

Program of Food Production and Conservation

The secretary of agriculture requested the state agricultural officials and representatives of the agricultural colleges in all the states from New York to the Rocky Mountains to meet him in St. Louis to discuss the agricultural situation in the present national crisis. The conference convened at the Jefferson hotel at 10 o'clock Monday, April 9, and continued through Tuesday. Thirty-two states were represented by sixty-five officials and the department by the secretary of agriculture and the chiefs of the bureau of plant industry and the office of markets and rural organization.

After a thorough discussion of the major problems involved, the conference decided to deal with the whole subject matter in four major divisions:

1. Production and labor.
2. Distribution and prices.
3. Economy and utilization.
4. Effective organization.

A representative committee of 15 was appointed by the conference to formulate its views on these subjects and to submit suggestions for courses of action. Subcommittees were appointed by this committee to deal with each of the enumerated matters. The subcommittees reported to the full committee, which in turn reported to the conference.

After consideration of the report of the committee of 15, the conference decided to express its views and to urge the courses of action, as indicated below:

THE FARMER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Upon the farmer rests in large measure the final responsibility of winning the war in which we are now involved. The importance to the nation of an adequate food supply, especially for the present year, can not be overemphasized. The world's food reserve is very low. Not only our own consumers, but much of the world at large, must rely more completely than ever before upon the American farmer. Therefore, the man who tills the soil and supports the soldier in the field and the family at home is rendering as noble and patriotic a service as is the man who bears the brunt of battle.

The American farmer has long shown his ability to produce more food per man and at lower cost per unit than any other farmer in the world, but he has never had to do his best. He needs to do his best now. This is not the time in which to experiment with new and untried crops and processes. It is very important that the farmer devote his principal efforts to the production of such crops and the employment of such methods as are well established in his community and as are likely to yield the maximum return in food and clothing material.

Within the next 60 days the final measure of crop acreage and food production for this year will have been established. We urge the importance of the immediate mobilization of all available service of the federal and state departments of agriculture in co-operation with the press, the banks, the commercial organizations, the religious and the social societies that all may heartily join with the farmer in performing the patriotic duty of providing and conserving food.

Because of the world shortage of food, it is scarcely possible that the production of staple crops by the farmers of the United States can be too great this year. There is every reason to believe that a generous price will be paid for the harvest of their fields.

INCREASING THE FOOD SUPPLY

There is yet time to add substantially to the bread supply by increasing the acreage of spring wheat in northern states. Throughout the United States, east of the one hundredth meridian, the corn area may be increased to advantage, with a view to its uses both for human food and animal production.

The production of a normal crop is necessary. This can best be accomplished by more intensive cultivation and increased fertilization rather than by increasing the acreage and thus neglecting the food and forage crops so important to the South.

In the districts where wheat has been winter killed replanting is suggested with oats, corn, or sorghum, as climatic conditions may determine. Where barley and oats are proved and reliable crops, they should be planted to the maximum that can be effectively handled. In portions of the northern and eastern states, where the season is too short for the great staple crops, the buckwheat acreage may well be increased.

An important increase in our food supply may be made by enlarging the area planted to navy beans in the north and west and to Mexican and Tepary beans in the southwest, and by stimulating in every reasonable way an increase in the area of potatoes planted, especially for local use.

Sweet potatoes in the south will undoubtedly be needed in their fresh state in larger quantity than usual and also for storing for winter use either in their natural state or as canned or desiccated products.

Where peanuts succeed, production may well be enlarged because of their value both as food and forage. A reasonable seed reserve for replanting tilled crops should be held wherever practicable.

While it is important to utilize available lands in the staple small grains and tilled crops, care should be taken to avoid undue encroachment on the area used for pasturage or hay which is required for live-stock production.

Authority should be granted the secretary of agriculture to advance to farmers under proper safeguards seeds required to insure the production of crops decided to be necessary for the welfare of the nation.

THE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S PART

We appeal to the youth of the nation to put forth every effort to produce foodstuffs in gardens and fields. There could be no better expression of true patriotic devotion to the country. It has been demonstrated through the boys' and girls' clubs that it is possible for the farm family to supply itself with much of the food required, thereby releasing the commercial product of the country for the needs of the people in the cities and in foreign lands.

