

United States Department of Agriculture Page

Bulletins and Special Articles of Interest to the Northwest, Issued by the Government; Suggestions Covering a Wide Range of Activities; Results of Federal Investigations, Etc.

The City Man as a Farmer

Department of Agriculture advises city man who would be farmer to try it out as a farm hand before trying up his savings in a ranch.

THE Department of Agriculture receives many letters from city people who have read glowing accounts of the wealth that may be made on the farm. A large percentage of these people have already bought farm land. Some of them appear to believe that the reason all farmers are not rich is because of extravagance, wastefulness, ignorance, and a lack of business ability. To these letters the department's specialists reply much as follows:

"As a matter of fact, farmers as a class are intelligent, industrious and economical, and many of them are men of good business judgment. Further, those who have made a thorough study of the business side of farming know that it is not an easy matter to make money on the farm. Only the most practical and experienced farmers are making any considerable profit out of their business. Most of the money that has been made on the farm in recent years has been made, not by farming, but by the rise of price on farm lands. In the nature of things this rise can not continue indefinitely, and some one will own this land when the price becomes practically stationary or perhaps starts to decline.

"While it is true that occasionally a city bred family makes good on the farm, this is the exception and not the rule. It is always a risk to invest in a business without first making a thorough study of that business. Many city people who have saved up a few hundred dollars and who have had little or no

farm experience, but who are imbued with a rosy vision of the joys and profits in farming, buy poor land at high prices and thereby lose the savings they have been years in accumulating. One city family paid \$10,000 cash and assumed a \$12,000 mortgage on a farm worth only about \$11,000. Another paid \$2,000 cash and signed a mortgage for \$6,000 on a farm that was later appraised at \$3,000. A city family that had saved \$2,000 used this money to make a first payment on cheap farm land and when their eyes were opened found they still owed considerably more than the farm was worth. For seven years they have worked almost night and day to meet the interest, without being able to reduce the principal. These instances could be multiplied almost indefinitely.

"In purchasing a farm great care should be taken to get a good farm at a fair price. To pay or agree to pay more than the farm is worth is to invite failure. From a business standpoint no farm that does not pay interest on the total investment, depreciation on equipment and wages for all labor performed on that farm is successful.

"Even when great care is taken in making the investment only in exceptional cases should the city-bred family attempt farming. Generally the best advice that can be given to the city-bred man who decides to become a farmer is that before purchasing a farm he work as a farmhand for two or three years. This will give him an opportunity to learn at first hand many things about the business, as well as the practical side of farming. In no other way, as a rule, can he get good farm training and experience at less trouble and expense or without danger from financial disaster."

Table Sirup from Apples

The following article sent out by the Washington State College at Pullman, comments upon a bulletin of the United States Department of Agriculture, recently published in these columns, and suggests a modification of the recipe for making table sirup from apples.—Editor.

RECENTLY the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, released a paper on "Discover Way to Make Fine Table Sirup From Apples." The patent applied for is in the interest of the public and is believed to be of value in utilizing undesirable or unmarketable apples.

The paper containing the information shows that the sirup is made from apple cider and that one gallon of sirup is obtained from every seven gallons of cider. In some respects the sirup is similar to cider sirup that was known to us 20 years ago. In other respects this sirup is similar to cider butter.

Inasmuch as the new process was designed chiefly for the cider mill or other manufacturer who desires to manufacture and sell cider sirup, the question immediately arose as to whether or not such a process would be feasible. From the home manufacturer's point of view the introduction of milk of lime (slaked lime suspended in water) did not appear practicable because it would be difficult to teach the average person the right amount of milk of lime to use. As outlined there is another objection in that the addition of water contained in the milk of lime dilutes the cider and consequently increases the time for the concentration of the cider to the proper consistency.

Taking these objectionable features into consideration, Professor Geo. Olson of the State Experiment Station at Pullman, Wash., has modified the original process in such a manner as he believes to make it of practicable use to not only the cider mill, but also to the housewife. Whatever changes have been made in the process it is hoped that it will not modify the patent in any way whatsoever. With this understanding, any one who desires to make sirup according to the modified method does so without infringing upon anyone's personal rights.

