Farming in the 1950's

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Farming in the 1950's

MONEY IN MILK?
1961
1960
1959
1958
1957
1956
1955
1954
1953
1952
1951
1950
DROUGHT?
WET YEARS?
WHEAT SURPLUS?
LOW PRICES?
HIGH PRICES?
$30 CO. HOGS?

Agricultural Extension Service
South Dakota State College - Brookings

Extension Leaflet 124
January 1950
Adapted Varieties and a Good Fertile Soil Are Needed to Escape the Usual July Hazard Season

In South Dakota, our growing season is often interrupted by a July “hazard” period. Dry weather, heat, crop diseases, hail and insects, on the average, are at their worst, beginning about the first week of July through the middle of August. Therefore, early varieties of small grain are safer. They escape hazards that hurt the late varieties. Corn, grass and legumes varieties can also be chosen to escape the hazard period. South Dakota strains of forage and grain sorghums have the ability to live through the hazard period, and are, therefore, real feed security for the stockman.

It is important to remember that the successful use of early varieties require the maintenance of high soil fertility. With adapted varieties, soil improvement, moisture conservation and other good cultural practices (all of which will be improved by research in the 1950’s) we can “farm around July” in most years.

Legumes for Livestock...

They Produce Twice as Much Feed Per Acre as Corn

We know how good grasses and legumes are for the soil. But did you know that an alfalfa-bromegrass mixture actually produces twice as much feed per acre as corn?

Look at this! The South Dakota average yield in pounds of TDN’s per acre (total digestible nutrients) is: Corn, 872; oats, 697; alfalfa, 1,700; and alfalfa-bromegrass mixture, 1,880 lbs. TDN per acre.

Legumes are also excellent sources of proteins and vitamins—3½ lbs. alfalfa hay equals one lb. of 40% protein supplement. The average S.D. alfalfa yield (1.7 tons) means that two acres of alfalfa has as much protein as a ton of 40% protein supplement. Alfalfa also contains 20% more vitamin A than native grass. It also is one of the best sources of B-complex vitamins.

In a test, brood sows fed alfalfa produced seven pigs that weighed
32 lbs. each at weaning time; compared to sows without alfalfa which produced six pigs weighing only 25 lbs.

In wintering beef cows, it cost only 16¢ a cow a day using alfalfa but it cost 19¢ a day using prairie hay and protein supplement.

Alfalfa also means heavier lambs and more wool. Ewes fed alfalfa produced lambs that weighed 65 lbs. at weaning time and sheared 9.3 lbs. of wool. Lambs from ewes with no alfalfa weighed only 52 lbs.; the ewe sheared only 8.5 lbs. of wool.

**Legumes for Fertility** . . .

There's $5,000,000 Worth of Free Nitrogen Over Every One of Your Acres. Get Your Share!

Nature gave us good soil. But some of our land has been cropped for 50 to 75 years without putting back what the crops have taken out.

Such soil is low in nitrogen and organic matter. If the stalks and straw have been taken off, or burned, it’s even worse. It is a poor producer.

There’s *five million* dollar’s worth of free nitrogen in the air over every acre. Legumes, like alfalfa or the clovers, take that precious nitrogen from the air and put it in your soil.

Leaving the straw and stalks on the soil, spreading manure, rotating grass and legumes with corn and small grain and, if necessary, adding commercial fertilizers—will pay you bigger yields now; and your land will be good to your children, after you are gone.

**Get Milk Cheaper** . . .

Good pasture and high quality roughage are the cheapest milk producing feeds. Here is a feed bill for the 6,405 lbs. of feed nutrients a cow needs to produce 8,818 lbs. of milk. The grain furnishes only a little over one-fifth of total feed nutrients the cow needs but the grain costs nearly half of the entire bill.

**Corn Borers Spreading** . . .

If you had a lot of down corn last fall, you know that corn borers are already a problem for you. No matter where you live in South Dakota, you’ll probably have corn borers in the 1950’s.

Planning your planting will help some. Borers usually hurt the earliest and the latest corn the worst; the mid-season usually gets off easier.

If you have a field you’ll put in a silo or run livestock in and don’t plan to spray it, plant that field in mid-season.

Plant your fields where you plan to spray, before (early) or after (late) the mid-season field you won’t spray with DDT.
Why Should We Make Changes?

There’s getting to be more of a price squeeze on the farmer. The price of the wheat, corn, hogs and other products that he has to sell, are now considerably lower than they were a year or two ago.

On the other hand, the things the farmer has to buy—his tractor fuel, grocery bill, clothes, farm machinery and all the rest—while they are some cheaper than they were, they have not gone down as much as farm products.

One of the biggest price drops suffered by the farmer is in wheat. At the high point in 1948, wheat sold for $2.82 in South Dakota. Now, in early 1950, wheat is bringing on the average, about $1.95 which is the national support price.

And it looks very much like the support price will be about 5% lower for the 1950 crop. There are a number of reasons for the gloomy outlook for the farmer who depends mostly on wheat. We had big wheat crops the past several years. That has helped to pile up a likely carryover July 1, 1950 of 300 million bushels.

