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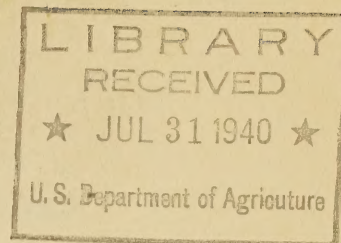
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics



The Farmer Reports on:

What things have made it hardest to get along on the farm?
What things have helped most toward getting along on the farm?

Preliminary Report

(FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY)

July 8, 1940

Division of Program Surveys

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Introduction

The major objective of this study has been to help determine how farmers have evaluated the problems and the attempted solutions with which they have been confronted in the past few years. How importantly have the activities of the Department of Agriculture loomed in their thinking? How favorably? What aspects of these activities are regarded most negatively? Which have widest general acceptance? What group differences are found among farmers relative to these questions?

Two sections make up the report: the first deals with the factors mentioned by farmers as having made it hardest for them to get along on their farms in the last few years; the second discusses farmers' views on what things have helped them most to get along.

Section I

What things have made it
hardest to get along?

I. The question, "What things have made it hardest for you to get along on your farm in the last two or three years?" led most farmers to mention more than one item with the result that our sample of 1200 farmers made a total of 3000 comments in their replies. 95 per cent of these comments dealt with ^{non}program factors, and only 5 per cent with elements of these programs. This suggests a considerable degree of relative acceptance of farm programs.

A. Among the 2850 comments on the non-program factors, those mentioned most frequently can be grouped under the following headings:

Markets and prices 1/	31%
Natural forces (e.g. weather) 2/	29
High production costs 3/	17
Inadequate production facilities 4/	16
Personal problems 5/	7
	<u>100%</u>

The major contents of each of these groups suggest that some of the difficulties attributed to one may actually be rooted in another, e.g., some of those ascribed to "Natural Forces" may really derive from such problems as depletion; and some attributed to "Markets and Prices" may in fact reflect either high production costs or inadequate production facilities. Nevertheless, these may not be understood or accepted by groups of farmers--and it is their construction of problems which is presented here.

-
1. For details see page 2
 2. For details see page 3
 3. For details see page 4
 4. For details see page 4
 5. For details see page 4

- B. Among the 153 mentions of program elements, those relating to allotments, administration and tenure status were most frequent.
- C. The following tables summarize the items mentioned most frequently, and so provide somewhat more precise information about what things farmers blame for their difficulties, and their relative importance:

Non-program Factors

1. "Markets and Prices"

	: % of all : : mentions :	: Most mentions : : % of :	: 2nd most mentions : : % of :
	: 6/ 7/ :Regions:farmers:	: Regions : : farmers :	
Low prices for	:	:East'n :	:
farm output	: 66 :	:Dairy : 66 :	: Wheat : 60 :
High prices for	:	: :	:
things bought	:	:Gt.Lakes :	:
relative to low	:	:Dairy :	:
prices received	: 21 :	: 23 :	: Corn : 20 :
High prices for	:	:Range :	:
things farmer	:	: and :	:
buys	: 9 :	:Lv.Stk.: 21 :	: General: 19 :
Other	: 4 :	:	:
	: 100 :	:	:
Total			
Mentions	892		

- a. Frequency of mention of "Low Prices" broke into three groups by crop regions--Eastern Dairy and Wheat were in the top rank; Great Lakes Dairy and Tobacco fell into the middle group, and Corn and Cotton fell into the lowest with only about half as many mentions as the two leading areas.

6. The form used in this table will be used at several points throughout the report. It indicates the relative frequency of mention of each item in the group under the heading "% of all mentions." The columns to the right indicate in what crop regions each major item was mentioned most frequently, and also the per cent of farmers in those areas who mentioned it. Thus, the comment "Low Prices for Farm Output" accounts for 66 per cent of all the mentions grouped under "Markets and Prices." Furthermore, farmers in the Eastern Dairy and in the Wheat regions mentioned "Low Prices for Farm Output" more frequently than those in any other region--66 per cent of those in the Eastern Dairy region mentioning it and 60 per cent of those in the wheat area doing likewise.

7. "Regions" based on Type of Farming map issued by Planning Division. of AAA.

- b. It might be noted that "high prices for things bought and low prices for things sold"---a statement indicating some grasp of the parity concept even though that specific term is used but rarely---is mentioned only one-third as often as "Low Prices" alone. Field men were particularly on the lookout for signs indicating that this concept was present in the farmers' thinking. Therefore, considering the emphasis on the parity concept in the educational work of the crop adjustment operations, it is interesting to find that only 15 per cent of the farmers mentioned it while three times as many retained their preoccupation with "Low Prices." Attention might be directed also to the fact that the frequency of these "parity" responses is as great or greater in the Great Lakes Dairy region than it is in any of the crop areas where adjustment work is most intensive.
- c. The samples were so small in both the Range and Livestock areas and in the General farm areas that their ranking in regard to frequency of mentioning "High prices for things bought by the farmer cannot be regarded as at all certain."