The modified process as worked out at the Washington State Experiment Station Chemical laboratories differs from the U. S. Department method in that precipitated chalk (lime carbonate) is used in place of milk of lime and an untreated boiled apple cider is used to render the chalk treated cider slightly acid.

The ample addition of milk of lime or precipitated chalk changes the coloring matter in apple cider to an inky color. Lime also tends to impart a chalky flavor. Its chief use, however, is to neutralize the malic acid in the cider and form what is known as calcium malate.

The difference in the use of milk of lime compared with precipitated

chalk is in its limits of reaction. The milk of lime must be cautiously added so as to avoid an alkaline reaction, otherwise more cider will have to be added until the color of the liquid returns to an amber one. This moving from the alkaline to the slightly acid is not easily accomplished and in the hands of the average person may make a product varying more or less in flavor. On the other hand, precipitated chalk will react with the acid in the cider to form a neutral product (neither acid nor alkaline) and which is easily made slightly acid according to the following instructions

For every 100 pounds of cider add 1/2 pound (ample in most cases) of precipitated chalk or enough more to make the treated cider take on a bluish to blackish color. Boil the cider for five to ten minutes and filter while hot. Collect the filtered material into open kettles or pans, add five pounds of boiled and filtered apple cider that has not been treated with lime carbonate. Boil again until the cider has reduced to one-seventh its original volume, then filter under pressure. The sirup formed is "distinctive" in flavor and appearance.

Size of Business and Income

The size of the farm business is one of the most important factors in controlling the farmer's income. Points out the Department of Agriculture in the following article.

A CAREFUL study by Government experts in regard to the profits made by a large number of farmers in different parts of the United States shows that the size of the farm business is one of the most important factors controlling the farmer's income. The problem of how large an investment is needed in order to carry on a certain type of farming to advantage is of the utmost importance. The amount of this investment will vary according to the type of farming and to the region selected.

In a survey of over 100 farms in an irrigated district in Utah only three farm owners with less than \$10,000 total capital received a labor income of more than \$1,000 for their year's work.

By labor income in this case is meant what remains of the net income after deducting 6 per cent for invested capital and working capital; in other words, what the farmer himself receives for his year's work and supervision.

In a group of 35 of these men, who had small farms and an average capital of \$5,345, the average labor income was \$235. One out of every five received nothing for his labor and made less than 6 per cent interest on his farm investment. With high-priced land this amount of capital gave him too small an area to utilize to advantage. If land were cheaper, so that a much larger area could be obtained with this same amount of money, then \$10,000 might be a

sufficient investment to give the farmer a substantial income.

In the Central States, where corn, wheat and oats are the prevailing crops and where land is from \$150 to \$250 an acre, \$10,000 would be entirely too small an investment to yield the owner a good income for the reason that 40 to 50 acres, the total amount of land he could possibly buy with this amount of money, would not utilize his teams, machinery or labor to the fullest advantage.

On the other hand, the number of acres is not always a true measure, as a big business can be conducted on a small area. Twenty acres of truck and small fruits may equal a 200-acre farm devoted to grain, hay, cattle and hogs. It is the type of farming that determines the number of acres necessary for efficient operation. Many persons have made the mistake of buying too high-priced land for successful general farming. In other words, they paid truck farming prices for land which on account of market relations should be used for only grain and general farming.

The proportion of the total investment that should be used as working capital is equally as important as size of investment. Generally speaking, about 75 per cent to 88 per cent of the farmer's investment is in real estate, the other 12 per cent to 25 per cent being in livestock and other equipment. This proportion will vary according to the type of farming followed. In regions where dairying is the main enterprise, the amount of working capital may represent one-fourth of the entire investment.

A third point in the consideration of the farmer's investment is the quality of material in which working capital is invested. This is espe-

cially true in regard to livestock. Investigations relating to profits in farming show conclusively that the efficiency of the animals to which the crops are fed is one of the most important factors in determining the farmer's net income. This is to be expected, since on many farms in this country the bulk of the crops is in reality sold to the dairy herd or to meat producing animals. If these are of such poor quality that they yield low returns for their feed the income to the farmer must be correspondingly small. Hence, no matter how large the total investment, if the quality of the equipment is deficient financial failure is inevitable.

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