

Herald and News FARM NEWS

National Potato Letter

Potato Fortunes Hang In Balance Awaiting Price Prop Decision

By A. L. Fitzsimmonds

Changes, if any, in the potato supply situation cannot be forecast until the October crop estimate is released next week by the department of agriculture. Currently, last minute action of congress on the price support legislation can make or lose more money for potato growers than will current changes in the market.

Potato price support is not even fairly new. It began, not during the war period, but with the first emergency relief purchases in 1933-34.

These purchases continued until the war years, upon a limited basis depending upon the funds available, and without any particular price objective. Parity payments were made on some commodities during the late thirties, and price supporting commodity loans have been available on some crops for many years.

Price Props

The Steagall Amendment of 1941 started modern price support for potatoes. It called for support at not less than 90 per cent of parity for any commodity of which increased production was requested as part of the war effort. Support was to continue for two years after the end of the emergency for the specific purpose of enabling farmers to re-adjust to peacetime production needs.

Steagall support ended on December 31, 1948, but in June of 1948 congress passed the agricultural act of 1948. Title 1 of that act continued 90 per cent support for potatoes for the remainder of the 1948 crop season, but provided for lower support, at 60 to 90 per cent of parity, on all potatoes harvested after January 1, 1949.

Cash Costs

Cash costs of potato price support have been heavy, last year topping a quarter of a billion dollars. At the same time, consumers have paid what they consider high retail prices and claim that they have actually paid twice — once in retail prices and one in taxes.

Department of agriculture officials have pleaded with congress as far back as 146 to change the act. The 1948 act did not change the situation appreciably as it still leaves the department of agriculture in the potato business in a big way. Its operation wastes a lot of potatoes and money, and fails to reduce production to anywhere near our consumption needs.

The Brannan plan seeks to treat potatoes much as are the basics, with acreage allotments, marketing quotas with penalties, and a new conception of parity a little higher than the old one, but more responsive to changing economic conditions.

Flexible

In addition, it seeks to provide price support by letting market prices seek their demand-supply level, and then paying growers in cash the difference between what they should have received and what they actually received.

Principal arguments for this innovation are that growers would get full parity and consumers would get cheaper potatoes. The non-cooperating growers would have to sell in an unsupported market and therefore there would be few non-cooperating growers and real production adjustment.

Opposing arguments call the proposal "economic sleight-of-hand." They give it the knock-out blow by charging that the cost would be so great and so uncertain that it cannot be estimated. The Brannan plan has no chance of passage in this congress.

Rejecting the Brannan plan, the house passed the Gore bill. The Gore bill repeals the act of 1948 and continues potato support for another year at the 60 per cent level. It is a stop-gap and does not solve the problem. Next in line, and now under debate in the senate, is the so-called Anderson compromise bill. This bill retains some of the features of the 1948 act and adds others. For potatoes, it leaves support at 60 to 90 per cent of parity, provides for marketing quotas and penalties and conditions support on compliance with various restric-

tions, but provides nothing new in the way of support methods. The bill is getting a thorough going-over in the senate, but still could be passed with little amendment.

Thomas Hill
The Thomas bill which proposed that potatoes be eliminated entirely from mandatory support is dead for the present but the idea could gain a strong foothold if pushed vigorously. Instead senators will offer an omnibus potato bill. The bill will seek to provide flexible support levels, acreage allotments, marketing quotas with penalties and no support if quotas are voted down. Production payments would be used to accomplish support.

Because of the provision for production payments, the bill stands no chance of passage. Without this feature, the bill, so far as potatoes are concerned, would provide nothing that is not already in the Anderson bill.

Confections, Tooth Foes, Says Dentist

SPOKANE, Oct. 13 (AP)—Confection manufacturers won't like what a dental surgeon had to say at the State Public Health association conference.

Dr. Walter J. Pelton of Denver, Colo., named candy, gum and soda pop as the chief causes of tooth decay. It isn't the form of the confection but the sugar in it that does the damage, he said.

Parents Accused
Dr. Pelton, senior dental surgeon for the U. S. public health service, also accused parents of doing more harm than good with "sweet tooth" rewards for obedience from their children.

"Many children find the candy dose in proportion to their behavior quotient," he said. "Many parents do not seem to realize the detrimental effect on the teeth."

