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South Dakota's Farm Labor Program 1943-1947

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South Dakota's FARM LABOR PROGRAM 1943-1947

Extension Service's Part in Meeting the Farm Help Shortage

Agricultural Extension Service
South Dakota State College - Brookings
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Acknowledgement

South Dakota farm families can be justly proud of their achievements during the war and post-war years. Their all-time record of farm production was made in spite of the heavy odds against them. Through an all-out effort to meet the great demands made of them for food, feed and fiber, they performed miracles of production for five consecutive years.

During World War II this great effort resulted in South Dakota’s farm production increasing 50 per cent, while the farmer increased his output 60 per cent, in face of a reduction of 10 per cent fewer workers, many of which were inexperienced in farm work. This remarkable production was a vital contribution to the winning of the war, and is proving of even greater importance in winning the peace.

In addition to the farmer and his family, thousands of local people with no farm experience volunteered their services in the production of farm crops. They were a great help to farmers and deserve due credit for their contribution.

Through the farm labor program, the South Dakota Extension Service organized a program for recruitment and placement of labor and custom machines. The extent to which farmers were benefitted by this service is indicated by the fact that 263,280 placements of farm workers, and 8,116 placements of combines were performed by the program from 1943 through 1947.

We herewith wish to acknowledge assistance received from cooperating agencies and organizations. We extend our appreciation especially to the radio stations, the press, the labor branch of the Production and Marketing Administration, the Seventh Service Command, the War Manpower Commission, the United States Employment Service, the Selective Service, the Governor of South Dakota, the State Department of Agriculture, the State Highway Commission, local chambers of commerce, and schools, as well as many other organizations and individuals.

W. E. Dittmer
State Supervisor
Emergency Farm Labor Program

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South Dakota’s
Five Year Farm Labor Program

Farm Worker Placements
1943-1947

During the war years and immediately following, South Dakota farmers, like those in other states, were asked to produce to the limit of their ability, their farm, and their soil. This food was needed during the war to feed our greatest armed forces in history. Following the war American production was kept at record pitch to help stave off starvation in the war-ravaged countries abroad.

South Dakota farmers met that challenge, despite the handicaps of hard-to-get equipment, manpower, seed and transportation shortages.

With the exception of those factors the farm production situation during the years of World War II was ideal. Better-than-average weather blessed the state, and improved methods and adapted crop varieties had increased South Dakota’s production potential.

Ideal weather, plus experiment-proven crops, however, can do little toward producing record crops without the manpower to seed, tend and harvest them. By 1942 the help situation on the nation’s farms had become extremely critical.

Recognizing that the lack of labor was threatening crop production, Congress enacted Public Law 45 on April 29, 1943.

Known as the Farm Labor Supply Act, this law gave the Agricultural Extension Service the responsibility of supplying agricultural labor.

It authorized the Extension Service and its county agents to work with local advisory committees in planning, organizing and developing their farm labor program in a manner that would best fit their own situation. It provided funds for each state to carry out its farm labor program. Cooperation between counties and states in planning and administering the program was encouraged.

Thus Public Law 45 not only enabled farmers to meet their production goals by assisting them in obtaining manpower, but became an integral part of the Agricultural Extension Service program.
Food production from vast grain fields was threatened by lack of competent farm help.

**Farmers Faced Increased Goals, No Help in 1943**

Calls to the service with the entrance of America into World War II, coupled with high-paid jobs in industry joined to make the farm help situation most critical by 1943.

For farmers in the Great Plains area, including South Dakota, this problem was the largest obstacle in the way of the record production asked of them. Equipment shortages were circumvented by improvising—but without help on the farm, especially during harvest time, the record acres planted could not reach our fighting forces as food.

Of all the work done by men on South Dakota farms, nearly half was done by men eligible for induction. The Tydings Amendment to the Selective Training and Service Act, passed in November, 1942, helped retain many necessary young men.

This act provided for deferment of registrants found necessary to and regularly engaged in agriculture so long as they remained so engaged and were irreplaceable. In spite of this provision for keeping necessary men on the farm, a large number of farm boys entered the services, and workers to replace them were hard to find.