2. "Natural Forces--Natural Causes" 8/

	: % of all	: Most mentions	: 2nd most mentions	:
	:	: % of	: % of	:
	: mentions	: Region:farmers:	: Region : Farmers :	:
Drouth	: 42	: Wheat : 76	: Corn : 49	:
Short Crops	: 29	: Cotton: 47	: Wheat : 38	:
Insect Losses	: 14	: Wheat : 21	: Corn : 15	:
Other	: 15	: :	: :	:
	: 100	: :	: :	:
Total				
Mentions	818			

"Natural forces" was the group with the second highest frequency among non-program factors. Within it, we find that drouth was mentioned by wheat belt and corn belt farmers more often than any other problem as the factor which made it hardest for them to get along. "Short Crops" was the focus in which many farmers summed up a situation due in some cases to unfavorable weather, in others to reduced soil fertility and due to still different factors elsewhere. Cotton farmers mentioned "Short Crops" with greater frequency than any other problem.

8. It should be remembered that most farmers mentioned more than one factor in their answers. Hence, the per cent of farmers in any one region mentioning each of various items can total more than 100 per cent. For example, in the above table 63 per cent of wheat farmers mentioned Drouth, 38 per cent mentioned Short Crops, and 21 per cent mentioned Insect Losses.

3. "High Cost of Production"

	: % of all	: Most mentions	: 2nd most mentions	
	: Mentions	: Regions: farmers:	: Regions: farmers:	
High price of machinery and repairs	: 25	: Gt. Lakes Dairy : 20	: Corn : 17	
High taxes	: 19	: General: 31	: Subsistence: 16	
High operating costs	: 17	: General: 18	: Corn : 13	
Other	: 39			
Total	: 100			
Mentions	472			

Both the General farm area sample and the Subsistence farm area samples are quite small and the rankings correspondingly tentative. In relative frequency of mentioning "High Taxes," they are followed by Great Lakes Dairy and Corn in each of which about 10 per cent of farmers gave this response.

4. "Inadequate production facilities"

	: % of all	: Most mentions	: 2nd most mentions	
	: Mentions	: Regions: Farmers:	: Regions: Farmers:	
Poor land, erosion, declining fertility	: 31	: General: 34	: Sub-sistence: 24	
Hard to get competent hired labor	: 29	: Cotton : 19	: East'n Dairy : 17	
Can't get good farm, good land	: 11	: Subsistence: 16	: Cotton : 9	
Farm too small for efficiency	: 10	: Corn : 7	: General : 7	
Other	: 19			
Total	: 100			
Mentions	471			

5. "Personal Problems"

Items mentioned most frequently under this heading include the health of members of the family, accident, etc., but none were mentioned by more than a few per cent.

Program Factors

Tenure--landlords won't cooperate, unfair, etc.	33%
Allotments--too small, don't fit	28
General--imports, programs unsatisfactory	25
Administration--delays, inequalities	14
	100%

Total Mentions 153

- D. It may be of interest to present the above information with the crop regions rather than the complaints as a focus. The following tables indicate the difficulties mentioned most frequently in each crop region:

Corn			Wheat		
: % of :			: % of :		
: Difficulty : Farmers :			: Difficulty : Farmers :		
: Drouth	: 49	:	: Drouth	: 76	:
: Low Prices	: 34	:	: Low Prices	: 60	:
: Parity Concept ^{9/}	: 20	:	: Short Crops	: 38	:
: High Price Machinery	: 17	:	: Insect Losses	: 21	:
: Insect Losses	: 15	:	: Parity Concept	: 16	:
: No. farmers--334	:	:	: No. farmers--159	:	:

Great Lakes Dairy			Eastern Dairy		
: % of :			: % of :		
: Difficulty : Farmers :			: Difficulty : Farmers :		
: Low prices	: 51	:	: Low Prices	: 66	:
: Parity Concept	: 23	:	: Hard to get labor	: 17	:
: High Price of Mach.	: 20	:	: Poor Land, Erosion,	:	:
: Poor land, Erosion,	:	:	: etc.	: 10	:
: etc.	: 13	:	: Parity	: 10	:
: Drouth	: 12	:	:	:	:
: No. farmers--105	:	:	: No. farmers--181	:	:

9. "Parity Concept" is used here as an abbreviation for "High prices for things bought relative to low prices received."

