

RESIDUAL BENEFITS RESULTING FROM ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTION WITH AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

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AN ABSTRACT

The purposes of the AAA programs have shifted emphasis as activities have progressed, but from the very beginning they have centered around the following ideas:

1. Stabilizing an adequate agricultural production according to need.
2. Conserving and improving the soil resources.
3. Helping farmers secure a fair share of the national income.

These ends have been striven for through the functioning of the various farm programs and through the educational work undertaken in connection with them. The educational work has been under the supervision of the Agricultural Extension Service but has been delegated as far as possible to local people in the various counties and communities.

Improvement of the farmers' financial status during recent years and impor-

ance of conservation of the soil are now generally recognized. The purpose of this paper, however, is to call attention to some less frequently mentioned benefits accruing from activities growing out of the application of the AAA programs.

In general, the benefits and accomplishments have been of a type that will carry on even if the AAA program should disappear. They are the invaluable by-products which are not easily measured in dollars and cents, but rate high in the scale of human progress.

Development of leadership. One of the most noticeable of these benefits has been the uncovering and development of a vast amount of capable leadership among farm groups. In the beginning, most farmers elected to positions of responsibility were the older men of the community who had indicated their capacity through participation in activities of the farm bureau or other community organizations. At

that time most farmers were hesitant to get up in a local meeting and express themselves. Today many of these positions are held by younger men who have developed as the programs have unfolded. Not only are these men making good leaders, but an increasing number of farmers have developed to the point where they get up and talk freely at local meetings.

General understanding of economic conditions affecting farmers' welfare.—In recent years farmers have acquired a broader understanding of the basic factors affecting agricultural welfare. They are not only familiar with the conditions that influence the local situation, but have a reasonable understanding of those broad factors influencing agriculture generally, such as export and import situations, competition of other agricultural products, industrial conditions, labor incomes, credit conditions, supply situations, and governmental activities. Part of this improvement has resulted from the educational programs which have been developed as a part of AAA activities.

Understanding of principles of good farming and careful farm planning.—In cooperating with the AAA programs most farmers were immediately confronted with the problem of adjusting farm operations. This situation offered opportunity for presenting those factors associated with good farming and for calling attention to some tried fundamentals in planning a profitable farming system. The explanation of why the particular bases or allotments were given to a farm and why they were different from those assigned to another farm brought home the results of variation in farm practices employed in the local community in the past. The cause for change in crops and their adjustment in relation to each other, along with the possibility of reduced income on the farm served to give added incentive for applying any new information helpful in meeting these problems on individual farms.

Development of community cooperation and action.—The benefits already mentioned have applied more directly to the individual. There are others which apply to the group rather than to the individual. Farmers tend to act independently of each other. The AAA programs have been voluntary but have required rather gen-

eral cooperation of farmers if they were to be effective. The local set-up of the AAA programs and the means for obtaining desired ends, as well as causes for such action, have all been conducive to cooperation of farmers in accomplishing a common result on a scale that was thought to be impossible a few years ago. Not only have farmers worked together for this common end, but a better understanding of the factors back of the agricultural situation and of the far-reaching effects of these conditions have improved the understanding and cooperation between agriculture and other groups.

Methods and aids in presenting educational material to farm people.—A tremendous task was thrown upon the Agricultural Extension Service when the AAA commodity programs were launched. Within a relatively short time the entire agricultural group had to be informed concerning the principles, purposes, and details of a new program. Consequently, too much was thrown at people in too complicated and concentrated doses within a relatively short time. Great progress has been made in regard to what should be presented, and in what manner and in what form such presentation should be made.

Collecting valuable information for future use.—One of the most valuable benefits resulting from AAA activities has been the volume of information made available. A large portion of the cropland has been measured and the use made of it has been recorded for various years. This information has been helpful to farmers, to agricultural census and other agricultural workers as a check on their statistics, to various research agencies interested in land use and farm planning, and to other public agencies, such as taxing bodies. The determination of major crop yields on all farms over a number of years has been valuable as a basis for a check on crop estimates and for setting up reliable actuarial figures for crop insurance. It is hoped that by the end of 1939 aerial photographs for all Illinois counties will make available a wide range of information to many agencies. The immediate purpose has been to obtain uniform measurement of fields; but the photographs will also be useful to the army, the highway and conservation departments, land-use planning agencies, and other organizations.