Shortages of cars, gasoline and tires severely cut down the flow of migrant workers, which usually furnishes a large portion of the state's harvest crews.

Farm wage rates and working conditions were usually less attractive than the employment inducements offered by wartime industry.

From 1940 until 1943, 40 per cent of the farm workers in South Dakota left the farm for the armed forces and war industries, reducing the number of hired workers from 30,000 to 18,000. In 1942 South Dakota produced more with the smallest supply of labor of any state.

With the increased production expected of them in 1943, it was obvious that the farmer needed assistance in recruiting help.
County Agents Namea 'It'
To Find Farm Workers

Whenever a problem concerning helping the farmer arises, rural communities have long looked to the county extension agent for assistance.

And, so it was with the execution of Public Law 45 in 1943. It was entirely natural for the county extension agent to be the nucleus around which the whole farm labor program evolved and through which it performed its service.

A state advisory committee determined the policy of the farm labor program in South Dakota; a state office staff directed and coordinated the activities, but the county agent was the man who actually received labor requests from farmers, and placed the men on the farms.

Heading the state office staff was the director of extension. The state supervisor of farm labor was responsible to the director for all phases of the farm labor program. Assistant state supervisors were in charge of the Volunteers for Victory youth recruitment setup, and the Women’s Land Army. The Extension editor had charge of publicity, publications and printing necessary to the program. District Extension supervisors were responsible for personnel, organization and administration for their respective districts.

The state was divided into nine areas, with area offices responsible for assisting counties in their areas, and reporting the area situation to the state office. Provision was made for labor assistants and clerical help in area offices and counties where farm labor activities were greatest. County labor assistants were appointed in counties where there was no county agent. Volunteer labor representatives, usually store keepers or gas station operators, served on a gratis basis assisting county agents and farm labor assistants.

Neighborhood leaders made a valuable contribution by cooperating in developing a system of labor and machinery exchange, surveying labor needs, and assisting to recruit and place workers and combines.

County agents set up farm labor offices at central points to expedite labor movement.
Getting Harvest in
Biggest Seasonal
Farm Labor Job

In 1943 the first custom combine pro-
gram was organized and operated in coop-
eration with the AAA, with headquarters
in Huron. County agents took the combine
orders and placed both local and itinerant
combines.

The needs for out-of-county combines
were relayed to the county AAA commit-
tee, who in turn sent the orders to the state
AAA committee. The state AAA com-
mittee contacted similar committees in
other states to give them the South Dakota
situation for use by operators following the
harvest. The state Extension Service had a
representative working with the state AAA
committee in Huron.

In 1946 the entire responsibility for the
combine recruitment and placement pro-
gam was shifted to the Extension Service.
Three years of experience with the AAA
in conducting the combine program pro-
vided the groundwork for the setup as con-
ducted by the Extension Service.

The information program was expand-
ed, and worked closely with county and
area representatives. Daily communication
with other states averted pile-up of ma-
chines where work was completed, and
served to route the combines to ripe fields
still standing.

The farm labor custom combine pro-
gam did more than meet the needs of
farmers who had combined their small
grain in years past. It started a trend to-
ard more combining, and less binding,
shocking, and threshing, that grew with
each year of the program.
During the five years from 1943 through 1947 a total of 8,116 combines were placed on South Dakota farms by the farm labor program. By years, the placements were: 1943—300; 1944—600; 1945—1,000; 1946—2,656, and 1947—3,560.

South Dakota, a Great Plains state, is one of the nation’s largest producers of small grain. As such, production of cereal crops was the main job for South Dakota farmers in helping to win the war for food. Each spring record and near-record acreages were sown to wheat, oats, barley and rye. Farm help was needed then. In late summer these acreages were ready for harvest. Farm help was needed again.

By far the greatest source of worker supply for planting and harvesting South Dakota’s small grain is the flow of migratory workers and combines, which for years has followed the harvest from Texas, north to the Canadian border. Transportation difficulties, caused by automobile, tire and gasoline shortages, slowed up this flow during the years when help was needed most.

In attempting to expedite the movement of this harvest help to places where they were needed most, the farm labor program set up a system of daily harvest information, including newspaper articles and radio announcements.

