

Level Price Outlook Expected for Farmers in 1955

NFA membership gives unanimous approval to proposed National Plant Food Institute

HOLLYWOOD, FLA.—Farmers over the next several years are probably faced with a level price outlook, according to O. V. Wells, USDA's agricultural marketing service. Domestic and foreign demands for farm products are expected to be at least as good as in 1954 with prices received by farmers expected to average near current levels, as are costs and prices paid by farmers. Cash receipts from farm marketing in 1955 may be somewhat reduced because of smaller wheat and cotton allotments but farm production expenses may be cut through lower outlays for labor and other operating expenses.

In considering the problems of a level price outlook for the American farmer, Dr. Wells assumed that average standards of living will continue gradually to increase and that farm people will feel they should share in any such increase. He also assumed that we are gradually moving toward a more peaceful world.

With these assumptions, Dr. Wells told the southern convention of the

National Fertilizer Association that increases in over-all farm incomes must come chiefly through reduction in unit cost of production and marketing and an increase in the volume of farm products produced and sold. Efforts will be made not to cut total production but to turn somewhat from "cash" crops to such products as meat, fruit, and vegetables, which can contribute to the improvement of the American diet. Such dietary improvement means greater demands for food. The export market should hold well because of efficiency of production.

There are several visible marks of progress in the marketing field: the shifting back to the USDA foreign agricultural service of the agricultural attachés; this should bring them closer to the marketing problems of American farmers and exporters of farm products. The USDA has concentrated activities relating to marketing within the United States into the Agricultural Marketing Service and Congress has provided a substantial increase in funds available for agricultural research, including marketing research.

The strongest reason for Dr. Wells' optimism was the increase in attention to the marketing job. Cotton producers for example have moved themselves out of the position of being the number one economic problem and of losing out to synthetics and today are reversing the situation with synthetics already losing to cotton in some areas. The citrus industry has had a major merchandising problem but has been a very effective group. Dairy products have been in a difficult position but now are girding for battle to gain back their losses. Beef cattle producers are studying market development, as are the lamb and wool producers. Expressing the opinion that the price support controversy is over-emphasized, Dr. Wells said that it is only a technique for getting things adjusted. The question is whether or not to squeeze agricultural production down. The answer to that is no. The difficulties must be ironed out through cost of production and marketing and it appears that effective steps are being taken.

According to Wells, two facts are of interest in considering possible future increases in the use of fertilizer. First, many of the practices which make for increased efficiency or lower farm costs,

Speakers at the NFA meeting were Richard Bradfield of Cornell (left) and Oris V. Wells (right), administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA. In the center is Mrs. Frank Holland. Right: Russell Coleman (left), president

of National Fertilizer Association, listens to NFA's board chairman, E. A. Geoghegan of Southern Cotton Oil. On the right are Mrs. Coleman and Paul Truitt, president of the American Plant Food Council



especially per unit of product, are practices which operate best in terms of increasing yields per acre, or better still, aggregate output for the farm as whole; and second, farm expenditures for fertilizer do tend to vary directly with farmers' cash receipts from year to year, even though there is a long-run trend toward increasing use of fertilizer. These facts underline the common interest of farmers and farm suppliers in finding ways and means of increasing the farm market.

Organic Farming. Although he cannot agree with many of the extreme views of the organic farming enthusiasts,

Richard Bradfield of Cornell said that he did agree with them on the importance of soil organic matter on the maintenance of good soil structure. Dr. Bradfield said that farming under modern conditions of plentiful supplies of chemical fertilizers and increased mechanization requires the frequent application of fresh organic matter to the soil. If fresh organic matter is added frequently and regularly, he said, farmers need not worry about the total organic matter content of the soil. It is not a question of organic or chemical fertilizers, he stressed; both are essential and as

inseparable as Siamese twins. Dr. Bradfield's paper is presented on page 1216 in this issue of AG AND FOOD.

NFA-APFC Consolidation. One more step was taken toward the consolidation of the National Fertilizer Association with the American Plant Food Council when NFA members voted almost unanimously and finally made approval unanimous for consolidation into the National Plant Food Institute. The final step needed for the approval will come Dec. 1 when the APFC membership meets in Washington, D. C., to vote.

Hundredfold Beef Increase Possible Through Grassland Management

JACKSONVILLE, FLA.—Beef production per acre could be increased in some areas 100 times over that gained from unmodified natural vegetation if known methods of improvement were all applied under optimum conditions. Experiments at the Coastal Plain Station, Tifton, Ga., are showing several practical methods of making forage crops strikingly more productive. Combinations of those results offer a potential beef yield that makes present averages seem almost primitive.

High level nitrogen fertilization has nearly doubled the pounds of beef per acre over what is now considered good fertilizing practices, while there is indication that supplemental irrigation can boost this another 50%.

Known techniques of grazing rotation already are giving 50% increases in beef yield and the addition of winter grazing crops have added considerably to the production from pasture lands.

Water and Nitrogen. Glenn Burton of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, USDA, told the Joint Committee on Grasslands Farming that while all of the known improved practices for grasslands management might not be combined practicably or economically on any given site at the present time, there certainly is good opportunity for improving productivity on most grazing areas. With rainfall 37% above normal in the Tifton area in 1953, hay yields were increased from 10.8 to 12.1 tons per acre by increasing the nitrogen application from 400 to 800 pounds per acre. By increasing nitrogen to 900 pounds and clipping at six-week intervals rather than more frequently, the yield was 15.4 tons per acre.

Yields of beef per acre were used by Dr. Burton as a scale to indicate the possibilities for increased pasture land production. With coastal Bermuda

grass fertilized with 200 pounds of nitrogen per acre, the average production of beef was 696 pounds per acre; 800 pounds of nitrogen per acre could increase this to 1044 pounds, he said. On the basis of increased rainfall during the 1953 season, he estimated that adequate supplemental irrigation could bring the beef yield up to 1500 pounds per acre.

Rotational Grazing System. Using the Dutch system of rotational grazing in which grass is allowed to grow several weeks, then grazed down in a single day, can give production increases as high as 50%. Adding this factor, Dr. Burton got an increase of beef production to 2250 pounds per acre. All this was based on an April 1 to Oct. 31 grazing

season. In the winter of 1951-52 the Alabama Experiment Station produced 430 pounds of beef per acre on a mixture of rye grass and crimson clover seeded on a coastal Bermuda pasture which normally makes little if any growth in the winter. This, added to the other beef increases produced by combining pasture management techniques could theoretically produce a yield of 2680 pounds of beef per acre, well over 100 times the production that might be expected from natural vegetation of the area.

Dr. Burton pointed out that this is the pasture potential in sight at present without even considering improved insect control and plant disease control.

Three special feature articles on grasslands improvement will be presented in AG AND FOOD, January 1955. Authors will be Drs. Sprague and Burton and Dr. Jack Harlan of Oklahoma A & M.

Howard B. Sprague, head of the agronomy department at Pennsylvania State University and chairman of the Joint Committee on Grasslands Farming, with Glenn Burton, Coastal Plain Experiment Station, USDA