Since the end of the war we have exported 450 to 500 million bushels of wheat every year. In the previous period we exported on the average 66 million bushels per year. In the future, about 250 to 350 million is about all we can expect to export.

Not so spectacularly, but a great deal the same sort of a thing is going on with corn—surplusses are piling up and the price is going down.

On the other hand, the demand for meat, milk, eggs and other livestock products, is stronger than it is for wheat.

Many agricultural authorities feel that South Dakota should take about 18% of its wheat acres out of wheat. If we take 18 acres of every 100 out of wheat, what will we do with them?

Grass, Legumes, Livestock—
A Winning Team

At present, only 8.8% of our South Dakota land is in grass and legumes. Economists, crop authorities and livestockmen who have studied the problem, feel that at least 25% of our tillable crop land in East river South Dakota and 50% in West river, should be growing grasses and legumes.

Such a shift would allow us to greatly increase our cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry and milk cows. It would allow us to diversify more—spread out our eggs into several baskets and be more ready for storms when they come.

On the other side of this sheet and the FARMING IN THE 1950's exhibit which you attended, you saw how livestock will make good use of grasses and legumes—actually better than grain. You saw also how if we are to preserve our soil for the future—and we must—grass and legumes are our best tools.
For More Information

The information summarized in this leaflet is very much boiled-down because of space reasons. If you'd like additional reading, here are publications which go more into detail. Any of these may be secured free of charge from your county Extension Agent.

Economics
Farm and Ranch Economic Review (published bi-monthly)
Should Farmers Emphasize Wheat or Livestock in North Central South Dakota—Exp. Sta. Circ. 33
Wheat Production in War or Peace—U. S. Dept. of Agr. Publ.
Facts for Prospective Farmers or Ranchers in S. D.—Exp. Sta. Publ.

Corn Borers
The European Corn Borer, Exp. Sta. Entomology Pamphlet No. 9

Soil Conservation
Fertility—Maintenance and Management, Exp. Sta. Circ. 66
Soil, Soil Management and Soil Conservation, Ext. Circ. 436

Poultry
Feeding, Management for Egg Production, Ext. Circ. 389
Chick Care, Ext. Circ. 400
Range Shelters, Feeders, Waterers, Ext. Circ. 423
Dropping Pits, Ext. Circ. 427
Cull Regularly, Ext. Circ. 411

Dairy
Good Pastures, Ext. Leaflet 59
Successful Calf Raising, Ext. Leaflet 105
Profitable Dairy Feeding, Ext. Leaflet 107

Crops
Recommended Crop Varieties for S. D., Ext. Circ. 449

Livestock
Beef Production, Ext. Circ. 450
Feeds for Wintering Bred Ewes, Exp. Sta. Bul. 388

Farming's Getting Complicated
Farming is becoming a more complicated business every year. Farmers have to deal with and be familiar with problems that never concerned our grandfathers. Research is going forward constantly in the State College Agricultural Experiment Stations all over the country.

Your county Extension agent, through South Dakota State College of Agriculture, is kept constantly up-to-date with these late findings and problems.

By getting acquainted with your County Agent and calling upon him frequently for help and information, you will get the technical information and help you need to successfully farm in the 1950's.

Don't Miss Out on 4-H Club Work
Do your boys and girls belong to a 4-H club? The 4-H boys and girls carry out projects in livestock feeding, dairy, crops and home economics projects, in which they learn how to become better farmers and homemakers for tomorrow. It also keeps up their interest in the farm.

If your boy or girl between 10 and 20 is not having the good wholesome fun of a 4-H club now, we invite you to talk to your county or home Extension agent about it today. The agents will be glad to help them get started.
A farm poultry flock, starting 800 straight run chicks (raising 90%) if fed, housed and managed right, will give 1,260 lbs. of cockerels and culled pullets to sell. The remaining 300 pullets should lay 4,500 doz. eggs during the next year. To do this, the first step is to buy the chicks from a hatchery with a reputation for chicks that give good performance and livability. Don’t buy chicks un-guaranteed against pullorum loss. A good starter mash should be fed the first 6-8 weeks. At 6-8 weeks of age, pullets and cockerels should be separated—the pullets going on range while the cockerels are confined to finish for market. Cockerels should weigh 3-3½ lbs. in 3-4 months. Green pasture is needed by the pullets on the range. It is best to confine the pullets in the laying house when egg production starts (which should be in about five months). A balanced laying ration will triple the number of eggs received over a feed of ordinary unbalanced grains. A good hen, fed right, will lay 175 eggs a year.

Weeds Are Thieves!! . . .

With 2,4-D, It’s Easy, Cheap and Effective To Kill Weeds; They cost you $73 Every Year!

Before South Dakota farmers became “weed conscious” and before we had 2,4-D, weeds used to steal about $50 million in this state every year. Think of it! That’s $73 on every farm—including your’s. Back in the days when it cost $50 to $100 per acre to kill weeds with old-fashioned chemicals, it was often more than the land was worth.

But now we have 2,4-D! It’s not true any more that “we can’t afford to kill weeds.” You can’t afford not to.

But in the 1950’s if you take fields out of wheat or corn, they will go into weeds if you don’t stop them. If kept weed-free those acres can be an asset to you; left alone they will become covered with weeds and only a liability.