Even though transportation difficulties cut down on the number of migrant workers, this group still made up 60 per cent of the harvest help total in 1943, the first year the farm labor program operated.

Combines are the second integral requirement to the small grain harvest. Even during normal years, farmers in the Great Plains states depend on custom combines for a big share of the harvest work.
Volunteers from all occupations helped farmers to harvest record grain crops.

**Lawyers, Merchants, Scouts . . . All Were Harvest Volunteers**

Harvest crews of business and professional men, boys, girls, and even women helped farmers in their communities harvest record yields of grain without material loss during the war years.

These patriotic citizens, realizing the seriousness of their rural neighbors' plight, proved to be a very important source of seasonal labor. In 1943 they made up 40 per cent of South Dakota's harvest help; in 1944, 30 per cent, and 20 per cent in 1945.

How did this program work? County extension agents and volunteer farm labor representatives surveyed the vicinities for help needed. Results of these surveys were turned over to such organizations as chambers of commerce, schools, and boy and girl scout troops. These groups went all out to recruit all local help possible.

They made a canvass of people in their town, listing the names of business and professional men, youth and women who were willing to go out in harvest crews, and when they could go. These lists were furnished county agents and volunteer farm representatives. Crew captains were selected, and crews made up to go out at the particular days, afternoons or evenings they were available.

As county agents and volunteer labor representatives received calls from farmers for harvest crews, they in turn contacted crew leaders, who lined up the rest of their crews to go out and take care of the orders received.

These locally recruited workers went out to farms in crews of five or more, at current farm wages. In addition to harvest work they frequently assisted with such seasonal jobs as haying and detasseling corn, and other jobs for which farmers needed help to prevent losses caused by delays.

The contribution of these town citizens did considerable to alleviate local farm labor emergencies.
Students, town men, contract workers aided in seasonal sugar beet production.

Specialized Program Developed to Assist Sugar Beet Growers

Butte county, South Dakota, located at the top of the Black Hills region, has a highly specialized type of agriculture. Years ago, it was found that the Butte county soil and climate were very satisfactory for growing sugar beets. Since then, many of Butte county’s farmers have adopted almost entirely, the growing of sugar beets as their principal crop.

As any housewife can testify, sugar too, was one of the hard-to-gets during World War II. Consequently, in order to encourage the production of this vital food item, the farm labor program was authorized to assist the growers in obtaining necessary help.

From 1944 through 1947 a total of almost 4,000 workers were furnished sugar beet growers—3,973, to be exact. These workers included Mexican Nationals, Texas-Mexicans, German prisoners of war, Jamaicans, Navajo Indians, Japanese Evacuees, Sioux Indians, high school students and other types of workers. This labor force met the needs of 1,858 farmers and ranchers.

A farm labor organization was developed so there would be a legal body to contract for the laborers. A farm labor office was established and labor assistants employed. The assistants made placements upon requests from farmers, and gave instruction to the workers on how to perform the work assigned.

A former CCC camp was equipped to house prisoners of war, and in later years the camp was used to house and feed Mexican National and Jamaican workers.

The main work performed by these workers consisted of thinning, hoeing, weeding and topping sugar beets. However, during rush seasons, these men also doubled in shocking and threshing grain, picking potatoes, picking cucumbers, lambing, herding and shearing sheep.

The confidence sugar beet growers had in the farm labor program did much to maintain the Butte county sugar beet acreage.
Hard-Working Town Boys Joined Victory Farm Volunteers

From 1943 through 1947 a major “back to the farm” movement was in progress every summer in South Dakota.

It began when school let out in the spring, and continued until the bells tolled classes in the fall. Town boys, from 12 to 17 years old, were the subjects of this movement, and the Extension Service farm labor program was behind it. These boys were “Victory Farm Volunteers.”

Early in the farm labor program, it became evident that one of the best sources for farm help was the town youth. However, it was not one of the most available sources. In the larger towns industry made an attractive bid for the services of high school age boys . . . and, industry paid good wages.

Most parents were agreed that farm work offered much that industrial employment could not. They recognized that farm living is healthful, develops resourcefulness and individuality. The problem, then, was to attract the boys themselves, to farm work during their vacation months.

