



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

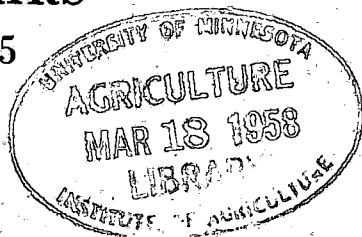
Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

**INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF
AGRARIAN AFFAIRS**

Vol. II, No. 2, June 1955



**Agriculture
and Forestry:
Competition or
Coexistence?**

Price 5s. 0d. net

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON: GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY: COMPETITION OR COEXISTENCE?

INTRODUCTION

AT one time or another there has been, in most countries, considerable competition between agriculture and forestry, particularly for land. Thus, much land has been transferred from forest to agricultural use following an increase in population, while in some countries, at least in recent years, an unsatisfied demand for timber has led to the afforestation of agricultural land. As such changes have frequently led to ill-feeling the relations between the two industries are of no slight consequence. Because of this and of the forthcoming meeting of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists in Helsinki in August 1955, where there will be some discussion of these problems, it is appropriate that this number of the *Journal* should be devoted to a series of articles on the subject.

The relative importance of agriculture and forestry in the national economy varies greatly from one country to another. Dr. Sen, on p. 150, quotes figures for a number of territorial units showing the percentage of the total area occupied by each of the two industries as well as the area of each per head of population. Taking the world as a whole, forests occupy slightly more land than agriculture and consequently there is also slightly more forest than agricultural land per person, though the latter difference is not very great. There is quite a considerable difference, however, when comparisons are made between various continents, and even more so between individual countries. To quote two extremes, in Brazil forests occupy nine times as much land as agriculture while in the United Kingdom agriculture occupies twelve times as much land as forestry. The great predominance of the one industry or the other in instances such as these obviously affects the relations between the two, though other causes also play their part.

All woodlands have what may be called a protective influence on land. They increase fertility, provide wind-breaks, fix shifting soils and prevent soil erosion, with its consequent silting-up of rivers and widespread flooding at times of heavy rainfall. It is claimed sometimes that the larger woodlands, or forests, do more than this and actually influence rainfall and climatic conditions. Destruction of woodlands, therefore, causes the loss of these benefits and unless great care is

exercised agriculture suffers both in the area immediately concerned and, possibly, even further afield.

Some distinction has to be drawn between forestry practised *per se*, generally in large tracts, and forestry practised as an adjunct of farming, almost entirely in farm woodlots. Large forests may have a considerable impact on agriculture and agriculturists. If the forests are natural, and particularly where they are common property, they frequently provide wood both for timber and for fuel, grazing for domestic animals, wild fruit, game and other products, thereby adding to the well-being of the neighbourhood. They may also provide the source of additional agricultural land if it should be required. On the other hand, they may harbour wild animals which eat crops or prey on domestic livestock thereby harming the agriculturists. Where the forests are cultivated and in private or public ownership they do not automatically confer the benefits that may be expected when they are held in common. In many cultivated forests, however, the adjacent agriculturists are allowed, subject to control, to graze animals or gather firewood. It is these controls, particularly with regard to the conditions under which grazing is permitted and charged for, that cause conflict between the forest owners and the agriculturists. Conflict also tends to arise when it is wished to expand either agriculture or forestry, but particularly the latter, since this can only be done at the expense of the other. Methods are being worked out, for example in France, by which land can be taken from agriculture and devoted to forestry without causing too much friction between the interested groups. In part this is done by providing opportunities for work for the agriculturists either on a number of days throughout the year or else at certain seasons when they are not otherwise fully occupied. In this connexion forestry is frequently regarded as the complement of agriculture since it provides work in those seasons of the year, such as the winter in the northern hemisphere, when agriculture requires least labour. This is true, of course, when forestry is confined to harvesting the natural produce of the land, but as soon as trees become a cultivated crop with the consequent labour requirements for seeding and transplanting, forestry becomes a direct competitor with agriculture.

In many countries there are regions where agriculture and forestry amount, practically, to different parts of a single industry. Much of Scandinavia and of the Black Forest region of Germany are notable examples. In these places the forests are not only a source of wood for

fuel and of timber for repairing or constructing farm buildings and farm implements, but also of timber for cash sales. In fact, on many farms, whilst agriculture remains the dominant industry, forest land is essential since agriculture could not provide sufficient income by itself and the farmer could not survive without his forest. Farm forests, however, perform another function in that they act as a savings bank and one which, in countries subject to unstable currencies, is particularly safe since it is not affected by inflation and currency reform. Many a farmer has used his forest to provide extra money through heavier fellings when he needed money to satisfy special wants—dowries for his daughters, professional training for his sons, extra capital for additional buildings, or merely to make good the loss of income caused by illness. Such heavy fellings would then be made good by harvesting smaller crops in the following years. The work required in these farm forests is largely of a harvesting nature and therefore fits in well with the requirements of agriculture, which normally provides the major part of the family living.

As will be seen from the contributions which follow, it is where agriculture and forestry are combined in the same business undertaking, or farm, that the two industries have reached the most advanced stage of collaboration. But even where they are carried on in separate undertakings competition seems largely to have given way to coexistence. This is not to say that examples of competition do not occur but only that they are less common and less violent, perhaps, than may sometimes be thought. Seeing that both industries have vital parts to play in satisfying human wants this is a situation which would seem to deserve encouragement.

Institute of Agrarian Affairs
University of Oxford

ANDREW W. ASHBY