

# Benson Eyes '60 In Seeking New Farm Programs

By OVID A. MARTIN  
Associated Press Farm Reporter  
WASHINGTON, April 20 (U. P.) — Time is becoming a vital element in efforts of the Eisenhower administration to leave the farm situation in better shape than it found it in 1953.

Certainly, what the administration does between now and the elections in 1960 may have a lot to do with Republican chances of holding onto the White House that year.

Moving into its fifth year in office, the administration is faced by these three hard facts:

1. Farm prices are 13 per cent below the level prevailing when Eisenhower took office.
2. Farm surpluses are nearly three times as large as they were at that same time.
3. The government has spent more on agriculture during the first four years of the administration than in the preceding 20 years.

**Govt. Faces Big Job**  
As these facts clearly indicate, the administration has a big job getting agriculture back where it was four years ago.

It is a recognition of this task — and the relative shortness of time remaining — that is leading Secretary of Agriculture Benson to say that present programs need drastic overhauling. Otherwise, he says, surpluses at the end of the administration may be as large as they are now.

The government now has \$1,300,000,000 invested in farm surpluses. The investment four years ago was \$2,912,000,000. This big increase was made in the face of broad use of crop production control programs and expenditure of upwards of four billion dollars in subsidizing exports.

**Truman Blamed for Surpluses**

Of course, Benson says that programs of the Truman administration, which by law he was required to use through 1954, contributed heavily to the buildup of surpluses.

Two years of programs patterned largely after Benson's recommendations have cut the investment in surpluses about half a billion dollars. This is not fast enough, however. It would take an annual reduction of more than three times that amount—or about \$1,816,000,000 — to get the investment down to the pre-Eisenhower level by election time in 1960.

The secretary is counting some on the new soil bank program to help reduce surpluses. Under this program, the department is authorized to pay farmers up to \$1,200,000,000 a year to retire land from production of surplus crops.

**Many Farmers Shun Soil Bank**

But there is serious doubt among farm leaders that it will do the job. In the first place, many farmers are staying out of the program, preferring to take their chances on producing all that is possible under whatever federal limitations that may be in effect.

In the second place, reports show that poorest-producing land is being retired and that extra heavy use of fertilizers is being made on the remainder of the land in an attempt to keep production as close as possible to previous levels.

During the past three years, the administration has had the benefit of a much broader export subsidy program than it is likely to have during the next three. In 1954 Congress authorized the department to sell three billion dollars worth of farm surpluses to friendly countries not only at cut-rate prices but for currencies of those countries.

**\$3 Billion Used Up**

This three billion dollar authorization has been used up and the President has requested an addition of only one billion dollars for the period ahead.

But the things that worry Benson the most are provisions of present crop control and price support laws. Under these laws, he is required to raise price support rates and to liberalize planting allotments as surpluses decline.

Benson says that higher supports and larger planting allotments would encourage unneeded increases in production which could only rebuild new surplus stocks.

He believes his department should have authority to fix price supports and planting allotments at whatever levels it believes would stabilize production at levels required by markets.

**Congressmen Cautious**

In other words, it would be possible, the secretary says, for the price support and production control program—as they now operate — to boost production and largely offset efforts to dispose of surpluses.

But Benson must pattern his programs after the laws as they now stand unless Congress changes them. He recognizes, however, that the lawmakers are in no mood this year to make changes in farm legislation. They have shown that in rejecting proposals for a new corn program as well as displaying reluctance to take up other farm proposals.

Nevertheless, the secretary hopes to get his ideas laid out before proper committees this year. His strategy will be to "sell" them to farmers with the hope of winning enough Republican strength in Congress in 1960 to get his ideas enacted into law in 1961.

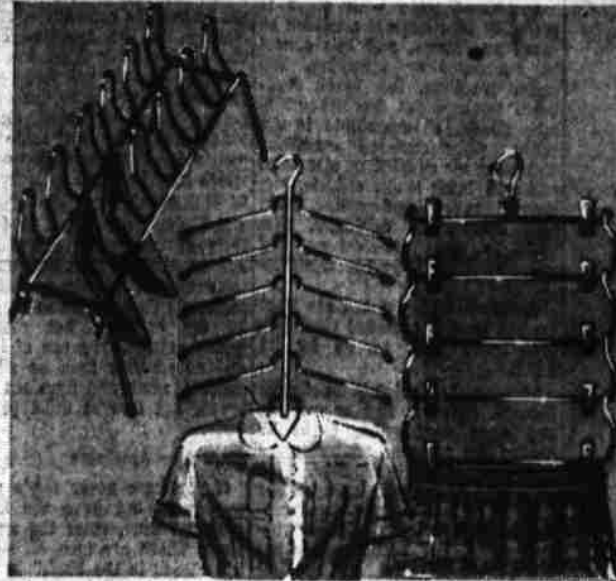
Further, he might well find his confidence in the Cabinet incompatible with the situation and outlook.

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