

In the Field of Agriculture

WHAT IS THE FARMER'S REAL INCOME

Extensive investigations into the profits of farming have indicated that the amount of money which the average farmer receives for his year's work is little more than that which he would be paid if he hired himself out as a farm hand to one of his neighbors. In other words, though

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the farmer is in business for himself, the average farmer gets little or no money reward for the intelligence and skill with which he has managed his affairs or the risk and responsibility he has assumed. But he must get something in return, or no one would trouble to farm for himself. A recent study conducted by experts in the United States department of agriculture shows that in many cases the reward may best be found in the products with which his farm furnishes him directly. When a farm is nearly, if not quite, self-sustaining, say agricultural experts, when it supplies the family that lives upon it with most of the necessities of life, a large money income is not necessary to prosperity. A greater sum derived from a farm which yields nothing for home consumption may leave the occupants much worse off.

Under the title of Farmers' Bulletin 635, "What the Farm Contributes Directly to the Farmer's Living," the department of agriculture is about to publish the results of a survey of conditions on a large number of farms in the ten states of North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Vermont. The farm selected for study, though possibly a little more prosperous than the average, were fairly representative of their sections which, it will be noted, included three corn and cotton areas, two states in the corn and wheat belt, two regions where general farming was carried on, and three different dairy districts. The average value of the chief necessities of life—food, fuel, oil, and shelter—used each year by the farm family the investigators found to be \$595.08. Of these necessities, estimated in money, the portion contributed directly by the farm was \$427.17, leaving \$173.91 to be purchased with the cash obtained from the sale of products. In considering these figures it must be remembered that if the farmer had been compelled to pay city prices for his home grown necessities, this \$421.17 would have represented much less comfort.

SOURCE OF FARM FOODS

Of the food consumed 63 per cent was furnished by the farm. This proportion varied greatly in the different sections but was greatest in the locality studied in North Carolina, where the farm supplied 82.3 per cent of the food consumed while the average in the New York locality was only 50.4. In view of the present economic crisis in the south, this fact is regarded as of particular significance since it demonstrates the extent to which with a proper system of agriculture, southern farmers can be made self-sustaining. Concentration upon one cash crop, cotton, has proved disastrous, and agricultural authorities are now trying in every way to induce the people to adopt a system which will lead to conditions similar to those now prevailing in this particular area of North Carolina.

In this connection the investigation revealed some interesting facts in regard to the four items of groceries, animal products, fruits, and vegetables in the average farm family's food bill. Of the value of the food consumed groceries constituted practically one-quarter, animal products more than one half, vegetables 11.6 per cent, and fruit only 0.3.

Practically all of the groceries were bought; on the other hand the quantity of fruits and vegetables used was in direct proportion to the quantity raised on the farm and where this quantity was great the grocery bill was correspondingly low. This was also found to be true of animal products, including, of course, not only butcher's meat, but poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, etc. Where these were abundant on the farm, fewer groceries were purchased. Since the grocery bill was found to be ordinarily two-thirds of the entire amount expended in cash for food, one very obvious and effective way of economizing appears to be to raise more vegetables, more fruit, more milk and eggs. In many cases, experts say, this can be done with no appreciable increase in trouble or expense.

Next to food, shelter is probably the most important necessity of life. In considering the farmer's income, however, a common error in the past has been to ignore the question of house rent. The value of the house has usually been included in the value of the land, and the whole considered as capital invested on which interest must be paid before the farmer can be regarded as receiving any pay at all. This method, however, assumes that the farm family is to have shelter for nothing—an assumption which the city worker with whom it is not unusual to pay out from one-third to one-quarter of his entire wages for rent alone would regard as most astonishing.

COSTS OF THE FARM HOMES

According to the recent investigation, if the average farmer had to pay rent, his home would cost him \$125 a year. This figure represents 10 per cent of the value of the average house. Including interest, depreciation and repairs, this is regarded as a fair rental charge for the class of houses usually found on the farm.

With the information at their command, the investigators were also in a position to compute the average cost of board and lodging on the farm. In this they included an item very easily forgotten—the value of the house work performed by members of the family. This was reckoned on the basis of the wages that would have had to be paid for hired assistance. Including this with the more obvious charges for food, fuel, light, and rent, it was found that board and lodging for each individual averaged \$14.62 a month. But of this sum, it is interesting to note, the farmer paid out in cash only 22 per cent. Exclusive of lodging, the board of the average hired man cost \$10 a month, but here again the farmer had only to pay \$3. The remaining \$7 was furnished by the farm as a result presumably of the hired man's own efforts.

The averages obtained as the result of this investigation are not, of course to be taken as mathematically exact for the entire country. In the opinion of agricultural experts, however, they point with convincing emphasis to the possibilities of comfort and prosperity that may be realized by a fuller utilization of all the farm's resources. Cash crops are not the sole, and on the average they are not even the chief source of real income. It is really what the farm furnishes directly to the farmer that enables him to support his family. To increase the quantity and quality

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