

# THE OBSERVATION POST

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## Farmer Jones Has to Keep Up

IN THE JAN. 20 Observation Post we listed the major factors accounting for the sound agriculture in the United States. One of the major causes for this fortunate situation was the federal and state support of educational institutions devoted to agriculture. The Land Grant colleges and experiment stations have supplied us with a large army of trained agricultural workers. These, in turn, have provided highly beneficial research and extension assistance to farmers. As a consequence American farmers are comparatively well informed and highly efficient. They have learned how to produce ever-increasing quantities of food, feed, and fiber with a progressively smaller labor force. There is however, much room for further improvement.

The preceding are abstract generalizations. They account for past progress and indicate continued improvement in the years ahead. A more mathematical measure of our technological advances in agricultural production is presented in the accompanying table.

In the December 1953 issue of the USDA *Agricultural Situation*, Charles E. Rogers creates an atmosphere of realism and life into the history of our recent agricultural revolution. His story recounts the trials and tribulations of one farmer who kept pace with progress. In the narrative, Farmer Jones, R.F.D., Southland, plays the leading role.

Back in 1940, Jones farmed 160 acres of fair land and made a good living for his family of five—his wife, his two muscular sons, his daughter, and himself. He could keep up with the farm work without calling on outside help, except during the occasional rush at planting, cotton chopping, or harvest time. A dependable supply of capable labor was available on call. Three teams of mules provided all the farm power needed. He farmed about the same in 1940 as in 1920 when he took over the place. He saw no reason to change.

### War and Scarce Labor Necessitate Changes

In the spring of 1941 (during the period of the National Defense Advisory

Council) his older boy joined the Navy. Hoe hands were hard to find and Jones could see trouble ahead when weeds would get into his cotton and corn. So he bought a one-row tractor. In effect, the tractor displaced four mules and the boy in the Navy. In the following year, Jones reduced his cotton and corn acreage and traded in his 1-row tractor for a 2-row machine. With more of his farm in pasture, he started a beef project with a half-dozen cows. Two years later, in 1944, Jones rented 80 acres from a neighbor and bought more cows and a registered bull. By this time, his younger son was drafted into the armed forces. Now there was a real dearth of local labor. Jones was competing with shipbuilding plants in Savannah and war plants in Detroit. The factories were paying higher wages than he could afford.

### Machines Solve Labor Problem

Farmer Jones quickly learned that he could keep up with his work and even expand production by using more machines. They enabled him to get his jobs done quickly. With his tractor-

drawn cultivator he could keep weeds out of corn and cotton between rains and in only a fraction of the time it took with mule-drawn equipment. And electric power in the barn cut chore time in half.

Jones then bought his rented acres and increased his cow herd. He found that he could still grow as much cotton and corn as in 1940, and by using improved seed and adequate fertilizer he was getting higher yields than ever before. By 1952 Jones had doubled his 1940 acreage. His land produced a third more than it did in 1940 with only a fraction of the human labor.

### Symbol for Success

Farmer Jones is a symbol, not a statistic. What our imaginary farmer did between 1940 and 1952 was the pattern followed by tens of thousands of other farmers. They modified their farming operations to fit changing times. A tally of all the changes that took place in the 12-year period represents the effects of the technological revolution in southern agriculture.

Now we are able to produce super-abundantly. Our agricultural surpluses should be viewed as manageable problems and not as calamities. Count on Farmer Jones adapting himself to new conditions.

**Agricultural Production and Productivity in 1953, with Comparisons (1935-39 = 100)**

Item	1948-52	1952	Indicated 1953 <sup>c</sup>
Volume of Production			
Total farm output	140	144	144
Livestock production <sup>b</sup>	139	146	146
Crop production <sup>c</sup>	133	134	134
Farm-produced power <sup>d</sup>	50	41	37
Production per Unit			
Farm output per man-hour	163	173	178
Livestock production per man-hour <sup>b</sup>	139	145	145
Crop production per man-hour <sup>c</sup>	160	174	181
Crop production per acre	132	133	131
Livestock production per breeding unit <sup>b</sup>	121	123	124

<sup>a</sup> Indications for 1953 based chiefly on the August 1953 report of the Crop Reporting Board.

<sup>b</sup> Dairy products, poultry products, meat animals, wool and mohair. This index measures "gross" livestock production, i.e., feed and pasture consumed as well as product added in converting feed and pasture into livestock and livestock products.

<sup>c</sup> All crop production including production of feed for farm horses and mules.

<sup>d</sup> Not included in total farm output. Farm-produced power production includes the feed and pasture consumed by horses and mules, and the product added in converting this feed and pasture into animal power.

Source: *Agricultural Situation*, USDA, September 1953.