

PLAN OF WORK

1958

LANCASTER COUNTY

VIRGINIA

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COUNTY AGENT

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 one hundred twenty-eight square miles. The land area is 90,880 acres. Thirty-six percent, or 33,376 acres, was in farms in 1954. The number of farms that year totaled 446 and they averaged 74.8 acres in size. The average value of land and buildings per farm was \$9,115. Seventy-five percent of the farms are operated on a part time basis.

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

The value of farm crops sold contributed 43.5 percent of the farm income in 1954. From 1944 to 1949 the proportion of farm income contributed by vegetables (mostly tomatoes) declined from 24.3 percent to 7.4 percent. In the same period the proportion from field crops (mostly soybeans, wheat and corn) increased from 14.4 percent to 33.3 percent. Poultry is the most important livestock enterprise.

II. The Situation

Most Lancaster farmers do not own enough farmland to have economical units for the market production of small grain, corn and soybeans. They prefer that type farming over other types. Therefore, they bid against each other for rented land, some of which is marginal for these crops. They have heavy investments of farm machinery and know that they must use it on as many acres as possible to lower the unit cost of production. The conservation reserve of the soil bank is taking some of the land which has been for rent, and it is expected to take more in the future. Many farms are so situated that they cannot be enlarged by the purchase of additional land. Many farmers are looking for part time employment off the farm. Some are looking for full time employment off the farm.

In 1957 many Lancaster farmers had the highest gross sales they had ever had, but net income lagged which points up the problem of rising expenses of machinery, labor and land rentals.

III. How This Plan Was Developed

This plan was developed with the help of agronomy, dairy and forestry commodity committees with advice from the Board of Supervisors of the county, the editor of the county paper and others interested in agricultural progress of the county.

IV. General County Problems, Needs and Opportunities

The problem of low farm income continues to be the number one problem of Lancaster farmers. We think that this problem can be partially met by:

1. Feeding more cattle, hogs and laying hens on Lancaster farms.
2. Treating the farm woodland as a crop.
3. Finding more off farm employment for small farmers.
4. Developing specialties where land is limited.
5. Increasing crop yields.
6. Clearing class one land or clearing land suitable for pasture to release class one land for crops.
7. Developing better farm storage facilities for grains.
8. Improving over-all farm management, keeping better farm records, attention to detail, and the adoption of improved practices.

V. Activities

A. Agronomy

Field crops contribute 33.3 percent of Lancaster farm income. The 1954 census shows 4300 acres in corn, 5000 acres in soybeans, 500 acres in wheat, 815 acres in oats, 832 acres in barley and 1348 acres in permanent pastures. Farmers are making progress in increasing yields of these crops but the agronomy

committee thinks that work on varieties, fertilization and planting dates could be continued.

We shall set up demonstrations on varieties of corn and wheat, top-dressing of small grains, planting dates of soybeans. We will distribute copies of recommended field crop varieties to all farmers. We will conduct weed control demonstrations on corn, soybeans and small grains. We will conduct demonstrations on control of insects as needed. Spring and fall tours of the Experiment Station will be conducted.

Goals: Increase average yields of corn to sixty-five bushels per acre. Increase average yields of soybeans to twenty-five bushels per acre. Increase average yields of wheat to thirty bushels per acre. Help five farmers to improve farm storage for grain. Help ten farmers to increase days of grazing from pastures.

B. Commercial Vegetables

The acreage in tomatoes has declined over the past ten years. Acreage in other vegetable crops has also declined. From 1944 to 1949 the proportion of farm income contributed by vegetables declined from 21.3 percent to 7.4 percent. We believe the decline is continuing. The land is now being used for soybeans and corn.

We will supply production and marketing information to growers of tomatoes, small fruits, asparagus, sweet potatoes, cress and other vegetables.

Most of the work with this group will be on an individual basis. Production letters will be mailed.

Goals: The establishment of two new small fruit demonstrations. Help one tomato grower produce own plants. Help one grower demonstrate plastic greenhouse. Assist two canners with problems of canning vegetables. We hope to show the many farmers with limited acreage that vegetable production may be the answer to their problem of limited acreage.

C. Dairying

The 1954 census shows 152 farms reporting 550 milk cows. Dairying contributes about five percent of the total Lancaster farm income. There are four Grade A dairies in the county.

The dairy industry in the county is so small and the chances of enlarging so slim, that it is expected that the problem of markets will have to be solved on an area basis.

Most of the work with dairymen will be on an individual basis with a few meetings of the whole group.

Goals: Increased production per cow on the farms. Ten percent increased volume of milk on the local market. All cows to be tested for Brucellosis and heifers vaccinated. Gain an additional member of D.H.I.A. Increase use of artificial insemination ten percent.

D. Livestock

Livestock contributed about fourteen percent of total farm income in 1954. The 1954 census shows hogs and pigs 1800, sheep and lambs 370, and beef cattle 1050.

Internal parasites are a problem in sheep, hogs and cattle.

Brucellosis is a problem in some cattle herds. We believe that more cattle and hogs should be bred in the county.

We plan to work individually with each commercial feeder of cattle and hogs to try to improve the management, feeding, breeding, disease and parasite situation. Timely letters will be used. Mass media program on parasites to be conducted.

Goals: Test all beef cattle for Brucellosis and vaccinate all heifers in county. Assist

fifteen farmers to secure better breeding stock. Start five new club members with livestock projects. Train one sheep shearer for the county. Set up two steer feeding demonstrations.

E. Tree Fruits

Tree fruits contributed about three percent of the total farm income in 1950. We have about 12,000 peach trees and some 3,000 apple trees.

The three commercial orchards are well managed and operated and need very little assistance. We will work with these growers on an individual basis. We expect to hold a fruit school in the county.