With this situation in mind, the farm labor program launched the “Victory Farm Volunteers” program, designed to serve two purposes—furnishing the farmer with needed help, and assisting town youth to find gainful summer employment at good pay.

This program was a three-fold one, including recruitment, training and placement.

Recruitment entailed contacting the boys and giving them the picture on farm jobs.
South Dakota school officials cooperated by giving the Extension Service an opportunity to present their case to school assemblies.

The training phase was dominated by Extension Service conducted schools, teaching the town boys essentials of what they should know for farm work. Typical of these was the series on tractor maintenance and operation, held in the spring. Farm implement companies furnished equipment and instructors and schools cooperated by excusing from regular classes boys who wanted to attend the one-day tractor school when it was given in their town.

Placement was no problem after the first year, when farmers saw that the boys learned quickly and were interested.

During the five years from 1943 through 1947 a total of 17,453 boys between 12 and 17 were employed on South Dakota farms. An average of 300 town boys worked on farms each day during the summer of 1947.

Two types of employment were usually used—crews and “live-ins.” Crews were younger boys supervised by a crew leader. They went out in groups to farms each morning, and did such work as pulling cockleburs, picking rocks and detasseling corn. The “live-ins” stayed on farms during their time of employment and did all types of work, from bringing in the cows to driving the tractor.

Supervising the program, on a part time basis were the assistant state farm labor supervisor, farm labor assistants and county agents. Some school instructors served as farm labor assistants, and gave valuable assistance because of their close contact with urban youth.
Potato production is a major agricultural industry in northeastern South Dakota.

Contract Workers Were Answer to Potato Harvest Labor Problem

A major seasonal phase of the farm labor program came each fall at potato harvest time.

Although confined principally to two counties—Clark and Codington—potato growers were plagued with help shortages because their harvest overlapped with the small grain and sugar beet harvests. Competition for workers between the three types of growers became acute and complicated the situation.

Contract workers proved to be the solution. It became an annual practice for potato growers to contract for Texas-Mexican, Mexican Nationals and interstate workers to supplement available local help.

While potato growers at first were hesitant to hire Texas-Mexican and Mexican National workers, they soon learned that these workers did the job well. Interstate contract workers entered the potato harvests with no prejudices, and performed very satisfactorily.

In addition to contracting for workers and providing transportation, the farm labor program arranged for housing for many of the men and their families. Growers with small acreages furnished lodging with their own families, but the large growers, who employed from 10 to 50 workers each, could not do this. The influx of workers for the small grain harvest also complicated the housing situation, and normal lodging was virtually unobtainable. However, large warehouses, armories, and other buildings, furnished with equipment obtained from the army, were the answer to the temporary housing problem.

From 1944 through 1947 a total of 679 contract workers were brought into Clark and Codington counties for jobs in the potato harvest. Of this total 353 were Mexican Nationals, 226 interstate contract workers, and 100 Texas-Mexicans. Local help, city youth and transient workers also were recruited for work in the potato fields.
Many farmers are quick to admit that a lot of the jobs they do every day take more time than they seem to warrant. Consequently, that time cannot be used in doing other necessary duties. Late hours or more help is the result.

In view of the extreme shortages of farm help during the war years, the Extension Service farm labor program included provisions for developing ideas and devices for saving work on the farm. This information was then passed on to the farmers in an effort to minimize as many of his numerous tasks as possible. Frequently the use of these devices and ideas cut down farmers' work so they didn't need to hire that hard-to-find worker.

Stress also was placed on exchange of labor and equipment, which contributed much to reducing demands for additional help.

Through farm visits, labor-saving shows and meetings, 49,170 farmers were assisted with labor-saving methods and sharing of labor and equipment during the five-year tenure of the farm labor program. In 192 communities organized programs for the exchange of labor and equipment were carried out.

In addition to meetings, state and county fair exhibits and visits, labor-saving ideas were brought to the attention of farmers by newspaper and magazine articles, picture slides, and motion pictures.