Cotton	:	:
	% of	:
Difficulty	Farmers	:
Short Crops	47	:
Low Prices	30	:
Hard to get labor	19	:
Parity Concept	11	:
Poor land, Erosion,		:
etc.	8	:
No. farmers--215		:

Tobacco	:	:
	% of	:
Difficulty	Farmers	:
Low Prices	46	:
Short Crops	14	:
Hard to get labor	13	:
Parity Concept	9	:
Poor land, Erosion,		:
etc.	9	:
No. farmers--90		:

General	:	:
	% of	:
Difficulty	Farmers	:
Low Prices	40	:
Poor Land, Erosion,		:
etc.	34	:
High Taxes	31	:
Drouth	31	:
Short Crops	24	:
No. Farmers--45		:

Subsistence	:	:
	% of	:
Difficulty	Farmers	:
Low Prices	63	:
Poor Land, Erosion,		:
etc.	24	:
High Taxes	16	:
Can't get good land	16	:
No. Farmers--38		:

Range Livestock	:	:
	% of	:
Difficulty	Farmers	:
Low Prices	63	:
Drouth	45	:
Insect Losses	39	:
Short Crops	36	:
No. Farmers--33		:

- II. The same 1200 farmers were asked, "What things in the farm programs have made it hardest for you to get along in the last two or three years?" The 1518 comments which were made in answer to this question were divided among the following general headings:

Allotment factors	27%
Nothing	26
Administration	20
Tenure	6
General	15
Not in programs	<u>6</u>
	100%

Thus, more than one-fourth of these comments express no criticism whatever of the programs.

- A. The following tables present the more numerous of the comments which were made in answer to the above question, and indicate the sources of some criticisms by crop regions:

1. "Allotment Factors"

	: % of all	: Most mentions	: 2nd most mentions	:
	:	: % of	:	: % of
	: mentions	: Regions: Farmers:	: Regions	: Farmers
Low Allotments	: 75	: Wheat : 39	: Tobacco	: 31
Fields don't fit	:	:	: Gt. Lakes	:
allotments	: 16	: Corn : 13	: Dairy	: 9
Payments too	:	:	:	:
small relative	:	:	:	:
to acreage re-	:	:	:	:
ductions	: 9	:	:	:
	: 100	:	:	:
Total	:	:	:	:
Mentions	413	:	:	:

2. "Nothing in programs has made it hard to get along"

397 farmers made this statement. The proportion of farmers expressing this point of view in each crop region follows:

Eastern Dairy	49%
Great Lakes Dairy	40
Cotton	40
Tobacco	35
General Subsistence and	
Range Livestock	24-37
Wheat	19
Corn	18

3. "Administration and program regulations"

	: % of all	: Most Mentions	: 2nd Most Mentions	:
	:	: % of	: % of	:
	:Region:	Farmers:	Region:	Farmers:
Late announcements	:	:	:	:
uncertainty	: 47	: Wheat: 25	: Corn :	20 :
Inequality in				
allotments	13			
No adequate sub-				
stitute crops or				
practices	10			
Administration--				
general	8			
No option on wheat				
or corn	6			
Penalized by his-				
torical base	6			
New program may be				
better	5			
Didn't get payments	3			
Must plant up to				
limit next year or				
lose out	<u>2</u>			
	100			
Total Mentions	298			

4. Tenure

Landlord won't cooperate	23 $\frac{1}{2}$
Losing ownership of farm	22
Division of payments with landlord unfair	14
Landlord unfair	11
Shouldn't let landlord charge cash rent for	
retired acres	11
More and more a landlord's program	8
Division of payments with tenants unfair	<u>11</u>
	100 %

5. "General "

Loans too high--makes feed too high	16%
Will have to pay it all back in taxes	16
No recognition of drouth injury to seedings	14
Small farmer should be helped more	9
Soil building units too low for work done	4
Why permit imports when acreages being cut	4
Programs cause other farmers to begin growing this crop	3
Not enough soil conservation in programs	3
Don't like government programs like FSA, WPA, etc.	2
Programs no help; those who stayed out are ahead	12
Program fits--farms way he would have	10
Couldn't have made it without program	7

Section II

What things in general or
in the farm programs have
helped?