'Forward Looking'
The speaker cited Lewiston, Idaho, as a "forward-looking community" for its use of treated water to prevent tooth decay. He said the cost per person had dropped from 19 cents per person to 14 or 15 cents. The chemical sodium fluoride is added to the water as a decay preventive.

Manure Loader A Scaffold

DES MOINES, Ia. (AP)—Homer Peters, who farms northeast of Alta, Ia., got his barn painted.

To make the job interesting for his two sons, Bruce and Dean, Peters fashioned a scaffolding by using his hydraulic-lift manure loader. He fastened a plank to the bucket end of the loader.

With the loader raised, the boys could stand on the plank and easily paint under the eaves. As they progressed downward they could lower the lift. Also, the boys had the fun of getting to move the tractor when a panel of the wall was completed.

MASONRY STRENGTH
The strength of a brick or other masonry unit wall depends upon the strength of the mortar joints. If mortar can be loosened by light scratching, the quality is poor.

SIGN OF WASTED HEAT
Heat is being wasted if the furnace room and basement is warmer than 70 degrees. The loss can be avoided by applying insulation to the furnace and heat pipes.

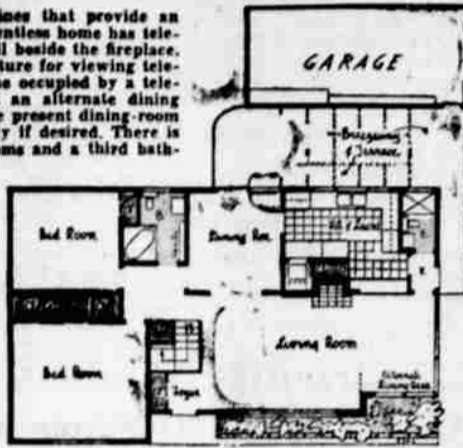
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Well-Proportioned Ranch House



In addition to gracefully proportioned lines that provide an eye-catching exterior, this ranch-style basementless home has television facilities built into the living-room wall beside the fireplace. This makes it unnecessary to rearrange furniture for viewing television and saves space that would be otherwise occupied by a television cabinet. The flexible design includes an alternate dining area at one end of the living-room so that the present dining room can be converted to a third bedroom or study if desired. There is space in the attic for two more large bedrooms and a third bathroom. Full-thick insulation with batts and blankets of mineral wool is estimated to save approximately one-fourth of the initial cost of the radiant hot water heating system in a home of this size. A long covered passageway leads from the garage at the rear to a vestibule opening into the living-room and kitchen.

This provides for easy access to the house from the garage in all weathers. The open room-planning of living-dining-room greatly enhances the feeling of spaciousness. The well-organized plan of bedroom wing at the left makes for easy access of all rooms. Kitchen, laundry and utilities are combined compactly. Window arrangement takes full advantage of the view.



Rats Plant Weed Seeds

Desert rats that gather reserve feed, store it in shallow caches, and leave many of these undisturbed, are practically planters of the stored seed. This is one of the important causes of the rapid invasion of grassy range lands by mesquite shrub. Mesquite, says the U. S. department of agriculture, displaces forage grasses and reduces the beef and wool production. In typical areas in Arizona the number of mesquite shrubs to the acre has increased by about 50 per cent in the last 15 years, the forest service reports from a study financed under the research and marketing act, a part of broader research looking to control of undesirable range shrubs.

Kangaroo Rat

The Merriam kangaroo rat is a small rodent that lives in the arid areas of the Southwest. The mesquite seed is one of its favorite foods. When the seeds are ripe, kangaroo rats gather them and store them in handful lots in shallow pits covered with an inch or so of soil. The rats are industrious and forehand and usually store more than they eat. Seeds they never recover are, for practical purposes, "planted" in these stores. Because of their very hard seedcoats, many mesquite seeds fail to germinate. But in storing the seeds, the rats gnaw the shells just enough to improve germination greatly. They act in something the manner of mechanical seed "scarifiers" used to improve the germination of sweet clover and other hard shelled crop seeds.

Cattle Planters

Cattle also eat mesquite seeds and scatter undigested seeds, but in field experiments H. G. Reynolds and G. E. Glendening of the Southwest forest and range experiment station have found that cattle also destroy many mesquite seedlings. Most rapid increase of mesquite developed on fenced small areas which keep out cattle and rabbits but admit the kangaroo rats.