Through the South Dakota State College agricultural engineering department, bulletins and blueprints of labor-saving ideas were sent to farmers showing how to make various labor-saving devices. Plans of short cuts and labor-saving ideas were obtained from neighboring states and distributed to South Dakota farmers.

The scarce labor supply, plus the Extension Service's program of information on labor saving encouraged farmers to adopt techniques that not only reduced help requirements, but increased their efficiency of operation.
Glamour came to South Dakota's grain fields during World War II, as farm and city belles joined harvest crews.

4,015 non-farm women aided in farm work from 1943-47. Tractor school were held to teach operation technique.

Women's Land Army Flocked to Fields To Get Crops in

When credit is given for contributions to the 1943-47 fight for food, South Dakota femininity can rightly claim her share. For during these years they volunteered for farm work in order to get the record crops in, and performed a valuable service to the farmer and to the nation.

Under the title, "Women's Land Army," farm women, business women, school teachers, Girl Scouts, and others worked on farms. They did such work as shocking small grain, driving tractors, assisting in the potato harvest, and helping with farm chores so men could spend longer days in the fields.

The Women's Land Army was part of the Extension Service farm labor program. It was designed to enlist the assistance of women for such farm tasks as they could perform, in order to supplement the farm labor force.

In organizing this group, the Extension Service contacted such organizations as the Parent-Teachers association, Federated Women's clubs, local business and professional women's clubs, and the Girl Scouts.
Leaders of these organizations were requested to stimulate interest in the Women's Land Army, and to assist in recruiting women willing to help farmers in their localities. Excellent cooperation was received.

Recognizing that many potential members of the Women's Land Army had little or no farm experience, schools were conducted for training them for farm duties. In 1945 twelve tractor schools were held. Health, safety, meal and chore short-cuts were emphasized at these meetings.

From 1943 through 1947 a total of 4,015 non-farm women worked on South Dakota farms. They were most active in 1944, when 1,903 assisted farmers with their record crops.

However great this spirit of the non-farm woman was, the contribution of the farm women was even greater. With normal farm help virtually unobtainable, these women lengthened their day to include everything from milking cows to shocking oats ... all in addition to their normal household duties.
Interstate Workers Contracted for
By Farm Labor Associations

South Dakota small grain farmers are giving a lot of credit for getting crops in on time to the interstate worker. He came from Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, or Tennessee, and was an integral part of the farm labor program from 1943 through 1947.

The nucleus of the interstate agricultural worker program was the county farm labor association. These associations were composed of farmers who needed labor for a definite period during the small grain harvest, and incorporated so workers could be contracted for. Farmers belonging to the association ordered a certain number of workers for a specified time of work, and paid a deposit for each worker ordered.

The Extension Service received these orders from the county associations, and sent word to Extension Services in the states from which the workers would come. These states, through a screening system, selected men qualified for the jobs, and sent them to South Dakota, chaperoned by farm labor personnel.

Both the farmer who had work to be done, and the worker, were happy with the contract arrangement. The farmer knew he was going to get the help he needed for the time he needed it, and at a fair rate of pay. Barring unsatisfactory weather conditions, his crops were in the bin with a minimum amount of loss.

For the worker, the arrangement also was ideal. He left for South Dakota knowing what his minimum earnings would be, how long he would be gone (usually four to six weeks), and was assured round-trip transportation.

During the five-year period a total of 3,989 interstate agricultural workers were brought into South Dakota through the farm labor program. The effect that these workers had on the general labor situation was immense. They came when help was needed most, and left when the job was completed. The interstate worker program did much to help win the battle for food production from 1943-47.

Extension agents placed interstate workers on farms and looked after their interests.
Foreign Workers Eased Seasonal Farm Labor Shortages

Critical shortages of seasonal farm labor showed up early during the war years. One of the hardest hit groups was the sugar beet industry in western South Dakota.

The first foreign workers brought into the state under the farm labor program were for the sugar beet growers. These farmers are almost entirely dependent on outside labor for thinning, weeding and blocking beets in the spring, and for harvest in the fall.

Mexican Nationals and Japanese evacuees made up this first group in 1943. Later Jamaicans were contracted for.

