

Soil Bank Program Cuts County Production Of Farm Crops; Conserves Land For Future

(Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of six articles in the Observer farm section on the Union County Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation office and the five federal farm programs administered by the office. The following article is devoted to the Soil Bank.)

By BILL BEBOUT
Observer Staff Writer

The plight of the American farmer is a national problem. Virtually every citizen is affected to some degree.

The federal government has moved more and more into the Agricultural picture since the mid-thirties—the turning point on the American farm scene.

Confronted with constantly mounting surpluses, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has formulated programs with the help of the farmers to bolster sagging markets and keep the farmer on an even keel. These programs are financed by taxes.

The farm programs of the Department of Agriculture are the targets of tax-conscious citizens, politicians, and the farmers themselves. This in itself is not surprising. Most publically supported programs leave much to be desired and the farm programs are no exception.

Different Views
But no simple solution has been found to satisfy all elements involved in the struggle to keep the farmer on an economically sound basis.

Both major political parties have differing views on how farm programs should be administered and paid for. Farm organizations present plans to the administration for improvement in the programs and county committees of the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) offices make recommendations.

From all of these diverse, and often diametrically opposed elements, the farm programs are formulated.

In 1956 Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson put into operation a plan designed to conserve usable farm land and at the same time reduce surpluses.

Too Many Acres
The Soil Bank program is a conservation reserve administered throughout the nation by the ASC, its community and county committees and staff members.

The 1960 Soil Bank Conservation Reserve has been "oversubscribed," according to figures released Wednesday by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Nearly 163,000 landowners have filed applications with the Department of Agriculture to put 9.6 million acres in the reserve next year. The conservation association predicts that a good share of those applications will have to be turned down.

When the sign-up began last summer, USDA estimated 5.1 million new acres could be taken. Now it appears this early estimate was too low.

Union County Share
There are 7,659 acres in the Soil Bank in Union County this year. The cost to the federal gov-

ernment for annual payments and federal cost-share expenses will total \$131,121.29.

Of the 50 Union County farms, 37 of them are whole farms. Ten more whole farms with an annual payment total of \$14,926 is expected by the local ASC office for 1960.

The average annual payment per acre in this county is \$17. Each farm is evaluated on the basis of production, typography and farming practices by the ASC county committee when application for the Soil Bank is made by the farmer.

For putting his whole farm in the Soil Bank, the farmer is granted an additional 10 per cent of his established rate.

Farmer Bids
When the rate is established and approved by the county committee, the farmer submits a bid based on his rate. The purpose of the bid is to enable the government to get as much land in the Soil Bank as possible for the least amount of money.

Federal Soil Bank funds are allocated to each state with state funds in turn divided among the counties according to priority (number of farmers who underbid their established rate).

Bids are divided into eight classifications at the county level. In group one are those who bid 70 per cent below the established rate; group two consists of farmers who bid 70 to 75 per cent below their rate and so on until the eight categories are established.

Offers are then made by the county committee to farmers beginning with group one until funds are depleted.

Must Comply
The farmer is given 10 days in which to accept or reject the offer. If he decides against a contract, the offer goes to the next lowest bidder. Contracts are made for three to 10 years.

A farmer who accepts a contract must agree to carry out conservation practices on his farm. He must either plant permanent grass or legumes or trees, or build fish ponds, marshlands or wildlife cover.

These practices, including the control of noxious weeds, must be continued for the life of the contract.

The farmer is not allowed to raise any crops. He may, however, plant a garden for home use.

Shares in Cost
The federal government shares in the cost of the conservation practices on a pre-determined cost-share ratio.

The farmer is not allowed to permit grazing or harvesting on the land in the Soil Bank. Violations can result in loss of annual payments, fines and loss of contract.

Staff members of the ASC office make their periodic checks on farms in the county to be sure that conservation practices are being carried out and other stipulations of the contract are being fulfilled.

If weeds have gone to seed or cattle are grazing on Soil Bank

land, the office declares an "indicated violation."

Penalties Assessed
Indicated violations are brought before the county committee which determines if violations are accidental or intentional and what penalties, if any, are to be assessed.

Penalties for violations can be as severe as the forfeiture of 100 per cent of annual payment plus an additional 50 per cent. Contracts are terminated if intentional violations are committed in two consecutive years.

There have been no intentional violations in Union County, according to Lloyd German, manager of the county ASC office. He said that most indicated violations resulted from accidental grazing or failure to control noxious weeds. County farmers have cooperated with the county committee and ASC office in eliminating the violations, German said.

No new cropland can be broken out during the term of the Soil Bank contract and land must have been in use since Dec. 31, 1956 in order to be eligible for the 1959 contracts.

Ending Contract
Cropland must have been in production during 1958 and the current year to be eligible for 1960 Soil Bank contracts.

