



## PERSPECTIVE...

### The Agriculture of the Future

WHEELER MCMILLEN, Editor-in-Chief, *Farm Journal*

**N**O SCIENTIFIC GAIN or outstanding mechanical achievement appears suddenly from out of space like a flying saucer. Each advance is built upon the accumulations and foundations put together by the patient endeavors of yesterday's toilers. Each step has to come in its proper order.

The agriculture which will utilize new discoveries will continue to be an ever new agriculture. The last half century has seen revolution in agricultural education as well as mechanical and scientific advances. Only a few decades ago it was necessary to persuade farmers to accept the findings of science.

Perhaps no single certainty of the agricultural future offers more far reaching significance than the fact that we shall, by and large, be dealing with a different kind of farmer.

The fundamentally important point about these changes is that agriculture will necessarily become increasingly a business in which only men of managerial skill can successfully engage. The time is rapidly passing when a farm owner or tenant can expect to survive in business by following indifferent methods while ignoring the principles of good management.

I do not mean to suggest that the family farm concept has to be abandoned. The farm will probably, in our time, continue generally to be a family enterprise, but it will also be a business enterprise.

The amount of investment required for ownership of either land or machinery can already be observed to be a factor which impels the less able, as well as some of the able but less fortunate, farm youth to consider nonagri-

cultural occupation. Those who inherit land must also either inherit or hire managerial ability.

While our farm population may continue for some years to decline in numbers it will inevitably rise in the average quality of business and managerial ability. It will no longer be a primary job to break down resistance against new ideas and new practices. The main job will be to supply the demand for constantly improved knowledge.

The managerial expert in the farming future will not be satisfied with generalities. His demand for precision will be relentless. He will want to know not merely in general terms but in precise figures what additions of plant food elements to his particular soil will yield him.

These probabilities indicate that research and information will assume constantly greater importance while education in the old sense of breaking down the barriers to acceptance of information will become less of a requirement. Communication—however, accurate, complete, timely, prompt, and understandable communication of information—will be demanded.

The skilled managerial farmer will compete on equal terms with industry for the labor he employs.

The advancement of agricultural science is vital to freedom and peace the world around. The real major problem of the world today is neither military, nor political, nor economical, nor ideological. Fundamentally it is agricultural—a food problem. For that problem the answers lie in science and education.

*(Excerpts from an address before the association of Land Grant Colleges, Washington, D. C., Nov. 17, 1954)*