

County Farm Crops Undergo Least Change

Category Includes Cereal, Seed Crops

(Editor's note: How is agriculture doing in Jackson county? What is its future? How does it stack up as compared to the past? What are the major items of income? (The following is one of a series of six articles, prepared by the Mail Tribune in cooperation with the county agricultural extension office and others, in an attempt to answer these questions.)

Of all phases of agriculture in Jackson county, farm crops seem to have undergone the least overall change through the years.

Included in this category are forage (alfalfa, grain hay, oats and vetch, clover, grass and corn ensilage), cereal (wheat, barley, oats, rye, corn) and seed crops (alfalfa, clover, Lotus, merion bluegrass, pennlawn fescue, sugar beet seed).

Annually, farm crops represent about 7.5 per cent of the total agricultural income for the county. Last year, which was considered an average year, estimated gross income from these crops totaled \$3,787,351.

Farm Crops Acreage
During 1956, estimated total farm crops acreage was 52,763. W. B. Tucker, county agricultural agent, states there has been little change in total acreage, though there has been some deviation in production.

Production of farm crops is largely dependent upon weather conditions, status of the local livestock industry, markets and production costs, according to Tucker.

This year, a major change in the farm crops picture is expected to take place. This is because excessive spring rains delayed planting of grain, pasture seed, forage and cereal crops. Tucker said farmers will probably make up for the reduced acreage of these crops by planting more than the usual amount of corn and sudan grass. These can be planted in late April or May when the ground is usually warm and relatively dry.

Feed for Livestock
Most of the forage and cereal crops raised in Jackson county are also used here as feed for livestock. Thus, when the livestock industry is strong, forage and cereal crop acreage climbs in accordance.

Breeds of cattle also vary in consumption of these crops. For instance, Tucker pointed out, Holstein and Guernsey cattle consume more than some other breeds. Holsteins are currently popular in Jackson county.

Talent alfalfa seed is the only farm crop raised here that is being exported on a significantly large scale at the present time. Most of this is being sold to Greece. But Tucker says the Greek market appears to be a temporary one.

Farm Seed to Cereal
Most of the farm crops production changes in Jackson county have come as a shift from seed crops to cereal and forage crop production. Following is a comparison of wheat acreage harvested for grain in the past 37 years:

YR.	ACGE.	YR.	ACGE.
1919	7,239	1950	2,500
1946	2,900	1955	1,500
1947	2,800	1956	1,200

Tucker said the steady decrease in wheat acreage has resulted from two factors. One has been past surpluses and acreage restrictions by the government. The other is that Jackson county soil is better adapted to production of barley than wheat. Tucker noted that most commercially ground grains now contain barley. As a result, barley is considered a premium grain here.

Acreage figures for barley have shown a steady increase since 1919, except for a period between 1950 and 1955. Following is a comparison of acreage totals.

YR.	ACGE.	YR.	ACGE.
1919	1,704	1955	5,500
1946	4,300	1956	5,600
1950	5,800		

Tucker said he could not definitely account for the 300-acre decrease from 1950 to 1955, but suggested there might have been unfavorable weather conditions for growing.

Increase of Oats
Even though use of oats is no longer universal, and the climate in Jackson county is too warm for production of high quality oats, there has been a large increase in acreage since 1919. In that year, there were 665 acres. In 1956, acreage totaled 3,200.

Tucker pointed out, however, that about 2,000 acres of land in the county have recently been brought under cultivation for the first time. This is because additional privately owned reservoirs have expanded irrigation capacities, particularly in the Sams Valley, Beagle and Lake Creek areas.

Much of this land has been devoted to oats because they are considered a good temporary crop to plant until the land can be "firmed down."

Rye Minor Crop
Rye has always been a minor crop in Jackson county, Tucker

said. In 1919, there were 127 acres. In 1956, there were about 100 acres. He explained that the per acre yield for rye is low here. Also, rye is a voluntary crop and tends to interfere with other crops, especially grain.