- I. In order to round off this study of farmers' attitudes toward the farm programs, this question was put to the group of 1200 farmers already mentioned, "What things in general or in the farm programs have helped you most in getting along during the last two or three years?" The resulting 2961 comments can be summarized under the following general headings:

Program Factors

AAA 10/

AAA payments have helped	24.4%
Helped with land building	12.6
Helped better market prices and farm income	8.8
Helped through diversification and better living	4.5
Total AAA	50.3%

Total AAA (from page 9)	50.3 %
Other Programs <u>11/</u>	
CCC---crop loans	6.8%
FSA	2.3
FCA	2.0
SCS	1.3
Marketing Agreements	1.4
Extension Service	0.6
FCIC---crop insurance	0.5
REA	0.1
Total other programs	15.0
Total Program Factors	65.3 %
Non-Program Factors <u>12/</u>	
Factors in farm operation	9.4
Market and price factors	12.3
Personal factors	6.3
Farm organizations	0.8
Tenure factors	0.6
Other sources of help	0.3
Total Non-Program Factors	29.9
Nothing Helped	<u>4.8</u>
Grand Total	100.0%
Total number of mentions	2961
Summary	
AAA factors	50.3
Other program factors	15.0
Non-program factors	29.9
Nothing helped	<u>4.8</u>
Total	100.0%

11. For further details see page 12
 12. For further details see page 13

A. The following statements summarize the concepts present in the AAA items mentioned most frequently:

1. AAA payments have helped

The 725 mentions of this general idea were divided into two groups--those which merely mentioned that the payments had helped (61 mentioned that they are the only source of sure cash income in case of crop failure), and those which indicated the various items of operating expense that the payments were used for. The comments that payments have helped were made by the following per cent of farmers in various crop regions: Corn, 85 per cent; Wheat, 85 per cent; and Cotton, 66 per cent.

2. AAA helped with land building

Of the 372 mentions in this category, only 40 per cent went beyond expressing this general idea. Mentions by these latter credited specific practices with producing the land building. Fertilizers were credited most often in the Eastern Dairy region and in the General farm areas. Cover crops, seeding, pasture and legumes were mentioned most often in the General farm and Cotton areas. Altogether, AAA's help to land building was recognized by 49 per cent of farmers in the General farm area, 46 per cent each in the Cotton and in the Eastern Dairy regions, and by 28 per cent and 24 per cent respectively in the Tobacco and Great Lakes Dairy sections.

3. AAA helped with market prices and farm income

82 per cent of 259 mentions in this group referred to stabilizing or increasing farm prices and income. The remainder stated that AAA had controlled production and had thereby helped farmers. Wheat and Tobacco areas were the source of the most frequent mentions of items in this group, though the Great Lakes Dairy region and the Cotton areas were close behind.

4. Diversification and Better Living

This group of 133 mentions includes such items as "better living through live-at-home program and canning," "less work on cash crops," "raising own food on diverted acres," and "encouraged non-depleting cash crops (flax)." The mentions come almost entirely from the Cotton, Tobacco, and General farm regions where they are mentioned by one-third, one-sixth, and one-sixth of the farmers respectively.

B. The following describes the mentions occurring most frequently in regard to farm programs other than AAA:

1. Commodity Credit Corporation

The idea that crop loans had stabilized or raised crop prices was mentioned by 202 farmers. More specifically such responses came from 36 per cent of the Corn Belt farmers and from 32 per cent of the farmers in the Wheat area.

2. Farm Security Administration

The total of 68 comments was made up almost entirely of mentions of "Loans and Disaster Loans" and Rehabilitation Grants. Such references were made by 9 per cent of farmers in the Cotton sections, and an almost equal percentage in each of the Corn, Wheat and Tobacco areas.

3. Other Farm Programs

- a. Activities of FCA were mentioned by 58 farmers, nearly half of them from the Eastern Dairy region.
- b. SCS terracing, contouring, wind erosion control work and other activities appeared in 39 replies concentrated mostly in the Cotton region.
- c. The milk marketing agreements were mentioned by 42 farmers, almost all of them in the Eastern Dairy region--20 per cent of the farmers interviewed in that region mentioned such agreements. All of the 18 mentions of "extension research" and "extension advice" came from that same crop region.
- d. Finally, these answers included 14 mentions of crop insurance and three mentions of REA.

