

A Look Ahead for North Carolina

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WHAT five years ago would have been called theoretical imagination, is today practical reasoning, where we foresee and foretell a bright future for Tar Heelia—the Old North State.

The AAA helped greatly, especially in instilling confidence and a way out of an almost hopeless agricultural dilemma. The new Soil Conservation program is a much more practical and basic move toward better conditions. The fundamentals back of it were those educational agencies starting with the Farmers Alliance 50 years ago; then, and on through the agricultural extension and vocational school work of today.

As with all other educational problems, changing such a ponderous and clumsy thing as agriculture from a question of: "That's the way my grandpap did it," to "Tell me a better way to do it," is a slow, tedious and almost hopeless task, extending through several generations.

Just 20 years ago, I returned to North Carolina from the tropics, where I had been engaged in agricultural extension and vocational work. After experience with 43 district agriculturists as assistants, and after traveling through 32 states, seeking the best place to locate, I decided on North Carolina.

Had Definite Convictions

I returned with definite convictions concerning purebred, or high-grade livestock; grading and marketing products

in attractive packages; more and better machinery; legumes as soil builders; milk cows for converting surplus vegetables and feed crops into a year around cash income. Sales of vegetables and fruits later convinced me of the necessity, rather than advisability, of quality and attractiveness in marketing.

Although now with the U. S. Department of Agriculture doing crop reporting, I still own and operate the farm I procured in 1915.

Reasons Outlined

Here are some reasons why in 1915 I chose North Carolina as my future home: (1) The climate is mild, just enough cold weather for health and not too much heat for comfort; (2) It has as wide diversification of native plant life as any state; (3) The choice of crops is almost unlimited—from oranges to maple sugar; (4) The topography ranges from delightfully verdant and cool mountains in the West to the temperate coastal area in the East with its inland waters and long seashore; (5) The gulf stream comes to within 150 miles of our coast and encourages the growth of early vegetables and fruits; (6) I saw as nice fruits grown in North Carolina as I found in California, Oregon, or Washington; (7) I had seen cattle grazing and in excellent condition throughout the Winter, even finding clumps of green grass under the snow on the mountains; (8) Protection for livestock from winter weather was un-

necessary, although advantageous; (9) Labor was plentiful and cheap; (10) Many markets were near, New York being only 400 miles distance from the Northeastern trucking section where both rail and water transportation were available; (11) The percentage of foreign population was the smallest of any state; (12) It was truly an agricultural state, no large cities, but many small towns where people know and mingle with each other; (13) The land was cheap and an unlimited choice was available; (14) Irrigation was not required.

System Improving

For a long time, North Carolina has grown too many acres of cash crops and not enough feed and soil improvement crops. This system has been gradually changing for the better. The depression accelerated the rate of change, especially with respect to feed crops, but there should be no change of a radical nature. The types of farming now in vogue should generally be continued, with adjustments in acreage to eliminate overproduction of cash crops, unprofitable acre yields, soil erosion, and dependence on outside sources for feeds.

In different parts of the state, cotton, tobacco, peanuts, truck crops, grains, and livestock are each dominant farm enterprises. Often the dominant enterprise is developed to exclusion of others, consequently, it is impossible to lay down a single program that would fit all sections. For that reason, the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service has divided the state into 11 agricultural areas, based on the type of farming being generally practiced.

Of the six and three-quarter million acres of land in cultivation in North Carolina, there are thousands which, because of poor drainage, being underlain with hardpan, or the soil being incapable of improvement, will never give profitable returns from cropping. Others are unprofitable because they are too steep or too rocky. No further attempt should be made to cultivate these lands, but they should be turned into pasture or reforested.

Fundamentals Cited

The fundamental need of most North Carolina soils is increased fertility, providing proper drainage, rotation, and the proper use of legume crops.

While the state has been mapped into type areas, for practical purposes, there are four major ones: outer and inner Coastal, Piedmont and mountainous areas. The extreme flat east is confronted with drainage problems. The inner Coastal counties are generally sandy and while needing drainage also need soil improving crops.

The central Piedmont also needs soil improving practices, however, we find in this area, the most diversified farming, specializing in small grains and dairying. Where tobacco predominates along the Virginia border and where cotton rules the South Carolina border we find the greatest need for more diversification

and soil building practices. Much of this territory, in which the land is kept poor intentionally to raise better bright tobacco, soil building crops are badly needed.

In the West or foothill and mountain counties, pasturage on the hillside and crops in the valley predominate. These steep hillsides must be held together with grasses or trees. Terraces alone will not do. These counties have long known and used good soil control.

State Well Balanced

The state as a whole is very well balanced in the average crop production. However, many areas could use some crops and livestock to an advantage. Much of the eastern territory should reduce cash crops and use legumes to build up the soil. In this section, there should be considerable increases of cattle, hogs and poultry for home and commercial use. Practically the same condition extends into the inner coastal section and up to the Piedmont area.

The Piedmont section offers the most diversified farming of any territory in the state with the exception of a few limited areas. More beef cattle and soil improving crops could be used to an advantage in most counties. The gently sloping hills of the Piedmont that reach up to the mountainous district should produce more cattle and small grains in an effort to control erosion. Much of the cash or row crops in this territory and the mountains should be discouraged.

To the reasons cited for selecting North Carolina as my future home, I can now add many more, including excellent highways, water, rail, motor, and airplane transportation to "everywhere;" hydro-electric power in abundance developed within the state's own borders and the rural electrification program fast being put into effect; a State Agricultural College and a Department of Agriculture that are outstanding. Just add the soil conservation program to these and you can readily see why there is a bright future for North Carolina. It has ranked fifth on an average in the total value of all crops in the United States for the past three years. Tobacco alone returns more than \$100,000,000 annually. It has five crops each valued at over \$10,000,000 each year, which in the order of their acreage rank are, corn, cotton, hay, tobacco, and peanuts.



In point of acreage, corn is North Carolina's most important crop.



Cattle come in for an important part in the state, too. This picture was snapped at the Piedmont Experiment Farm, near Statesville.



Grain, such as this, is also an important crop in North Carolina's Piedmont Section.



A day's outing at the Experiment Station, near Oxford, which helps these good farmers to become ever better farmers.