

Fewer But Better Farms as Number Of Tillers Drops

WASHINGTON, May 20.—(AP)—You've heard this: Farm workers are fewer and farms are getting bigger and fewer. It's true. But why?

City life, city jobs and better pay have drawn farm workers. And since machines do the work of many men, bigger and better farm machinery has meant less need for farm hands.

Thanks to the machines and better farming methods, bigger farms can be worked better than many small farms formerly could be with manpower.

Here's the story as told by figures from the agriculture department.

Where possible, the years used are 1910-14, the pre-World War I period, and 1946, the first year after World War II.

The average number of farm workers:

1910-14—12,052,000, when total U. S. population was 91,000,000.

1946—10,012,000, when total U. S. population was 140,000,000.

So the number of farm workers dropped more than 2,000,000 while the total U. S. population was increasing 49,000,000.

The average number of farms:

1910-14—138 acres.

1946—5,900,000.

That drop of 500,000 in the number of farms might make it seem less farmland was being worked. Not so.

Land under cultivation:

1910-14—310,566,000 acres.

1946—345,773,000 acres.

Thus while the number of individual farms dropped and total farmland increased, the size of farms increased.

Average size of farms:

1910-14—11,138 acres.

1946—194 acres.

Net Income Small

But what of the value of the crops farmers produced?

Cash receipts, or the money farmers got for their products:

1924—\$10,220,000,000.

1946—\$23,900,000,000.

Of the \$23,900,000,000 in cash receipts in 1946, about \$900,000,000 came from government subsidies or payments, of one kind or another.

So, exclusive of how the government helped out, farm cash receipts more than doubled between 1910-14 and 1946.

But that money was the pay farmers got for what they raised. How much did they have left after meeting expenses?

The average net income, after expenses, of farm operators:

1910-14—\$586.

1946—\$2,134.

These are average figures. Big farmers netted far more than these average figures show, and small farmers netted much less.

Oregon Farm Brevities

Oregon ranked 24th among all states in cash receipts from livestock and their products marketed in 1946, according to USDA figures. Farmers of this state received \$144,754,000 for livestock

marketings last year, while the livestock receipts for Washington were \$176,533,000. Iowa farmers topped the nation with marketings of \$1,493,968,000, and the total for the nation was \$13,243,419,000.

Oregon ranked 28th in receipts from crops amounting to \$172,684,000. Washington stood fifth with \$362,656,000. California farmers were first in marketings of a long list of crops, and ranked No. 1 in the nation in total crop receipts with \$1,336,489,000—nearly double that of Texas, the No. 2 state. Total crop receipts for all states was \$10,690,446,000.

Weed Control Offered
The weed control practice of the agricultural conservation program now can be used on any farmland approved by the county committee, as a result of an amendment to Oregon's 1947 ACE handbook. Hitherto the practice was restricted to cropland, along ditchbanks, and land in a watershed furnishing irrigation water. The change will make commercial orchards eligible for the weed control practice.

Livestock Protection
Livestock producers from now on can have additional protection of their sales proceeds under an arrangement worked out by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The plan will be similar to the insurance protection provided on personal bank accounts. When a commission firm deposits in separate "custodial" bank accounts shippers' funds representing proceeds from sales, such funds will be insured up to \$5,000 for each shipper having an interest in the account. So the shippers' sale proceeds on deposit are protected even though the bank fails before the commission firm's check in payment of the net proceeds is cashed by a shipper. This protection is in addition to that afforded livestock shippers by proceeds bonds of about \$28 million now on file with the Department to assure performance of financial obligations incurred by registered commission firms.

For School Lunches

Approval of a deficiency appropriation by Congress has resulted in additional funds for operation of hot lunch programs in Oregon schools. The state has received \$115,650 to supplement the original allocation of \$322,617 which was exhausted more than a month ago. The funds are distributed to school lunch programs on the basis of number and type of meals served through the State Department of Education.

Turkey Prices Propped

To assure turkey producers of price support throughout the normal marketing season, the Department of Agriculture has announced a support program for 1947-crop turkeys marketed during the period October 1947 through January 1948. Support prices will be announced about October 1 and will reflect a national average price of 90 percent of the September 15 parity price. The government's price-support program may prove unnecessary with fewer turkeys

being raised, but the department will be prepared, if necessary, to buy dressed turkeys from processors who certify that they have raised them. The previous year, commercial banks furnished more credit to finance farm purchases during 1946 and Federal lending agencies less. Farmers are buying most of the tracts being sold, and more of the non-farm buyers are indicating an intention of operating rather than renting the farms they purchase.

Despite further rises in prices of farm real estate, farm sales continued high during 1946. For the country as a whole, prices rose 12 per cent, bringing average market value to a point 52 per cent above the 1935-39 average.

An editorial in a current issue of a national magazine on U. S. farm programs and policies contains misstatements of facts—at least insofar as application of these programs in Oregon is concerned, the state PMA Committee points out.

The article referred to the cost

of supporting farm commodities at 110 per cent of parity. Turkeys and potatoes—the only two Oregon commodities covered by the Steagall amendment which have run into postwar price trouble—have been supported at 90 per cent of parity, and not 110 per cent of parity. The prices of all other farm commodities entitled to 90 per cent of parity price protection until the end of 1948 are and have been above the support level.

Warning on Debts
Prospective land buyers need to be increasingly cautious and avoid debts that may turn out to be too burdensome to carry, the Department of Agriculture warns.

The further sharp increases in land values during the last 4 months, along with the great number of transfers, reflect the continued operation of strong inflationary forces in the farm land market.

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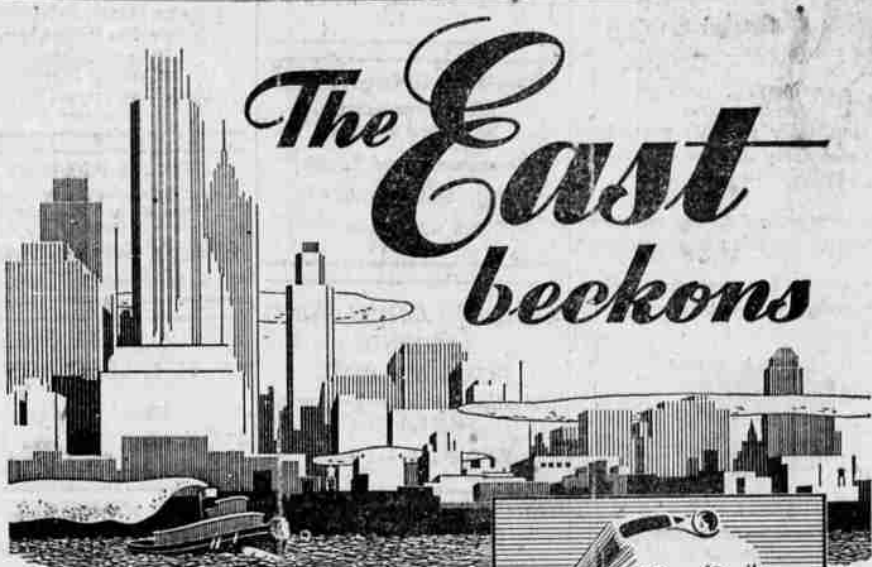
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