Corn acreage in Jackson county has always been low. In 1956, there were 332 acres raised as a cereal crop and 1,980 acres for ensilage. Tucker indicated acreage has remained more or less stable through the years, with slight increases when spring has been especially wet.

Corn raised in Jackson county has a high moisture content, Tucker said, and must be dried artificially. This has made large scale production inadvisable. The county agent pointed out corn moisture content should be about 15 per cent for successful storage, but it varies from 44 to 28½ per cent in corn raised here. He said there is some discussion of obtaining a portable dehydrator in the county, which would make expanded corn production a possibility. However, he emphasized, the move is only in the talking stage at this time.

Important Forage Crop
Alfalfa is considered the most important forage crop raised in Jackson county. There were about 9,714 acres in 1919, about 11,200 acres in 1950 and 13,000 acres in 1946. There has been no acreage change since then.

Alfalfa acreage doesn't increase much, Tucker said, because the crop is not tolerant of acid soil, of which there is much in Jackson county. Also it is not tolerant of wet soil, but must have a sandy type ground with good drainage. Most of the locally grown alfalfa is either fed to the grower's own stock or sold to livestock owners in the county.

Grain hay production has decreased steadily here, and Tucker attributes the change to the increased production of alfalfa. He noted that the two crops are closely associated and when production of one is high, production of the other tends to be low. There were 10,211 acres of grain hay in 1919; about 8,000 in 1946; about 7,500 in 1950; and about 3,500 in 1956.

Production Fluctuates
Production of oats and vetch as forage crops fluctuates according to corn acreage. Total acreage of oats and vetch in 1919 was 192. Acreage climbed to 7,000 in 1946, then decreased to 5,500 in 1955 and 4,000 in 1956. Tucker noted that oats and vetch make good ensilage crops and can be grown on about any type of soil. He predicts that farmers in Jackson county will continue raising oats and vetch until corn yields increase.

Production of clover has increased in the last 10 years, but it has probably been at the expense of other grass hays, Tucker stated. In 1956, there were 13,000 acres of clover and 4,000 acres of other grass hays. In 1946, there were 4,800 acres of clover and 6,700 acres of other grass hays. Clover has also been planted on additional soil recently brought into use.

"Seed crops in general are in a precarious position, and there is not much future for any of them," the county agent said. This is largely because of poor markets. There is some markets for sugar beet seed, he said, but

all sales are on a contract basis. There are now only about 84 acres of sugar beet seed being raised here.

Talent Alfalfa
Production of Talent alfalfa climbed from 200 acres in 1955 to about 621 acres in 1956. This step-up resulted from opening of the market to Greece, Tucker stated. But, considering the uncertainty of this market, the county agent says no expansion in production is recommended.

Ranger alfalfa was publicized several years ago as being resistant to alfalfa wilt. But it was discovered locally that the report was not entirely true. Prices dropped from about 80 cents a pound to 20 cents a pound in just one year. There are 40 acres being grown in the county now, and no increase in acreage is recommended.

Ladino clover has been a major part of Jackson county seed production, but acreage has dropped from 2,300 acres in 1946 to 133 acres in 1956. Even less acreage is expected this year because sale price is now

less than 50 cents a pound and other crops can be raised for better per acre income.

Kenland Red Clover
Kenland red clover has followed a similar reduced acreage pattern. In 1955, there were 30 acres, and in 1956, there were 18 acres. Kenland red clover is not a high paying crop, Tucker said, and is also susceptible to mildew. It is a biennial crop and must be plowed up every two years.

Lotus acreage has dropped from about 2,000 in 1949 to about 16 in 1956. This is because market price has dropped from about \$1.50 a pound to 50 cents a pound and the price does not justify the amount of labor involved in raising this crop.

Three new varieties of seed crops being raised here are merion bluegrass, pennlawn fescue and polycross bentgrass. All three were developed in the last five years by Pennsylvania State college. There has been some local interest in these crops, Tucker said, but there does not

seem to be much future in them.

In 1956, there were about 74 acres of merion bluegrass and this acreage is being maintained. There were about nine acres of pennlawn fescue in 1956, and a reduction in acreage will be apparent this year, Tucker said.