In a normal season it is certain that there will be large quantities of perishable products which can not be properly preserved in the home. To meet this emergency it is recommended that local and municipal drying and canning establishments be improvised to conserve this material.

KEEPING UP THE MEAT SUPPLY

The live-stock holdings of the farmers of the United States are already too low. It would be unfortunate if these numbers be diminished further under the pressure of the present demand for food. Indeed, an early increase of the animal products of the country should be made. Such an increase must come chiefly through the enlarging of our feed supply by more successful methods of feeding, and through more complete control of contagious diseases.

Milk production could be increased fully one-fourth by more liberal and intelligent feeding. Pork production could be increased substantially through the more extensive use of fall litters, better care, and feeding. The poultry products of the United States could be doubled within a year.

Contagious diseases of farm animals take a toll of more than a quarter of a billion dollars annually. More than half of this loss is due to controllable diseases, such as hog cholera, blackleg, and Texas fever. The federal government, co-operating with the states, could profitably expand its intensive regulatory services so as to embrace every important live-stock district in this country.

MOBILIZING FARM LABOR

One of the principal limiting elements of food production is the labor supply on the farm. Indiscriminate enlistment from the farms with no plan for labor replacement will reduce food production below its present low level.

The plan for public defense should include

as definite a provision for enlistment for food supply as for service at the front.

In addition to more than one-half of those applying for enlistment and rejected because of unfitness for military service, there are more than two million boys between the ages of 15 and 19 years in the cities and towns not now engaged in productive work vital to the nation in the present war emergency. These constitute the most important hitherto unorganized and unutilized labor resource available for this emergency.

In consideration of all these facts the plan of military enlistment should be broadened so as to include in a national service those who, by reason of their age or physical condition, are permanently or temporarily incapacitated for active military duty but who are able to render to the government equally indispensable service in the production of food, supplies, and munitions.

This enlistment should include three classes: Men beyond military age; men of military age but not accepted for active military duty; and boys under age for enlistment.

The government should make plans at once for the mobilization of this important resource for the production of food and other necessities. This proposed enlistment in the national service should be regarded as part of the public patriotic service in the present war emergency and be given proper official recognition.

THE HARVEST EMERGENCY

The husbanding of a matured crop promptly is often the most vital and crucial point in production and is the point of the heaviest labor demand on the farm. We suggest that the federal department of agriculture, co-operating with the state departments of agriculture and other agencies, should take steps to mobilize sufficient farm labor to meet all emergencies which may arise.

A SURVEY OF THE FOOD SUPPLY

We suggest the importance of a thorough-going survey of the food, labor, and other resources of the country and of the needs of the local communities to the end that every part of the country may be maintained in effective service. Therefore, we recommend:

That power be conferred upon the secretary of agriculture, in co-operation with the federal trade commission so far as practicable, to secure such information regarding the food supply of the nation and all business enterprises related thereto as may be necessary to enable congress to legislate suitably for the protection of the people in the existing crisis and for the information of the nation in its daily conduct, giving the secretary of agriculture for this purpose power to administer oaths, to examine witnesses, and to call for the production of books and papers, with means of enforcement and penalties.

That authority be conferred upon the secretary of agriculture to establish market grades and classes of farm products, including seeds, and standards for receptacles for such products. For this purpose he should consult the various trades concerned. The established grades for corn and wheat undoubtedly will be of much advantage in purchasing supplies, and the establishment of grades for other products will be fully justified for the same purpose. Furthermore, such standards, with a suitable degree of supervision of their application, will result in returning to the producer the value of the particular qualities he produces, thus encouraging adequate production in the future. This is of special importance in connection with the perishable crops, but applies with almost equal force to the staples.

The secretary of agriculture should be authorized by law to license warehouses, packing plants, mills, cold storages, produce exchanges, co-operative and other shipping associations, commission merchants, auctioneers, brokers, jobbers, wholesale distributors, and other individuals, partnerships, associations, and corporations engaged in the business of marketing and distributing farm and food products. When directed by the President, the secretary should have power, after advising with the council of national defense as to the necessity of such a step, to take over and operate such of these businesses as may be warranted, in a manner similar to receivership.

In order to facilitate the solution of transport-