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Different Attitudes of the Managers of Agricultural Enterprises Towards the Mechanization of Animal Production (An Example of Mechanical Milking on State Farms)

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Many technical and economic reasons cause the mechanization of animal production to be slow. Social and psychological factors, which are difficult to measure, are also important, just as they are in the mechanization of crop production. As an example, the attitude towards potato digging by machine can be given. There are enthusiasts who have used these complicated machines for many years and who get excellent results from every point of view, although some specialists in mechanization are far from certain about the direction that the mechanization of potato-digging should take. The seasonal demand for manpower and the risks connected with it (especially in regions where there are difficulties with manpower) are sufficiently strong incentives for striving after technical and organizational solutions in spite of difficulties. To delay the mechanization of crop production by employing seasonal workers from over-populated regions is not always profitable because of organizational difficulties and higher costs.

In dairy husbandry the situation is different. The demand for manpower is steady throughout the year which makes it easier to obtain the appropriate workers. Many workers looking for better and steady earnings and better places to live take jobs in cowsheds regardless of the working conditions.

The most labour-consuming operation in attendings cows is the milking; its mechanization very quickly decreases the labour input. Moreover, mechanized milking has in fact been accepted for a long time. In spite of this, however, the rate of mechanization of milking on state farms is slow and is limited by the purchasing arrangements for milking machines with pipe-lines. The supply of other machines is quite different. The demand is greater than the supply, especially as far as imported machines are concerned.

Bucket-type machines are accepted in principle and utilized, but those with pipe-lines are not used at all or are used as if they were bucket-type.

The reasons for this are rather complicated:

- (1) Not very high quality planning for mechanized milking.
- (2) Faults in layout, especially those with pipe-lines. Cooling is seldom practised.
- (3) Lack of maintenance services and inadequate supply of spare parts.
- (4) Lack of reserve electric power in view of frequent cuts of current.
- (5) Bad preparation of herds for mechanical milking; lack of adequate selection.
- (6) Inadequate technical training of staff.

Over and above these objective factors there are economic and social incentives.

As a result of the Trade Union agreement on working conditions there is a readily available reserve of labour on state farms. Many women look on milking as an additional source of income for the family. A state farm pays the worker the same amount of money per litre of milk no matter whether the cows are milked mechanically or by hand. In such a system the crew with poor performance demands individual accounts of the milk milked. With a pipe-line this is difficult. (This is also one of the reasons why existing pipe-lines are not used.) When a farm mechanizes the milking it incurs additional costs and takes more risk. The risk lies in the possibility of harming the cows' health (mammitis, etc.), decreasing the milk yield per unit and even worsening the quality of the milk. Especially great risks are taken by the farm which introduces milking machines with pipe-lines, where all these difficulties will rise, including in particular the poor qualifications of the working staff. Judging the quality of the farming on the basis of the number of cows per 100 ha. of agricultural land and their productivity per unit is a strong reason for not taking this risk.

A manager's training is not always decisive so far as the mechanization of milking is concerned. If he is highly qualified he appreciated the inevitability of mechanization and, depending upon the demographic character of his region, speeds up or delays its introduction. In taking the decision to introduce milking by machine he links it up with organization changes and with the further training of the workers (or partly changing it). An active attitude of this kind attracts better workers or raises the workers' qualifications. In this way (in spite of the objective difficulties enumerated) risk is removed and production increased. A different attitude is often taken by good managers in regions where recruitment of workers for the cowshed is relatively easy.

They are conscious of the need to mechanize the milking but they postpone it for an indefinite time in the belief that the difficulties and

risks of introducing it will decrease. Such a temporizing is justified in only a limited number of cases.

Most managers of large farms take a passive attitude, which is made easier by the fact that the allocation of capital is done by higher authority. This passive attitude does not give the best results once mechanized milking has been introduced, nor does it really change the conditions of work. The old organization of the working day remains. Milking three times daily and poor equipment in the dairy and store-room do not decrease the labour input, they only decrease its effect.

Failure to change the organization of the work and the training of the workers often reduces production.