PLAN OF WORK 1959

Farm Management Extension (Virginia)

Kenneth E. Loope

Associate Extension Agricultural Economist

Full-time Extension

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I. Analysis of the Situation

Agriculture is changing rapidly. Virginia lost 25 percent of her farm workers from 1940 to 1950 and indications point to a more rapid loss since 1950. Farms are getting fewer and larger. Output per man-hour of labor is increasing at about 6 percent per year. Adjustments necessary to meet these changes are many and varied. Farmers need more technology and knowledge of how to adjust and apply it under their particular set of circumstances.

The narrowing profit margin has made increase in volume per farm necessary if net incomes are to be maintained. Since many farm families are inefficiently using available resources, particularly labor, it is important that they be given help on the analysis of their farm operations in order for them to investigate and choose from possible alternatives.

Farm organization, because of its complex nature, is more difficult for extension workers to work with than is work at the practice level. Furnishing evaluation of new technology under the individual farmers conditions continues to be an important phase of the Extension farm management job. Farms are increasing in size and complexity and it is harder for farm operators to balance the factors of production now than was true several years ago. Due to these changes there is greater spread in earning capacity between good and poor managers.

II. Objective

The objective of the project is to train other Extension specialists and county workers in the principles of the farm management approach and through them furnish farm families with information on which to base wise decisions in developing efficient operations from both organization and practice levels. The budget procedure will continue to be used in testing alternative choices in farm organization open to the farm family and in evaluation at the practice level. The writer feels that the teaching of basic farm management principles is much more effective by showing their application to an actual situation. Sound decision making in present day farm operations requires much figuring.

III. Program of Work for 1959

1. Least cost ration work will be expanded during the coming year. Since approximately 50 to 85 percent of the cost of producing livestock and livestock products is in the cost of producing feed, it seems a logical place to look in improving overall efficiency. This work will include dairy, hogs, beef cattle, and laying hens. Work will be done on choice of rotations to furnish most economical rations for livestock.

Quantity and quality forages will be emphasized in work with dairy and beef together with estimates of cost of production comparisons of various feeds.

Protein content and possible savings on grinding and mixing own feed will be emphasized for hogs and other livestock. Estimates indicate that concentrate cost for laying hens and dairy might be reduced from 20 to 30 percent under certain conditions. Feed substitution possibilities including pasture will be dealt with.

This work will be accomplished in both group and individual farm approach as well as acquainting specialist and agents with economic possibilities of feed substitutions.

2. During the coming year the writer will emphasize the economics of fertilization in cooperation with the Agronomy Department. Ten regional meetings are planned in January and February where members of the fertilizer industry, and farmers will attend to discuss factors to consider in arriving at optimum quantities and analyses of fertilizer to apply. The writer will discuss the economic aspects of this problem. The writer will also appear on two discussion panels during the Annual Agronomy Department Meeting in December to discuss fertilizer economics for field crops and forage.

3. Work will be continued on providing agents and farm operators with basic information (economic and engineering) and analysis in estimating costs of owning and operating farm equipment. The effect of scale of operations on the per unit cost will be emphasized. Possible choices of using custom equipment, partnership equipment, and used equipment will be discussed. Corn drying and farm grain storage will be worked with together with estimates on costs of irrigation.

4. The need for additional work on pasture economics is evident and will be emphasized during the year. The fact that under normal conditions THE costs of native pasture increases with increased fertilization is not generally recognized. Quick fill of high quality forage is important with dairy cows but may be too expensive an approach for beef cows. Renting or buying additional acreage may be a more profitable approach under certain conditions.

5. The level of grain feeding to dairy cows producing manufacturing

milk will be studied. Many dairymen are feeding grain in quantities beyond this point of profit. More attention needs to be given forage programs on this type of farm. The "V" milking parlor will also be studied to determine the practical application on other farms of this type.

6. Outlook work will be continued emphasizing changes in agriculture affecting farmers. Contract farming and vertical integration will be discussed with farm people and others.

7. Principles of and methods involved in decision making will be taught to agents at every opportunity. The art of counselling with farm families will be demonstrated. Emphasis will be given to the fact that farm families should make their own decisions based on information they have plus additional information furnished by the Extension agents. The agents will be trained in giving economic interpretations of organizational changes and practices recommended to individual farmers.

8. Much of the writer's time will be spent in working with agents on individual farms both in Farm and Home Development and in the general Extension Program. Broad problems of acute nature that need special handling because of differences of resources etc. will be worked with. It is the opinion of the writer that this type of work is very valuable in teaching other specialists and agents farm management principles by application under specific farm conditions.

9. The writer is to teach a communications course during February.

In summary, the writer would like to point out the need for a team approach in working with farm families. To do this, it will be necessary to learn the recommendations of fellow specialists, particularly those of the production specialists. This will prevent promotion of pet projects

of individual specialists by testing it and other alternatives and letting the farm family make the decisions rather than making recommendations.

IV. Plans for Evaluation and Reporting Results

The writer plans on keeping records of the type of problems encountered on individual farms together with the analysis made of the situation and alternative worked out. Typical situations will be given some publicity showing how various problems can be solved. This can be of value to agents in helping recognize possibilities for various situations.