardens.
2. To examine the roots, especially, of the truck crops and to determine to what extent, if any, the crop is being damaged by nematodes.
3. To put into the hands of the farmers of the county information on nematodes.
4. To help the farmers with other crop diseases and insect problems which they may have.

#### VI. 4-H Club Work.

The county agent feels that he has never given as much time to 4-H Club work as should be given. This year the agent is trying to limit the 4-H projects which he will have to not more than three throughout the year. By this he means he hopes to have more time to give to those who are in club work.

1. The agent will have at least seventy-five 4-H club boys enrolled in the various projects.
2. He will have eight organized 4-H Clubs.
3. A Junior Leader in charge of each 4-H Club group.
4. He hopes to have a larger completion of projects this year than he has had in the past.
5. To have representatives at all the 4-H Club Short Courses and Camps.

#### VII. Cooperation With Other Organizations.

A. The agent will cooperate with other agencies in the county, working directly and indirectly with the farmers and rural people. The main organizations are:

1. Dairy Herd Improvement Association.
2. Peninsula Artificial Breeding Association.

3. Colonial Soil Conservation District.
4. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation.
5. James City County Ruritan Club.
6. Parent Teachers' Association.
7. Peninsula Farm Bureau Exchange.

B. Methods Used to Accomplish The Above Goal.

1. Using the County Board of Agriculture as an educational forum for the education of farmers of James City County by holding group meetings to discuss various problems which are facing the farmers.

2. By circular letters to the farmers of the county, giving information on their various problems.

3. By newspaper publicity, discussing immediate problems of the farmers.

4. The work of the James City County Board of Agriculture and the county agent by visits to individual farmers to help them with problems which cannot be handled by one of the other methods.

5. By meeting various civic groups and discussing agriculture problems of the county.

6. Newspaper articles each week in the local papers.

VIII. Farm and Home Development Program.

A. To discuss this program with the Home Demonstration Agent and to agree on at least three farm families with whom to begin the development of this program.

B. Since this work is new to me I shall have to feel my way to a certain extent as I go along so will move very slowly. I will have to move very cautiously because I shall most likely make severe mistakes which will need to be corrected as quickly as possible. It will be necessary to go slowly so one can correct the mistakes before he has gone too far.

C. The aim this year will be only to get a small number of the Farm and Home Development Programs under way and not to complete them.

D. The agent is beginning these programs with a certain amount of fear and misgivings, but with much interest and hope.