Although the workers were brought in for work in sugar beets, farmers learned that the Mexican Nationals could be used to advantage at other work during the slack period in sugar beet work. During this interim they were put at such work as shocking grain, driving trucks and tractors, husking corn, picking potatoes, and became general farm and ranch hands.

Mexican Nationals lived in Extension Service operated farm labor camps in western and eastern South Dakota for sugar beet, pickle and potato work. In western South Dakota, for other work, they also lived in tenant houses, doing their own cooking and house work, and sometimes lived with the farm and ranch families themselves.

The Extension Service furnished the workers with Spanish magazines, papers and translation books, and prepared a job instruction book in Spanish to assist in training them.

Foreign workers were furnished transportation and guaranteed a minimum amount of work at a fixed rate of pay.

The five-year total of foreign laborers brought into South Dakota included 5,348 Mexican Nationals, 200 Jamaicans and 57 Japanese evacuees. They earned almost a million dollars in wages, and saved many times that amount in crops through their work.
Extension agents worked with army officers in arranging for use of war prisoners.

Prisoners of War Were Source Of Labor in 1944-45

German prisoners of war were certified by the Extension Service for farm work in critical farm labor shortage areas during 1944 and 1945. They were used principally near Belle Fourche and Milbank, and assisted with such work as sugar beet production and harvest, pickle harvest, haying and small grain harvest, potato harvest and corn harvest.

The agriculturally-minded Germans proved very satisfactory for any of the jobs they were assigned. Those working in the grain harvest shocked an average of 10 acres a day per man, and other tasks they were put to were done equally satisfactorily.

Prisoners were housed in camps surrounded by high fences and supplied with adequate guards, as prescribed by the army. They worked under proper army guard.

Since many of the duties assigned the prisoners was new to them the Extension Service farm labor program prepared illustrated instructions, in German. County farm labor assistants who could speak German showed the workers how to do the job, and supervised them in the field. The efficiency of the workers, rated high, was due largely to the training program conducted by the Extension Service.

Following certification of the prisoners of war by the Extension Service, county farm labor associations entered into contracts with the Seventh Service Command for use of the prisoners. They were transported to and from the camp each morning and evening, in trucks provided by the farm labor associations, and under army guard.

The prisoners were used in groups of ten, or multiples of ten, except in the small grain and potato fields, when they worked in groups of five.

The Extension Service was responsible for supervising, repairing and maintaining the camp sites.

During 1944 and 1945 a total of 889 German prisoners of war helped alleviate labor shortages in South Dakota.
The G. I. Saved Crops for Many Grain Farmers

That national hero, the G.I., did more than win the fighting World War II, as far as agricultural America is concerned.

In many states, including South Dakota, he saved the day for farmers by helping them when the harvest was ready. On leave, on pass, and after drill hours, he was found in South Dakota small grain fields during the harvests of 1943, 1944, and 1945.

The year 1945 was the most critical year in the farm labor program. Supplies of migrant workers were at a low ebb, and orders for contract workers could not be completely filled. The result was a tremendous shortage of farm help all over the state. It was that year that soldiers stationed in South Dakota were most valuable to the small grain harvest. A total of 10,100 of them, from the air base at Sioux Falls, volunteered their services to farmers in that and neighboring areas during 1945.

Another instance of unusual service came in 1943, when two combat units were used near Salem and DeSmet. Heavy winds had blown down shocks of grain, and torrents of rain had thoroughly soaked them. Unless this grain was set up into shocks again immediately after the storm, much of it would spoil. The soldiers again saved the day by re-shocking the grain, and thereby saving it.

Most of the soldier help on South Dakota farms from 1943 through 1945 came from the Sioux Falls air base. The functioning of this program of farm assistance was similar to that in other areas where G.I. help was used. Farmers placed their orders with the county farm labor assistants, who with the assistance of base officers, recruited soldiers when the help was needed. Farmers transported the men to and from the base each morning and evening, except on weekends, when the men stayed over through Sunday, as guests of the farmers.

During the three years a total of 13,888 soldiers helped on South Dakota farms.
Texas-Mexicans in Wheat, Sugar Beets and Potatoes

It wasn't until 1947 that Texas-Mexicans became part of the army of contract workers assisting on South Dakota farms.

