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AGRICULTURE IN TRANSITION
FROM WAR TO PEACE

Papers and Proceedings

of the

Seventeenth Annual Conference

of the

WESTERN FARM ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION

Held at Los Gatos, California, June 27-29, 1944

Edited by the President of the Association

The same is true of vegetables. In this field our investigators have been at work on means of improving quality through better methods of handling, sounder knowledge of factors that affect quality, more objective tests for adequacy of sanitation, quality grades, and culinary quality. We are going into this matter as thoroughly as possible.

We also have work in progress on freezing of poultry and eggs. This is our newest phase of food freezing research and we are already well along with our survey of the field and its technical problems and with chemical investigations of the changes that occur in frozen eggs and poultry. Thorough physical and chemical studies of all frozen foods assigned to us are to be a part of our future program.

We have done some work on ready-cooked frozen foods. This field is opening up rapidly. We will do more work along this line.

Again I want to say that we are one research agency, part of a larger one, closely coordinated with many others, and of course deeply interested in all work related to our own specialities. Our work is of interest not only because of the value of its contributions but because it exemplifies work being done in other fields and in other places. Technological progress is inevitable—a sort of foregone conclusion. Dr. E. C. Aucter, Administrator of Agricultural Research Administration, frequently emphasizes this point—that the objective of research is improvement of human welfare. Technological development is not a natural process that we watch from the position of an observer. Neither is it something over which we can exercise complete control. It is a very valuable tool in wartime and we hope and expect that our wartime advances will be useful after the war.

REPORT OF AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SECTION MEETING

Prepared by ALYCE W. LOURIE, *Program Appraisal
Division, War Food Administration*

In the discussion following presentation of Dr. Waugh's paper, it was first emphasized that the War Food Administration is more concerned with the effect upon the market of an abrupt cessation of military purchases than with the prospect of liquidating reserves. If the Army should decide to consume its reserves, contracts would be cancelled and we should be faced with the problem of orderly marketing in the midst of disorderly buying. The present system of two-way buying, under which WFA may buy excess military food reserves at cost, will enable WFA to regulate liquidation or disposal of such reserves while the military continues to purchase for its current needs.

The close relationship between WFA price supports, accumulation of reserve stocks and production control measures was discussed. The possibility of controlling production by price ceiling adjustments on an input item, complemented by subsidy payments as a compensating factor to competing enterprises was pointed out (e.g. reducing egg production by relaxing the ceiling price on concentrate feeds with attendant subsidy payment on dairy products).

To a question regarding the policy of WFA to sustain high agricultural production, it was replied that this was its definite objective, at least until the end of the War was certainly in sight. Accordingly, it was added that "managed demand" for farm products would be a necessary feature of postwar adjustment, if serious disruption of agricultural operations were to be avoided.

A further question was raised regarding the period of time over which WFA activities might be expected to extend postwar. In reply it was stated that the interval will undoubtedly vary widely among commodities, the transition being very slow in some instances. The period of activity will be governed by consideration of specific market conditions, by season, by current production, competing supplies, etc.

Discussion followed on the policy adopted by WFA of moving processed food surpluses, insofar as possible, through the canners and packers. It was pointed out that this method of stocks disposal is rendered most difficult by the fact that canners are not organized to provide for the purchase of processed foods. Moreover, the packer is unable, in many instances, to determine the conditions of interim storage, when the commodity has moved "out of position." On the other hand, the Government lacks an adequate selling organization, and is at a disadvantage in not having a complete line.

Finally, the group gave consideration to the commodities for which postwar price control measures might be anticipated. The opinion was expressed that these would include all present proclamation items, with some possible additions. The latter will be influenced by the price that packers are willing to pay, and the effect that this exerts upon production (of annual crops) and price in the ensuing year. In the first year following the cessation of hostilities, growers will be especially disadvantaged by having produced at wartime cost levels for sale at postwar prices. As a means of regulating production, consumer prices may be permitted to decline sharply, if the farmer and processor are directly subsidized during the transitional year.

Discussion of Mr. Saunderson's paper centered on three points: (1) the type of beef animal suited to postwar needs, (2) the availability of feeds, both native and concentrate, and (3) the effects of heavy stocking upon range grasses.

The opinion was expressed that postwar consumer demand would favor baby-beef, causing a reversal of the recent trend toward the slaughter of older, unfinished cattle. Moreover, it was questioned whether the older type of larger-framed, slower-maturing beef animal could surpass in efficiency of feed utilization the more recently popular blocky conformation under any conditions of range or feedlot production.

It was pointed out that more concentrates will be available for beef cattle-feeding postwar, that a period of less abundant rainfall in the intermountain states will restore the practice of marketing feeder cattle from this area, and that a tendency may develop to move finishing grains to range areas in contrast to the feeding of cattle in feed grain states.

Attention was called to the author's emphasis on the differential results of heavy grazing of native range grasses in (1) the Great Plains Area and (2) the semi-arid mountain states, whereby in the former instance the adverse effects are apparent in the condition of livestock grazed thereon while the grasses are possessed of sufficiently high recoverability to escape permanent injury and persist in climax associations, while in the latter case the typical bunchgrass cover of these ranges suffers irreparable damage from prolonged overstocking.

In the discussion which followed T. L. Swenson's paper, the semi-perishable nature of dehydrated food products was emphasized. It was pointed out that temperatures in excess of 75°F. cause deterioration of dried eggs and vegetables, particularly the former. Thus, dehydrated eggs have proved to be a more satisfactory product in Great Britain than in the Pacific area, which is probably attributable to lower temperatures in transit and storage prior to consumption.

Criticism was directed to the tendency which has hitherto prevailed to endeavor to recapture the characteristics of the original commodity by rehydration, whereas new recipes or methods of cooking might preferably be devised to take advantage of the low water content of dehydrated foods such as milk and eggs. These new products merit an imaginative approach to their more effective preparation and use.