Soil Bank contracts from 1956 through 1959 can be terminated if sale or death occurs. In either case, the successor has the option of carrying out the contract. If the contract is cancelled the federal cost share payments must be refunded and no additional payments will be made.

Beginning with the 1960 contracts the regulations have been changed. Contracts are cancelled by death or sale unless one of the following conditions exist:

* Successor was part of the original contract.

* Control of farm was gained through inheritance.

* Contract in effect for at least three years.

These regulations also apply to the cost-share program.

Advantages Seen
The Soil Bank program offers many advantages to the farmer. Property which is not easily accessible to the main farming operation can be placed in the conservation reserve for up to ten years.

Through the conservation program, the farmer can improve his soil through the cost-share program while receiving payments for keeping it out of crop production.

Retired farmers frequently put their land in the Soil Bank and in many cases are able to show a larger income than if they rented the land to a tenant farmer.

No owner or tenant is allowed, however, to draw more than \$5,000 annually regardless of how many acres he may own.

Example Given
The following example is given of the method used to establish a contract on a whole farm in the county:

This 200-acre farm has an established rate of \$17 per acre. A

check is made by the ASC office and 120 acres must be established in cover for the life of the contract. Eighty acres must be maintained in grass or legumes.

For putting the entire farm in the Soil Bank, the farmer is entitled to an additional 10 per cent for a total per acre payment of \$18.70.

The farmer bids \$18 and is offered a contract. His annual payments, based on \$18 for each of the 200 acres will total \$3600 annually. Federal cost share at \$6 per acre for the 120 acres will amount to a maximum figure of \$720 for established practices in seeding of cover.

Eligible Acres
The part-farm contract is determined on the basis of the amount of eligible acres offered.

For example: A farmer may apply to put 80 acres of his 200-acre farm in the Soil Bank. The ASC office must then establish the Soil Bank base.

The Soil Bank Base is determined by the average production of the two preceding years.

In 1958 the farmer raised 30 acres of wheat, 42 acres of barley, 10 acres of oats, 18 acres of rye and 20 acres of peas for a total of 120 acres.

Base Figured
In 1959 he raised 30 acres of wheat, 55 acres of barley, 15 acres of oats, 20 acres of rye and 20

acres of peas for a total of 140 acres.

His soil bank base is thus established at 130 acres. The 80 acres for the Soil Bank when deducted from the base figure leaves him 50 acres on which he can harvest any Soil Bank base crops. If the farmer exceeds the 50 acres he would be in violation of the contract.

Federal cost share on the 80 acres cannot be in excess of \$8 per acre for seed, seeding and seedbed preparation.

If approved cover already exists when land is offered to the soil bank, the farmer may apply for a contract period of three or four years. Whenever it must be established, however, a minimum contract length of five years is required. Contracts are made for up to 10 years.

Not Cure-All
The Soil Bank has not been offered as a cure-all for the mounting crop surpluses. But Department of Agriculture officials point out that the program has helped to reduce surpluses while encouraging better conservation practices.

The program is designed as a stop-gap in the hope that other solutions can be worked out to adjust the demand to the supply of crops.

The next article in this series will deal with the Agriculture Conservation Program.

Farmer's Income Only Half Of What Non-Farmer Makes

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Government economists estimated Wednesday that the average U.S. farm resident's income would drop this year to less than one-half the income of the average non-farmer.

Official figures have not been released yet. But experts said the data would show per capita net farm income was less than 50 per cent of the non-farm rate for the fourth year in the last seven.

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A House Republican leader has charged that Democrats want a permanent farm depression so they can make political hay out of the farmers' plight.

House GOP whip Leslie C. Arends (Ill.) said Tuesday that a farm policy statement issued by the Democratic Advisory Council made it obvious that Democrats "must be planning a depression or recession."

Arends challenged the Democratic statement that "we must have sufficient supplies to meet the needs in excess of defective market demand during periods of recession and depression."

He said the Democratic statement was "nothing more than an attempt to keep farmers in a permanent depression with continuous and expanding dependence on government controls."

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The government's investment in farm price supports rose to a record of nearly \$9.25 billion on Oct. 31 and it's headed still higher.

The investment reported in an Agriculture Department statement Tuesday includes surplus farm commodities owned by the government and outstanding price support loans on farm crops.

As of Oct. 31, the department owned crops worth \$7.755 billion. Price support loans amounted to more than \$1.47 billion.

The total broke the record of \$9.09 billion set last February.

The total was expected to climb this season when farmers put more of the record 1959 corn crop under support. When the seasonal peak is reached next spring, Uncle Sam will own or control about \$10.5 billion worth of surplus crops.

Union County Waterfowl Hunting Poor

Steelhead angling has been fair to good and is improving on the lower John Day and Walla Walla Rivers. The Umatilla river below the Three Mile Dam is good to excellent for steelhead. Best success has been with worms or eggs. A few steelhead are being taken from the Columbia River between Arlington and McNary.