Production of polycross bentgrass has also been limited here. The county agent pointed out this crop is expensive to raise, and the price is now coming down. No acreage expansion is recommended.

Tom Gail Is Elected Vice President of BTP

Salem—Tom Gail, junior at Willamette university from Medford, was elected vice president of the campus chapter of Beta Theta Pi this week.

A biology major, Gail has served as vice president of the class and a member of the varsity track team. Active in the university drama department, he is the son of Mr. and Mrs. B. W. Gail, 1569 Biddle rd.

Rickers Plan Trip To Wood, Wisconsin

Camp White—Manager and Mrs. Eugene K. Ricker plan to leave Saturday for a conference with the manager at the Veterans Administration Center, Wood, Wis., he has announced. Assistant Manager H. Jaffrey will be acting manager during Ricker's absence for a three-week period.

Jaffrey has been attending an area management and fiscal conference at Portland this week, accompanied by Mrs. Sue Vincent, fiancée officer, and R. H. Ruffin, domiciliary officer.

Registrar L. L. Dover and Personnel Officer John W. Sanders will attend an area conference Thursday and Friday this week.

Bolivia, the third largest of the South American republics, embraces an area of about 510,000 square miles.

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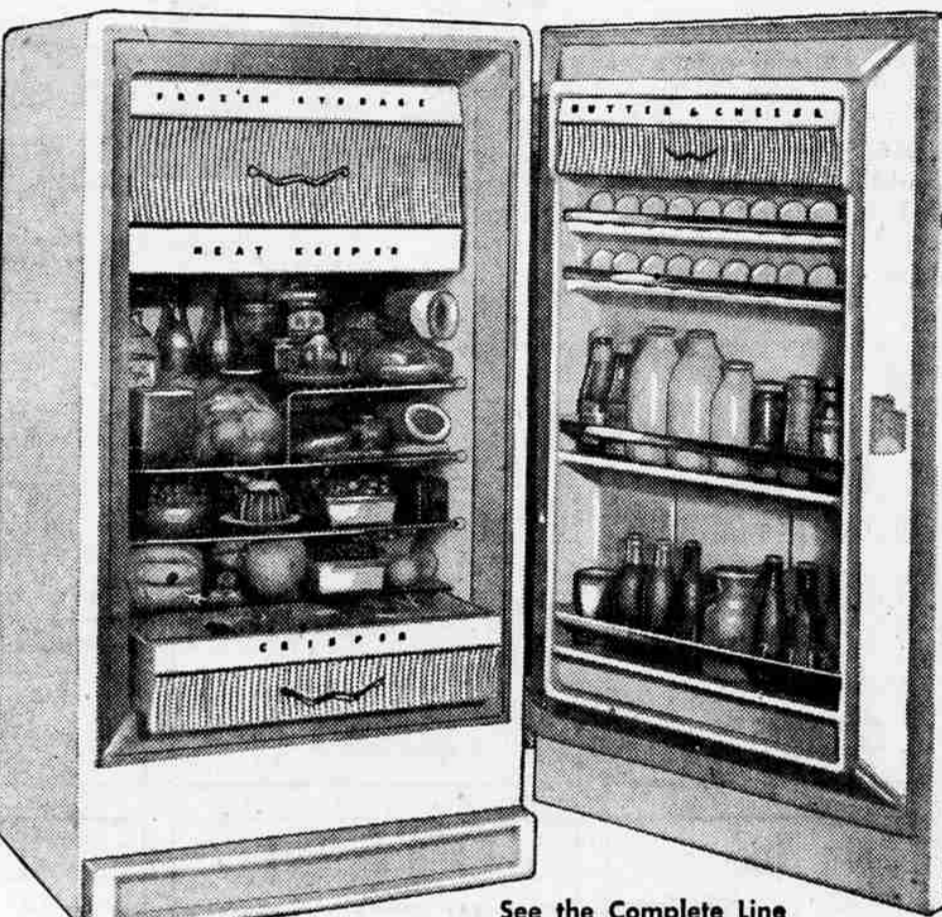
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