F. Poultry

Poultry contributed 31.6 percent of the total farm income in 1950. In 1954 poultry contributed 37.3 percent of the total farm income. Considering these facts there is surprisingly little interest in poultry among farmers of the county. There is no broiler industry and few turkeys. The bulk of poultry income is from laying hens.

We believe that laying hens offer a good possibility for increased income on grain producing farms and part time farms. Records from well managed flocks bear this out.

We will work individually with demonstration flocks and with farm and home development families to see that the flocks are well managed. We will use mass information media to try and interest other families to increase size of flocks and provide better management.

Goals: We shall try to change the attitude of Lancaster farmers in general to poultry, encouraging them to reappraise this enterprise in the light of recent developments and to show that good management of laying hens can be profitable. Three demonstration poultry flocks.

G. Forestry

Forty-eight percent of Lancaster County is in woods. The 446 farms average about forty acres in woodland.

Due to the ASC program, the program of the local pulp mill, and educational work of the Forest Service, SCS and Extension, the farmers are more conscious of their woods than ever before. We are making progress, but much remains to be done.

We will work individually with farmers and woodland owners to get them interested in improving the woods. We will cooperate with other agencies and organizations on "Plant More Trees" and similar campaigns. We will use mass information media to take the story to the people. We will use method and result demonstrations to show good practices. We will organize a county forestry club and continue to work with a forestry committee.

Goals: We hope to change the attitude of the average woodland owner toward his woodland. We hope to get him to look upon his woods as he would a crop. We plan to plant 300,000 more seedlings in 1958-59 planting season. We plan to enroll forty members in the forestry club. We plan to get ten tracts of timber disked before cutting as we believe this is one of the best ways to get reproduction of pines in many situations.

H. 4-H Club

We plan to enroll about three hundred boys and girls in eleven 4-H Clubs in 1958.

General activities, camp, Short Course, County Council and other similar activities will be continued. Club work will be continued in the schools and on a club to the grade basis.

Major project work will be on wildlife and electrification. Farm boys and girls will carry farm projects in addition to those projects.

We expect to work with the 4-H Council to develop plans for Rural Life Sunday, National 4-H Club Week and Achievement Day.

VI. Farm and Home Development

We have now assisted thirty-one families with plans for development of their farms and homes. We believe that this is a sound approach to farm and home problems. In 1958 we plan to help those families in putting plans into operation. In addition we plan to start work with five new families.

We plan to work with these families on an individual basis.

VII. Economic Problems and Public Policy

We recognize a responsibility here. There is a need for additional off farm employment for the many small part time farmers and watermen of the area.

We plan to work closely with the Kilmarnock Chamber of Commerce, the local Menhaden plant and civic clubs to survey the situation and help draw plans for meeting the problem.

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 County Committee, and the responsibility for informing farmers of ACP practices, and services available from SCS, State 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 new bulletins, books, farm magazines and study agricultural legislation so that he may pass on to Lancaster people the best information available.

CALENDAR OF WORK

January

1. Radio - four programs - forestry, Brucellosis, small fruits, poultry, outlook.
2. News articles - poultry, varieties field crops
3. Start one family Farm and Home Development, visit four families
4. Visit cattle feeders
5. 4-H meetings - instruction electrification, wildlife
6. Tour - poultry

February

1. Radio - four programs - Brucellosis, gardening, forestry fertilizers
2. News articles - fertilizer, results of cattle feeding
3. Start one family Farm and Home Development, visit six families - check on previous plans
4. Fruit meeting
5. Dairy meeting
6. 4-H meetings - instruction electrification, wildlife
7. Top-dressing pasture demonstrations
8. Farmer production tomato plants - one
9. Forestry Club meeting

March

1. Chemical weed control small grains demonstrations
2. National 4-H Week - Council
3. New small fruit demonstration
4. Start one family Farm and Home - visit six families Farm and Home
5. Radio - four programs - news articles
6. Set up variety demonstrations - corn
7. Assist farmers in locating and purchasing better sires
8. Tour - forestry

April

1. Start one family Farm and Home Development - visit six families
2. Check 4-H livestock projects
3. Check 4-H garden projects
4. Check on sheep shearing school - secure person to attend
5. Radio - four programs - safety, water systems
6. News articles - safety, water systems
7. Farm and home lighting

May

1. Letter on Experiment Station Tour
2. Demonstration - planting date - soybeans
3. Farm storage for grain
4. Trench silos
5. Check forestry club - poisoning
6. One new Farm and Home - six established Farm and Home

June

1. Farm and Home visits
2. Demonstration - post-emergence spray on corn
3. Japanese beetle educational program
4. Visit 4-H members and projects

July

1. 4-H Camp
2. Letters and visits to people going to Institute
3. Visit six established Farm and Home
4. Visit 4-H members and projects

August

1. Letters on Experiment Station Tour
2. Check poultry demonstrations
3. Farm storage for grain
4. Trench silos

5. Plastic greenhouse
6. Winter pastures (visits to livestock owners needing)
7. One new Farm and Home - six established Farm and Home
8. Visit 4-H members and projects

September

1. Educational exhibit at fair on farm lighting and safety
2. Forestry club members - order seedlings
3. Letter to cattlemen - parasites
4. One new Farm and Home - six established Farm and Home
5. Planning 4-H work.

October

1. Variety demonstrations - small grains
2. Visit established Farm and Home

November

1. "Plant More Trees" program
2. 4-H Achievement Program
3. Better lighting program
4. One new farm and home - six established farm and home

December

1. Meetings of commodity groups
2. Pine planting demonstration
3. One new Farm and Home - six established Farm and Home