

Farm Program, Fertilizer Prescribed for Farm Problem

County agent says manufacturers should give more attention to local fertilizer dealers

ATLANTA.—The farmer must have a well-administered support program and the government must produce a definite and concrete farm program, if we are not to slide toward economic trouble. The farmer must learn that he can abide by acreage reductions yet make more profits by proper use of fertilizer. Fertilizer companies should give more attention to the local dealers as they exert the greatest amount of influence which could lead the farmer to intelligent use of fertilizer. These were the high points of opinion expressed before the 27th Annual Southern Convention of the National Fertilizer Association here Nov. 16 to 18.

No one segment of our national economy can get sick without endangering the rest, declared Georgia's Senator Richard B. Russell in his address before the group. With the great growth of our industry, he declared, there has been a tendency to forget the importance of agriculture. He warned that this cannot be allowed to continue as about 45% of the nation's gainful employment depends on agricultural and related pursuits. During the past few months the farm income has been sliding downward at a disturbing rate, Senator Russell told his audience. This year the income will be \$1.5 billion less than it was in 1952. This is eating up the capital assets of farmers. He said that the Bureau of Agricultural Economics had estimated that by the end of this year capital assets will be \$9 billion less than they were on Jan. 1, 1953.

In examining some of the proposals which have been made for remedying this bad situation, the Senator said that free markets have an attractive ring, but the advocates of that approach have not really been speaking of free markets. They talk of free markets only for agriculture, while if such a system is to work it must apply all the way across our economy and not only amount to the removing of agricultural price supports. The farmer long has fought for free markets for all of the United States according to the Senator, but this is not involved in the current suggestions for making free markets.

With reference to the two price systems, the Senator took a favorable attitude to the extent of indicating that he thought that such a system could work very well in some areas and that it would be very helpful to foreign markets for American agricultural products. He indicated, however, that it would have to be done very carefully and he left the impression that he had many doubts about the practicality of such a system at present.

Senator Russell said he believes that the 90% support program properly administered would not result in any loss. While he said that he could not predict what may be ahead for the American farmer or what results may come from Congress during the next session, he said that he did know that a definite concrete farm program must come forth to end the destructive uncertainty which now exists. He made

it clear that he did not believe that any sliding-scale support program which the present administration might offer would be likely to improve the farmers position of reduced income which must be improved if our economy is to prosper. He said that unless an adequate two price system is brought forward he believes that Congress will continue the existing system much as it now applies to existing commodities.

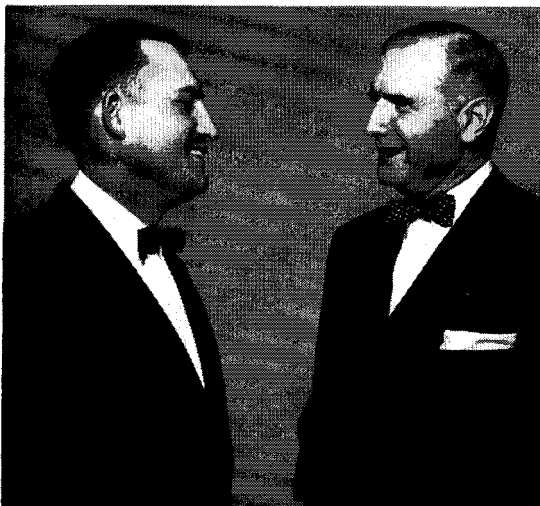
Dollars and Cents. The average farmer who follows college recommendations on fertilizer use along with other sound farming practices can make spectacular increases in his profit per acre, according to W. R. Allstetter, vice president of NFA. He said that information supplied to his organization by colleges all over the country shows that the proper use of fertilizer cuts the farmer's unit cost of production to such an extent that the farmer not only can maintain his income in the face of price declines but usually he can actually increase his net income.

Mr. Allstetter emphasized that the use of fertilizers to boost per-acre profits and to cut costs of production does not necessarily mean more total output. On the contrary, he said, costs can be lowered so that the average farmer can maintain his income on fewer planted acres—even from less total production. The only way farmers as a group can maintain their income without adding to already cumbersome agricultural surpluses, declared the speaker, is to lower production costs by the use of ample amounts of fertilizer along with better land management.