Steelhead angling on the Lower Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers has been fair but spotty because of fluctuating river levels. Angling should improve with continued cold weather. Steelhead angling on the Snake River below the mouth of Pine Creek is excellent. Angling success on warm water species has been slow on the Brownie and McNary pools.

Waterfowl Hunting
Duck shooting has been poor in Umatilla county. Goose shooting has been good on foggy mornings over d-cays. Many ducks and geese are in the Umatilla area. Waterfowl hunting is fair to good in Union county and fair to poor in Baker county. Many ducks and some geese are using Wallowa lake.

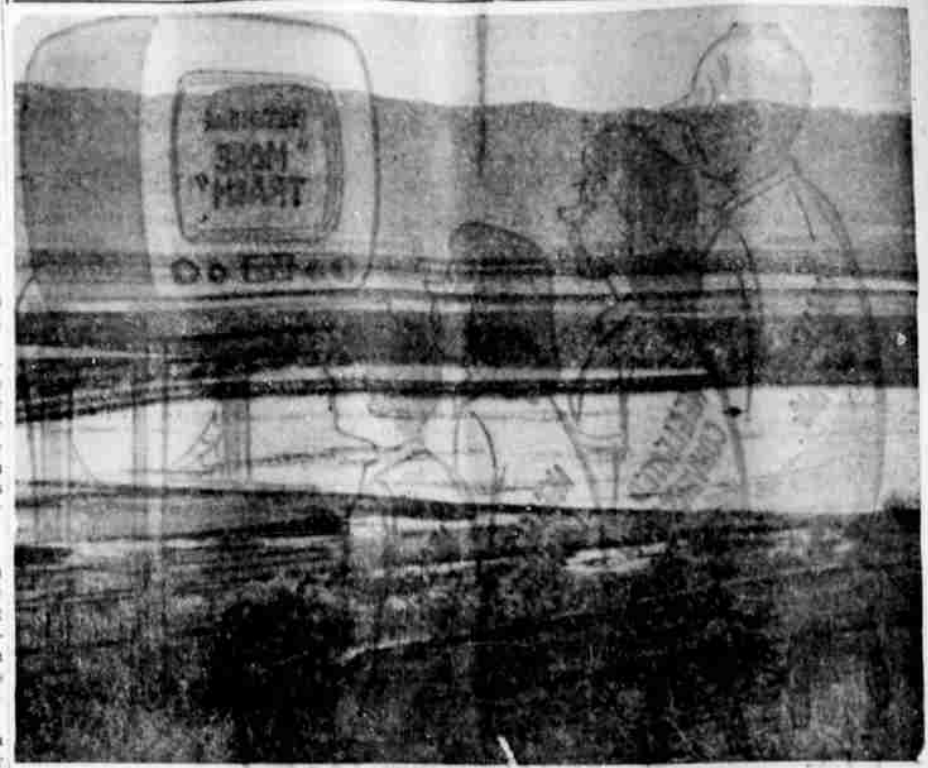
Elk Hunting
Prospects are poor for the Bridge Creek and Baker controlled elk seasons because of mild weather conditions. Elk are widely scattered and staying at higher elevations.

SUSPECTS CLEARED
BAKER (UPI)—Two suspects in an arson case were released Thursday after a 17-year-old ex-MaLaren school inmate changed his story.

The youth was arrested Wednesday in connection with starting a series of fires in the Richland, Ore., area. He implicated two young persons from Halfway in

Valley Farm-Ranch-Home

Bill Bebout, Editor



MARSHLAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Marshland for migratory waterfowl is included in the programs of the Conservation Reserve of the Soil-Bank. The above photograph shows a portion of the marshland on the Chase Bohnenkamp farm east of Imbler. Soil Bank conservation programs preserve land, provide cover for wildlife and keep soil out of production. (Observer Photo)



PERMANENT WILDLIFE COVER

Lloyd German, manager of the Union County Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation office, inspects field of permanent wildlife cover on the W. T. (Bud) Jones farm east of Island City. The entire Jones farm is in the Conservation Reserve of the Soil Bank. (Observer Photo)

JUDGES MEET
PORTLAND (UPI) — Oregon Circuit Court judges were here today for their annual meeting. A day-long program was planned with a welcome by Judge Paul R. Harris, president of the Judges Association.

The burning of three vacant houses and several cars worth an estimated \$8,000.

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ENTIRE FARM IN CONSERVATION RESERVE

Leo Neiderer, Summerville, is one of the Union County farmers who have put entire farms in the Conservation Reserve of the Soil Bank. Permanent cover of grass and legumes cover the farmland which once contributed

crops to the enormous surpluses in the nation. Soil Bank program was started in 1956 when Congress acted on the program sponsored by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson. (Observer Photo)

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