Other states had used them in previous years to good advantage, but the problem of work-spacing prohibited their use in South Dakota until a suitable plan of continuous employment was evolved.

Beet growers had long wanted to take advantage of this source of help. The big problem in the use of Texas-Mexicans in the beet fields was the slack period between the spring and fall work. Sugar beet work requires a large number of workers in spring and again in fall, while the period between requires very few workers.

In order to provide work during this interim period the Texas and South Dakota Extension Services cooperatively arranged for the employment of Texas-Mexicans in small grain and potato fields. This arrangement proved to be very satisfactory.

Texas Mexicans were recruited by the sugar beet company operating in the Belle Fourche area, in cooperation with the Texas Extension Service. The sugar company transported them to the beet fields and made placements on farms. South Dakota farm labor assistants worked with the Texas-Mexicans in giving job training, and a representative of the Texas Extension Service looked after their interests and directed them to other jobs as work was completed.

After the early sugar beet work was finished the Texas-Mexicans were placed on farms in Beadle, Kingsbury and Codington county farms, to work in the small grain and potato harvest, until the sugar beet harvest was ready.

The result was a happy arrangement for the workers, and the sugar beet, small grain and potato growers. Work done by the Texas-Mexicans was praised by the growers, and the 502 workers in the state in 1947 earned a total of $99,879.50.
Up-to-Date News Brought Farm Help in Time

"How much of what kind of help is needed... where... when?"

Answers to these questions were the responsibility of the information aspect of the farm labor program. This highly-organized phase was one of the most important functions of the entire help-recruiting service.

Unless workers, custom operators, and cooperating agencies knew the answers to these questions, help could not be obtained in time.

News stories, through newspapers and radio, gave this information to the workers and custom operators. More detailed news letters were sent to county agents, labor assistants and cooperating agencies. Information for these reports was taken from weekly reports sent in from the counties.

During the small grain harvest the system of reports was stepped up from weekly to daily. Fast-ripening grain created changed situations over-night. Counties reported their worker and combine situations to one of the nine area offices each night. After shifting surpluses to shortage counties within his area, the area assistant telephoned his area situation to the state office.

Giving the situations by counties, the entire state situation was then sent to news services and 17 radio stations, in South Dakota and neighboring states. Digests of these reports were sent to Extension Services in neighboring states, for their use in routing help to South Dakota.

In 1946 and 1947 printed harvest guides giving highways and other information were made available to combine operators and harvest workers: Signs were put up directing workers to the nearest county agent or farm labor assistant, for the latest local information.

Workers and custom operators accepted this information as their passport to jobs. This timely news brought timely help, and saved many dead-ripe crops.
Many other phases of the farm labor program proved invaluable to the farmer in helping him to meet the critical farm labor shortage situation.

County wage boards were named by county farm labor advisory committees to hold hearings and recommend prevailing wages and rates for farm labor and custom machine work. These recommendations were helpful in stabilizing labor and custom work as well as wages.

As in the small grain harvest, farmers experienced help difficulties in getting their corn picked. The farm labor program set up a system of labor and mechanical picker recruitment similar to that conducted for the small grain harvest. During the five years the program operated, more than 800 mechanical pickers were placed on South Dakota farms, and an undetermined number of hand pickers.

At the end of World War II special emphasis was placed on counseling war veterans, and finding them the kind of farm jobs they wanted.

In 1947 the Extension Service farm labor program cooperated with the South Dakota department of agriculture in preventing the spread of noxious weed seed under the new state weed law. County agents and farm labor assistants stressed enforcement of the law in their counties, and provided custom operators with tags signifying they knew the provisions of the law and were complying with them. Farm labor assistants aided with inspections at many of the six ports of entry, which inspected 5,388 combines and trucks during the year.

This is the story of the Extension Service farm labor program, and how it helped to attain food goals. However, most praise for successful harvesting of five years of bumper crops in South Dakota is due the farmers themselves. Without their diligence and perserverance, the job could not have been successfully accomplished.
Farm Worker Placements

1943: 30,000
1944: 40,000
1945: 70,000
1946: 50,000
1947: 40,000
Extension Service, South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, South Dakota