Old Hen Still Lays Eggs

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP)—A hen old enough to vote is claimed by Pearl Halferty, a stock feeder for a railroad.

He said the 21-year-old hen is the last survivor of a flock of 50 roosters and 48 hens he bought in 1928. She still lays an egg now and then, he said.

ELIMINATE WALL BORDER

A small room will appear larger and ceiling higher if there is no division between ceiling and walls by molding or similar horizontal lines or border.



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Solid Brick Walls Need Insulation

Although many owners of homes of solid brick or masonry construction believe otherwise, it is twice as important to insulate the walls of these homes as to insulate the walls of a frame house, and four times as important to insulate the solid walls as the roof, it was asserted today by the Construction Research Bureau, New York clearing house for building information.

Studying tests conducted at the University of Illinois, the bureau said that 40 per cent of the season's fuel can be saved if the 8-inch-thick walls of a 2-story solid brick or masonry house are insulated with 3 1/2 inches of mineral wool between the brick and plaster. Insulation of this thickness in the walls of a frame house of the same size saves 19 per cent of the fuel. The difference is that solid masonry is a better conductor of heat than wood.

Units Saved

The tests showed that where 138 fuel units are required to heat a house with uninsulated walls 8 inches thick, 56 units can be saved with full-thick mineral wool, and that even one inch of mineral wool will save 45 units.

Fuel savings with 4 inches of this insulating material between roof and living area amount to 13 units in a frame house requiring 100 heat units, or in a solid masonry house requiring 138.

Evident
"From this it should be evident that side-wall insulation is a must for a solid masonry home and is of even more importance than roof insulation," the bureau said. "A 3 1/2-inch layer of mineral wool has the insulating efficiency of 12 feet of concrete."

French Provincial furniture now can be found in low priced bedroom and dining pieces.

BACKACHE, LEG PAINS MAY BE DANGER SIGN Of Tired Kidneys

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, you may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

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Forecast Puts Spud Crop Further Down

WASHINGTON, Oct. 13 (AP)—The agriculture department has forecast the nation's second largest crop in history for this year.

The indicated production of other crops compared with a month ago, last year and the ten-year average, respectively, included:

Corn 1,221,075,000 bushels for October; 1,214,258,000 a month ago; 1,491,742,000 last year and 1,234,982,000 for the ten-year average.

Dry field peas 3,418,000 bags; 3,418,000; 3,584,500 and 5,620,000, respectively.

Potatoes 378,805,000 bushels; 363,061,000; 445,850,000 and 393,403,000.

Sugar beets 9,882,000 tons; 9,865,000; 9,422,000; and 10,145,000.

Hops 49,511,000 pounds; 49,621,000; 49,819,000 and 44,146,000.

Apples (commercial) 132,126,000 bushels; 129,423,000; 88,407,000 and 111,114,000.

Peaches 75,114,000; 78,729,000; 65,352,000 and 68,947,000.

Pears 35,926,000; 35,505,000; 26,324,000 and 30,832,000.

Milk Down
The production of milk in September was reported at 9,390,000,000 pounds compared with 10,546,000,000 in August. Production in September last year was 9,124,000,000 pounds and 9,102,000,000 for the ten-year September average.

Production of eggs in September was reported at 3,576,000,000 compared with 3,853,000,000 in August. This compared with 3,516,000,000 in September last year and 3,004,000,000 for the ten-year September average.

Acres Outlook

The indicated yield per acre of major crops compared with last year and the ten-year average, respectively, included:

Corn 40.5 bushels per acre this year; 42.7 last year and 31.4 for the ten-year average.

All wheat 149.9; 17.9 and 16.6.

Winter wheat 16.1; 18.7 and 17.

Durum wheat 11.1; 14 and 14.5.

Other spring wheat 11.8; 16 and 15.5.

Potatoes 199.6 bushels; 212.4 and 145.5.

Stocks of wheat on farms were but at 459,556,000 bushels or 40.8 per cent of this year's crop. This compared with 546,151,000 bushels or 42.4 per cent a year ago and 492,852,000 or 49.9 per cent for the ten-year average.

By States

The indicated yield per acre and production, respectively, of important

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