C. The following deals with the non-program factors mentioned as having helped farmers during the last few years:

1. "Factors in Farm Operation"

	: % of all	: Most Mentions	: 2nd Most	Mentions :
	:	:	: % of	: % of
	: Mentions	: Regions	: Farmers:	: Regions :
	:	:	:	: Farmers:
Good crops--Bumper:	:	:	:	:
crops	: 44	: Corn	: 29	: General : 18
Factors making for:	:	:	:	:
greater produc-	:	:	:	:
tion	: 24	:	:	:
Hybrid seed corn	: 8 :	: Corn	: 7	: General : 2
Modern machinery	: 8 :	: Corn	: 5	: Wheat : 2
Good land, in-	:	:	:	:
creased pro-	:	:	:	:
ductivity	: 6 :	:	:	:
Other	: 2 :	:	:	:
Factors making	:	:	:	:
for greater	:	:	:	:
self-sufficiency:	: 18	: Wheat	: 10	: Cotton : 9
Income from crops:	:	:	:	:
and sidelines	: 14	:	:	:
	: 100	:	:	:

Total Mentions 287

2. "Market and Price Factors"

	: % of all	: <u>Most Mentions</u>	: <u>2nd Most Mentions</u>	:	
	:	:	:	: % of	
	: <u>Mentions</u>	: <u>Regions</u>	: <u>Farmers</u>	: <u>Regions</u>	: <u>Farmers</u>
Good prices for	:	:	:	:	:
things farmer	:	: East'n	:	:	:
sells	: 28	: Dairy	: 13	: Corn	: 12
Good price for:	:	:	:	:	:
cattle and live-	:	:	:	:	:
stock	: 47	: Wheat	: 39	: Corn	: 20
Milk and Butterfat:	: 11	: Corn	: 7	: Gt. Lakes:	:
	:	:	:	: Dairy	: 2
Cotton	: 5	: Cotton	: 8	:	:
Tobacco	: 4	: Tobacco	: 17	:	:
Hogs	: 4	: Corn	: 3	: Wheat	: 3
Other	: 1	:	:	:	:
	: 100	:	:	:	:
Total Mentions	363				

3. The remaining non-program items were not mentioned with sufficient frequencies to warrant additional breakdowns.

D. It may be of interest to re-surmarize the above material by crop regions as was done in Section 1. The following tables indicate the helps mentioned most frequently in each crop region:

Corn	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA payments	85	:
Crop loans	36	:
Good crops	29	:
Cattle and livestock prices	20	:
AAA help with market prices	18	:
AAA help with land building	16	:
No. farmers--334	:	:

Wheat	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA payments	85	:
Cattle & livestock prices	39	:
Crop loans	32	:
AAA help with market prices	32	:
AAA help with land building	21	:
No. farmers--159	:	:

Great Lakes Dairy	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA payments	49	:
AAA help with market price	30	:
AAA help with land building	24	:
Favorable prices for prod.	20	:
Crop loans	15	:
No. farmers--105	:	:

Eastern Dairy	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA help with land building	46	:
Milk marketing order	20	:
Favorable prices	17	:
Farm Credit Administration	13	:
Extension Service	10	:
No. farmers--181	:	:

Cotton	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA payments	66	:
AAA help with land building	46	:
AAA help with diversifica-	:	:
tion & better living	34	:
AAA help with market price	24	:
Favorable prices for crops	16	:
No. farmers--215	:	:

Tobacco	:	:
	% of	:
Helps	Farmers	:
AAA payments	36	:
AAA help with market prices	31	:
AAA help with land building	28	:
Favorable prices for crops	24	:
AAA help with diversifica-	:	:
tion and better living	16	:
No. farmers--90	:	:

: General : :			: Subsistence : :		
: % of :			: % of :		
: Helps : Farmers:			: Helps : Farmers:		
: :			: :		
: AAA help with land building:	49	:	: AAA payments	55	:
: AAA payments	42	:	: Personal abilities and	:	:
: Favorable prices for crops	29	:	: activities	55	:
: AAA help with market price	20	:	: AAA help with land building:	53	:
: AAA help with diversifica-	:	:	: AAA help with market prices:	29	:
: tion and better living	16	:	: :		
: :			: :		
: No. farmers--45	:	:	: No. farmers--38	:	:
: :			: :		

: Range and Livestock : :		
: % of :		
: Helps : Farmers:		
: :		
: AAA payments	52	:
: Cattle and livestock prices	48	:
: Good land & increasing productivity:	30	:
: AAA help with market prices	24	:
: AAA help with land building	18	:
: :		
: :		
: No. farmers--33	:	:
: :		

DETAILS OF FARM SAMPLE

This survey of what farmers feel have been their toughest problems and their greatest helps during the past two or three years is based on interviews with 1200 farmers in 27 states during a three-month period from mid-February to mid-May of this year.

States Covered

Vermont	Virginia	Texas	Missouri
Connecticut	Alabama	Tennessee	Kansas
Massachusetts	Georgia	Indiana	Nebraska
New Hampshire	Louisiana	Illinois	South Dakota
New York	Mississippi	Iowa	Oklahoma
Maryland	Arkansas	Wisconsin	Colorado
South Carolina	North Carolina	Minnesota	

