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Farm Work Simplification. By LAWRENCE M. VAUGHAN and LOWELL S. HARDIN. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York; Chapman & Hall, Ltd., London. 1949. 145 pages.

PUBLISHED under the joint sponsorship of the Work Simplification Committees of the American Farm Economics Association and the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, the book is in two parts. Part I, primarily for farmers, explains what work simplification is, what savings can be made by its use, the principles of effective work, and how the results may be used. Part II, for research workers and teachers, summarizes the experiences of researchers in work simplification and indicates methods of teaching principles and practices.

The book is highly condensed, many parts being in outline form. Its 49 illustrations and charts add clarity and precision to the descriptive material. At the ends of chapters are references, further readings, and lists of instructional films and slides.

The authors point out the great variability of rates of performance and efficiency under which farm products are produced. Variability is due to differences in the age, experience, and abilities of farm workers themselves, to the resources available to them, to conditions under which the work done, and to scale of operations. For these reasons, the authors believe, uniform efficiency is unobtainable but in most cases substantial improvement is possible. Improvement may be brought about by avoiding unnecessary work, simplifying hand and body motions, improving the arrangement of work areas and location of materials, using better adapted equipment, and by organizing and integrating the steps in the work routine, or by any combination of these methods. The authors give the impression of having confidence in results, but avoid extravagant claims of accomplishment. It is the addition of many small savings in time, energy, or cost, which brings significant results. Jobs that have repetitive phases or include much hand labor are stressed. Nevertheless, the addition of simple but well-designed and well-adapted equipment often may be the key to improvement.

It is pointed out that the rapid increase in mechanization has brought greater relative savings in field work than in tasks connected with livestock or those around the buildings, whereas about one-third of all farm work is with livestock, so improvements in these phases may be particularly valuable.

Illustrations are given of what has been accomplished with such enterprises as production of hogs, dairying, picking apples and tomatoes, and raising tobacco. Analysis of the jobs connected with these enterprises is carried far enough to show where and how savings are possible.

The chapter on research outlines clearly methods of organizing and developing a project. Techniques are described, and such terms as "job," "operation," and "work element," are technically defined. Types of equipment and procedures for specific studies are described.

For training, emphasis is placed on demonstrations and visual aids. Methods of presenting a demonstration are described.

This book is particularly timely. The present agricultural situation and the outlook make plainly evident the importance of reducing costs in as many ways as possible. Suggestions for testing alternative methods which may include different procedures and equipment should be helpful when choices are to be made in regard to improving efficiency and reducing costs. If reductions in acreages of some principal crops are accompanied by shifts to livestock production, to act on the suggestions for improving the farmstead and the building lay-out in livestock operations may be profitable.

Naturally, in a volume so condensed, many statements are generalizations, applying to the over-all picture rather than to specific types of farming. For example, the statement that labor is the largest single item of expense would hardly apply to groups of cash-grain farms in Kansas. Other examples might be cited. Consequently, in any appraisal of the over-all effects of work simplification, the type of farming must be taken into account. By showing the variations in results for several different enterprises, the authors have furnished a body of information which can be used for appraising the possibilities of work simplification on the different types of farms that consist of combinations of these enterprises.

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