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Agriculture—Economic aspects (Pa)

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NEW ENGLAND AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

PROCEEDINGS JUNE 1957

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

STORRS CONNECTICUT

DYNAMICS IN AGRICULTURE

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Today, too many people on and off the farm, including some college and university professor, numerous politicians, and non-politicians, many so-called agricultural leaders and those who want to be leaders are belaboring the great "agricultural problem" and "farm situation" confronting this nation, this region, and this state and other states. True, agriculture has failed to share in the prosperity enjoyed by most other segments of the national economy. In addition, there are many other industries which serve the farmer that have not enjoyed comparable rates of expansion with sister industries because of declining farm incomes. But why all the pessimism and all the hullabaloo? Does it help in solving the problem? I don't think so. Interest and concern --yes, but let us not immortalize the problem.

The pessimistic outlook for agriculture has been and is being reflected in the numbers of students enrolling in agriculture curricula in the nation's colleges and universities as the percentage of students enrolling and studying agriculture has been declining since 1950. The current pessimism, so it seems enthusiastically exhibited by so many, certainly suggests a need for an appraisal of the present situation with a look at certain trends which may suggest possible future studies and developments in agriculture and on the farms.

Can it be that American farmers have succeeded so well in the necessary effort to increase their efficiency that they now consistently out-produce and outrun the capacity of the economy to consume what they produce? Is this bad?

You will recall that in the 1940's an all-out agricultural production was called for and accomplished in connection with the war effort. Because of the war stimulus of patriotism and profit, new techniques and research findings, were applied and put into practice at a rate in excess of any period in the history of this country. Today in the 1950's yesterday's research has become common practice and agricultural science is of age--it is so recognized and it is on the march. Are you one of those who want to stop it, or think it should be stopped? I doubt it! If you are, I'm disappointed in you as members of your profession, as agricultural economists and as staff members of educational institutions. You are the leaders of men and thought. Did you ever know a great leader who was a pessimist? No, not for long.

Today agriculture <u>needs</u> leaders. It <u>needs</u> great leaders, great leadership--it needs <u>optimists</u>, not <u>pessimists</u>. We are witnessing the <u>greatest</u> agricultural <u>evolution</u>, not revolution, in this country, the world has ever seen.

Some, however, <u>may</u> wish to call it a revolution because of the rapidity of change. There have been great changes and rapid changes but they are only the beginning. Food output is up over 40 percent in the last fifteen years, while the total production of man hours on the farm is up over 90 percent. For the last 25 years production per man hour is up 140 percent. Production per acre and per animal unit increased by 20 percent in the last fifteen years.

These are astounding accomplishments! Increased farm technology has been largely responsible for the increased efficiency and production. During the past 15 years we have seen put into practice the old adage "off with the old and on with the new." It has become a symbol of life not only for the farmer but for all his city cousins and neighbors. We should point with pride to what agriculture has accomplished. We should be on the offensive, not the defensive, optimistic, not pessimistic.

This continuing change has contributed to our high level of living. It also presents agriculture with the challenge of adjusting on use of land, labor, capital and management.

Now adjustment is seldom painless, especially to some individuals and especially to those individuals who don't want to be adjusted. With the unlimited use of electricity, machine power, and automation, we are racing ahead trying to overtake the person ahead of us who in turn is trying to catch the fellow ahead of him.

The farm and agricultural problem seems to be that agriculture is in the rear car overloaded and having to take whatever is left by the front drivers. How are we going to help get agriculture in the lead car to share in this race for prosperity? That is the $64 question that causes discussion and pessimism.

In your deliberations and discussions at these meetings may I challenge you to keep foremost in your minds that you are leaders. That you are optimists not pessimists. That you are looking ahead to the 1960's, not back to the 1940's. And, as you project agriculture into the future will you look--and when you do (1) can you see more food from fewer farms and fewer farmers, (2) can you see the continuation of family-owned and operated farms (not as classified of yesterday or today, but tomorrow), (3) can you see the ever-increasing need for larger amounts of capital per farm and per man, (4) can you see that there will continue to be wide year to year fluctuations in net farm income, (5) can you see that farms will be producing quality and specialized products, (6) can you see an increasing number of part-time farmers, (7) can you see the fitting in of the integration process on our farms, (8) can you see that we may need greater management skill for success on our farms rather than just production skill, (9) can you see that we may need to do more research on agricultural adjustment and agricultural problems as contrasted with the per farm, per annual or per acre production?

You may not see all of these, yet you undoubtedly will see many and more important factors than the ones mentioned. The important thing, however, is that you look, listen and study and discuss in an unbiased manner; moreover, that you project into the future enthusiastic leadership, devotion and skill commensurate with your professional positions and in accordance with the acclaim and acknowledgments of your co-workers and agricultural friends.

