

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAM MEETS WARTIME NEEDS

W. F. COOLIDGE

Farm Adviser, Morgan County, Illinois

INTRODUCTION

As early as 1836 the United States Government began to take an interest in the development of agriculture. In 1862 a Bureau of Agriculture was established as a part of the Department of the Interior. From then on, many bureaus were organized from time to time, agricultural colleges were sponsored by land grant aids and federal funds, and agricultural experiment stations were established.

The agricultural experiment stations have conducted scientific experiments in the interests of agriculture, horticulture, and dairy in every state and in the territories. They have experimented with fertilizers and soils, improved varieties of grain and fruits and also breeds of livestock, studied the habits and means of destroying noxious insects and investigated diseases of domestic animals and means for their prevention and cure.

Up to 1914 the local educational program was carried on by farmers' institutes, household science groups, and schools. Assistance has been given by men from the experiment station and the college of agriculture.

In 1914 the Smith-Lever Act was passed, giving the Extension Service the right to cooperate with the states and counties the opportunity to organize agricultural education agencies to be placed in charge of county agents or farm advisers. Later home advisers or home demonstration agents were added, and adult education for women was thus established in many counties. Funds were to come in part from the Federal Government, in part from the State, and in part from the county. In Illinois the cooperating agency is the Farm Bureau and the Home Bureau.

MORGAN COUNTY

During World War I the county farm bureaus were organized rapidly in Illi-

nois. Morgan County was organized December 26, 1917, when the following purposes were outlined at the meeting of the executive committee:

1. To increase crop production.
2. To facilitate efficiency.
3. To raise better livestock.
4. To eliminate leaks in the business of farming.
5. To get acquainted and to get farmers acquainted with one another.
6. To work for better records.
7. To organize 4-H clubs for boys and girls.

The work progressed along these lines until the "great depression," when farmers were having a hard time to get adequate prices for their produce. At this time a program was worked out seeking improvement of conditions on the farm. Chief needs were more efficient crop rotations and a livestock program that would yield top-price livestock with a minimum amount of feed. Through the efforts of the agencies and helped by the Agricultural Adjustment Act the farmers started back to more normal conditions. Other helpful agencies developed at this time were the Credit Association, the Commercial Loan Company, the Federal Land Bank, and the Farm Security Administration.

EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAM

The parent organization, the Extension Service, the oldest established agency and a strictly educational institution, continued its program of bettering conditions through concrete demonstrations on farms and through the experiments carried on at the experiment field, at the State University and the Experiment Stations. These demonstrations and experiments fitted into the agencies' program of agricultural improvement seeking profitable incomes for all farmers.

At the beginning of the war a 12-point program was developed, prime objective

of which was to keep the farmers informed not only regarding agriculture but also the affairs of the world and the war.

1 Farm machinery.—At the start of the war the farm machinery program was quickly seen to be vital to increased production. County surveys were made to see what machinery was available, what repairs were necessary, and what machinery could be obtained. Each farmer was urged to repair his machinery and to keep it in good repair so that it would last. This program did much to assist farmers in planting and harvesting their crops on time.

2 Wartime educational program.—The County Agent and the Home Demonstration Agent act as chairman and co-chairman of the county wartime educational program. A county committee of home makers and farmers met to decide on the program to be followed. The 208 chairmen and co-chairmen representing the 104 school districts have assisted in distributing information on the war, on soil improvement, crop improvement, machinery repair, animal disease control, inflation, and many other subjects that would assist farmers in better understanding what was going on.

3 Labor.—The chairman of each school district was also made chairman of the labor committee. He registered all farmers who needed farm labor in the area and also registered boys who were willing to work on farms in other localities. This information, handled through the Extension Service and the U. S. Employment Service, assisted many farmers in getting farm hands.

4 4-H Clubs.—A special effort was made to organize a 4-H Club in each community. Any boy or girl between the ages of 10 and 20 is eligible to become a member. Approximately 800 boys and girls are now enrolled in the 4-H clubs of the county, all contributing something to the war effort. One of the outstanding programs is the work program in which the boys and girls are given credit for their activity on the farm rather than for carrying out a particular project.

Boys and girls are also investing money in war bonds and are buying an ambulance.

5 Soil improvement.—The Extension Service has cooperated with the Soil Con-

servation Service and the A.A.A. in giving farmers more definite information on contour-farming and strip-cropping in order to save moisture and to save wear and tear on machinery. Through the Extension Service a free test of soil is given all farmers bringing their samples to the office, so that they will know how much limestone and rock phosphate are needed. Assistance has been given farmers in obtaining limestone from the best sources available. Limestone is purchased on its merit as to the percentage of calcium carbonate equivalent that it contains.

6 Crops.—Through the field tests carried out in the county we have been able to pass on to the farmers of the county the names and numbers of the best types of hybrid corn that can be planted. We are also experimenting on the crops that are resistant to various insects, such as the European corn borer, chinch bugs, root worms, and others. This information is compiled not only from our own county but also from our experiment stations and from the State experiment station.

7 Gardening.—Victory gardens are the result of much information being given the farm people on the planting, cultivation, and care of vegetables. Information available includes varieties of beans, peas, salad crops, and the vegetables that are the best producers, the most resistant to disease, and that can be best stored under the various storing conditions.

8 Transportation.—Information meetings have been held regarding conservation of transportation facilities with relation to getting livestock to market, thus saving rubber, wear and tear on trucks, and labor. In this way excess trips to markets are cut down.

9 Disease control.—Disease control methods are passed on to the farmer through the newspapers, meetings, over the radio, and in local publications.

10 Insect control.—From the State Entomologist comes information on the various insects that damage crops. Many inquiries are answered as to when to plant, what crops to plant, and what to do to prevent serious damage when the crop is growing. For example, there are three methods of combatting the European corn-borer—(1) carefully plow under all refuse; (2) plant corn that is resistant to the borer; and (3) plant late enough so that the early brood is out of the way.

Other insects that harm crops are the

chinch bug, grape colapsis, cut worm, leaf hopper, grasshopper, Army worms, blister beetle, potato beetle, to mention a few. Methods of control, if properly applied, save much expense.

11 **Poultry.**—Poultry production is another program. Methods of feeding to increase production of eggs and meat as well as methods of controlling disease and parasites are given through the press, radio, and meetings. Plans are available for houses, brooders, and feeders, all of which may be built by the farmer at a nominal cost.

12 **War Board.**—The Extension Service is represented on the agricultural War Board and is active in discussions that have to do with agriculture.

Home Extension work.—The Home Extension work has as its long-time objective the home security through conservation of material resources on the farm in helping to win the war.

Since the war began, the county nutrition committee, with the county Home Adviser as chairman, has distributed health and nutritional information as well as teaching the various methods of food preservation such as canning, freezing, salting, and drying. The planting, use and preservation of more home-

grown foods is encouraged by the home-grown health program. More than 1400 home makers have had instruction regarding the importance of better eating habits and better health, and the prevention of the common cold as related to nutritional practices.

Since prices have risen, more home sewing is being done. Home makers are being taught that care and repair of their present supply of clothing is important in the saving of fabric and textile supplies, all in line with the war effort on conservation.

In the last analysis, there is no phase of the agricultural educational program or the home makers program that is not being presented to more than 2,000 farm families in the county by the Extension Service. The Extension program may not have definite information nor specific examples to answer all questions but it is ready and willing to help whenever possible. The program will certainly help to win the war and to do a better job in writing the peace.

The sole aim of the Extension Service in the county is to give to the adults and to those not in school information that will help them, that may be used in a practical way, and that will have a lasting influence on the future development of agriculture in Morgan County.