Mr. Allstetter reinforced his theory with reports of practical examples. He

NFA entertains representatives from associations, government, and industry. Left: Russell Coleman, NFA president; Harvey B. Mann, American Potash Institute. Right: Sam Nevins,

Mathieson Chemical; K. D. Jacob, USDA at Beltsville Station; George Wilkins, Jefferson Lake Sulphur Co.; and Hugo Reimer, Nitrogen Division, Allied Chemical & Dye





E. A. Geoghegan of Southern Cotton Oil Co. and vice chairman of the board of NFA; Raymond Rosson, Tennessee county agent; and W. R. Allstetter, NFA vice president

said that Georgia cotton farmers produce about 242 pounds of lint cotton to the acre, using 325 pounds of fertilizer. By using 700 pounds of fertilizer, they could produce 500 pounds of lint cotton per acre. This would mean an income increase of about \$60 per acre. He said it has been shown in that same area, that with corn, average yields can be boosted from 16.5 bushels per acre to 50 bushels per acre with an increase of income of \$35.85 per acre.

Mr. Allstetter said he thought the same principles of more profit from less production would hold true for all crops. Certainly the farmer will receive more profit from his farm regardless of the total

produced if he keeps his unit cost of production low.

Grass Roots Report. Raymond Rosson, who has established an outstanding record as county agent of Washington County, Tenn., scored strongly with the audience as he presented some of the points of view he has developed during many years of successful work as a county agent. In 1932, he reported, the farmers in his county sold \$1 million worth of produce, all told. In 1951 they sold \$12 million worth of produce. The history of this development, according to Mr. Rosson goes back to the period following the depression after World War I. A group decided at that

time that a grassland economy could be practiced on small farms just as well as on larger units. And they knew too that farmers received more of the consumers dollar from selling beef, milk, pork, and eggs. Much of their land was worn out from excessive farming of corn, and trouble had been caused by erosion from the planting year after year of row crops which are harvested. The farmers realized that grass was a crop to be harvested just as other crops and set out to find how it could be done. By the application of lime and fertilizer, and an active interest in farm management, these farmers proved that a permanent pasture is the keystone around which a pasture program should revolve. They found that fertilizer applications should be between 500 and 1000 pounds of 5-10-20 at seeding, then from 300 to 500 pounds of the same applied annually. Some of the better pastures have been fertilized much more heavily and have paid a profit in being handled in this way. Comparisons of Washington County production with the production from other counties in Tennessee showed very impressively the results of the efforts by the farmers in Mr. Rosson's county. The Washington County farmers had higher yields per acre, they had fewer acres in open crop production, thus less exposure to erosion, and they were selling much more farm produce per acre of land farmed.

Mr. Rosson said that one of the most important steps in developing a fertilizer program is to educate dealers as they probably exert a greater influence than any others over the farmer's choice of fertilizer and the amount he uses. It would benefit both the farmers and the fertilizer manufacturers to give dealers more information and stimulate their interest in advising the farmer profitably.

Fertilizer Dealers. Russell Coleman, NFA president, spoke, following Mr. Rosson's talk, to say that he felt that the dealers certainly constitute a neglected segment of the fertilizer industry. Some companies are doing very well in dealer education, he noted, but there are many who are not doing so. Dr. Coleman said that the NFA has difficulty in knowing what the dealer wants and in understanding his point of view. The fertilizer dealer is not so much interested in the National Fertilizer Association and that organization needs the help of the companies serving those dealers.

He asked what the NFA might do to contribute to the improvement of this situation. The NFA is planning to get out some charts and information in the very near future which should be of interest to farmers, county agents, and many others who are interested in fertilizer, but he says that the NFA isn't sure just how this will help dealers.

Louis Ware, of International Minerals, chairman of the board of NFA, hears Sen. Richard B. Russell (D.-Ga.) call for a concrete farm program