May I compliment you on your selection of the theme of this program --Future Agricultural Development in New England in a Changing Economy. It is an important one and a challenging one.

In Connecticut the question is being raised and I am certain that it is being raised in the other New England States as well, what is the future of Connecticut agriculture. Let me read you a statement about Connecticut agriculture.

"The general impression prevails that farming in Connecticut will not pay. It has been repeatedly said that her farms were running down; that in order to make a living her young men were either forced to emigrate, or engage in other callings, and that the failure to make both ends meet after a hard year's work, was leaving an increasing incubus of debt to embarrass almost every farmer, and compel him to mortgage his estate.

In the immediate vicinity of cities, towns, and manufactories....., the rapid appreciation...., in the value of real estate formerly used for agricultural purposes, had had the practical effect to take it out of the list of farming lands. Many of these farms are held for subdivision and sale, in small lots....

The contagious spirit of manufacturing and other pushing industries has largely diverted the attention of owners of such land from agricultural pursuits. They would be more properly classed as real estate dealers than farmers. The agricultural purposes for which many of these farms are still used are merely incidental to the other interests for which they are held. The uneasy speculative spirit which these conditions have developed, and the numerous annoyances incident to farming in the midst of manufacturing communities, have had much to do with forming the unfavorable public estimate of the present condition and value of the agricultural interests of the State." 1/

Let me review a few facts about agriculture in Connecticut.

General Trends and Changes on Connecticut Farms

	1935	1955	Change
1. Gross sales	$47 million	$171 million	Increase of 124 mil.
2. Number of farms	32,157	12,753	Decrease of 19,404
3. Acres of land in farms	2,079,933	1,137,904	Decrease of 942,029
4. Acres of cropland harvested	484,386	285,886	Decrease of 198,500
5. Acres of irrigated land	520*	11,975	Increase of 11,455
6. Value of land and buildings per farm	$8,828	$23,877	Increase of $15,049

*1940

Important Trends and Changes on Connecticut Dairy Farms

	1940	1956	Change
1. Commercial dairy farm	6,233	3,467	Decrease of 2,766
2. Pounds milk sold annually per farm	91,000	204,000	Increase of 113,000
3. Milk produced annually per cow	5,040	7,130	Increase of 2,090
4. Pounds milk produced	525,000,000	706,000,000	Increase of 181 mil.

1/ The Fourth Annual Report, Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of Connecticut for the year ending November 30, 1888, p. 140.

Important Trends and Changes on Connecticut Dairy Farms

	1935	1955	Change
5. Tons of hay per acre	1.2	1.8[1/]	Increase of .6
6. Acres of alfalfa	12,268	47,563	Increase of 35,295
	1939	1956	
7. Milk dealers	2,153	633	Decrease of 1,520
Producer dealers	1,531	231	
Sub dealers	306	188	
Merchant dealers	316	214	

Important Trends and Changes on Connecticut Poultry Farms

	1940	1955	Change
1. Number of broilers sold	5,050,000	25,852,000	Increase of 20,770,000
2. Number of eggs produced	361 million	663 million	Increase of 302 mil.
3. Eggs produced per bird	150*	205	Increase of 55
4. Number of layers per farm	1,506**	3,420	Increase of 1,914
5. Number of broilers per farm per batch	996**	13,048	Increase of 12,052

* 1935
**1930

These facts speak for themselves. Agriculture is stronger today and more productive with higher quality of products being produced than ever before in the history of the state. And it will continue so at a faster rate during the next twenty-five years than it has during the past quarter of a century.

It has been and is a thrilling time and a thrilling experience to live in our great country and in New England today and be connected with the great achievements that have taken place in agriculture. And it will be even more so in the years that lie ahead.

To me, increased productivity and efficiency is good because it builds people and also administers to their needs.

1/ This does not indicate the full increase because much more of the 2nd and 3rd cuttings is pastured now than formerly.

Let us remember that science and technology have multiplied human effort in remarkable ways in agriculture as well as in industry and business, that science and technology are the lever we can apply to improve our position and improve individual output per unit of effort. Archmides is reported to have said that if he had a lever long enough, he could move the world.

In science and technology we have such a lever. Let's find the way to use it best for the benefit of agriculture and for society in general. Contrary to the forecast of many, I predict that by the use of science and technology Connecticut and New England agriculture will far exceed in total production during the next quarter of a century, over the past quarter of a century. I am even more positive that the scientists and farmers of tomorrow, the same as those of today and yesterday, will have faith in themselves and the fundamental precepts which constitute the spiritual and economic strength of New England and the nation, and that there will be a most satisfying future in New England agriculture for those who have that faith.

May I express to you again our pleasure in having you meet on our campus. We hope your stay will be an enjoyable and profitable one.