

# THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE

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## THE FARMER DOES NOT GET HIS SHARE

WE HAVE HEARD MUCH lately about the "increased cost of living." It has played its part in the political campaign through which we have just passed, and the unusually high prices of farm products—to those who have them to buy—have led a lot of city newspapers into painting the farmer as a man rolling in wealth and holding the rest of the world at his mercy. A very pretty picture, no doubt, but one scarcely justified by facts.

It is fortunately true that farmers as a class are prosperous, but not unduly so; and it is unfortunately true that a great many Southern farmers, because they have been buyers rather than sellers of nearly all farm products, have failed to derive any great benefit from

the high prices of those things with which the farmer supplies the rest of the world. But it is unfair to conclude that farmers in general are getting rich at a too rapid rate. The price of what the farmer has to buy, as well as of what he has to sell, has increased, and more than this, the increase in the price of farm products has not all been going into the farmer's pocket—not by a great deal.

On this point there are some interesting figures in the Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture just issued. June last an investigation was made in 78 cities as to the difference between the price received for milk by the producer and that paid by the

consumer. In the cities investigated in the North Central States, the producers get just 44 per cent of what the consumers pay; in the North Atlantic States, 53 per cent; in the South Atlantic States, 57 per cent; in the South Central States, 55 per cent. Taking the country as a whole, the producer gets about 50 per cent of the final market price, the railroads about 7 per cent, the retailers about 43 per cent.

Investigations made some time ago, but which Secretary Wilson thinks applicable to-day because, as he says, "It seems probable that the farmer is not now receiving a larger share of the consumer's price than he received ten years ago, and he may be receiving a smaller," show that the farmer gets 55.1 per cent of what the consumer pays for poultry, 69 per cent of what he pays for eggs, 55.6 per cent of apples when sold by the bushel, 48.9 per cent of strawberries. He fares better with staple crops, getting 93 per cent of the cotton money, 72.9 per cent on wheat, 73.6 per cent on oats, 91 per cent on cattle when bought by packers, 93 per cent on hogs and so on.

It will be seen at once that the fewer hands a product passes through on its way from producer to consumer, the larger the per

cent of the ultimate price received by the producer. One would, of course, expect this, as also that the price to the consumer should be higher when the article is sold in small lots. For example, when onions are sold by the barrel, the consumer pays a little less than twice as much as the grower receives, but when they are sold by the peck, he pays over three times as much.

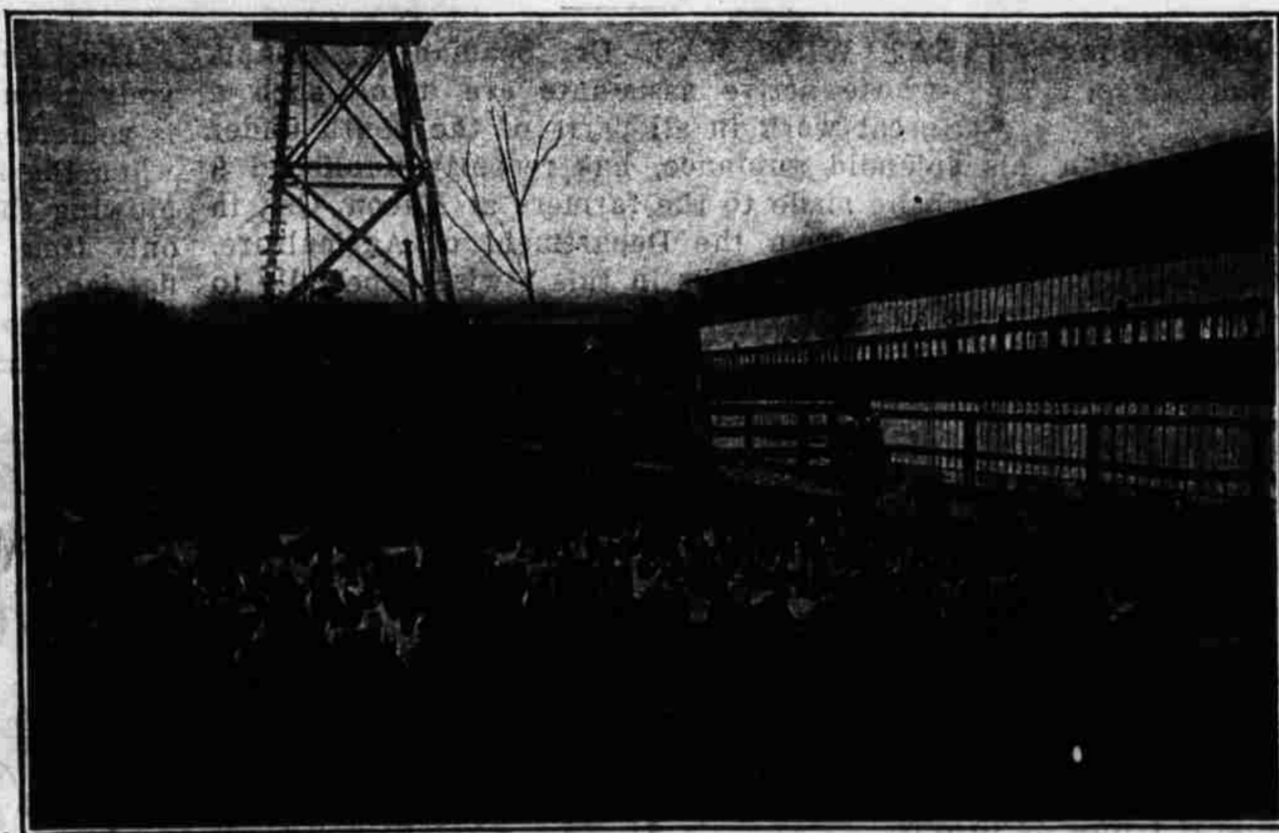
In either case there is too much difference between the first price and the last. The middlemen and the transportation companies are, of course, necessary and are certainly entitled to fair pay for their work, but we are yet to be convinced that it is worth as much to distribute the farmer's milk to the consumers as it is to produce that

milk. We feel certain that when the railroads and the merchants get as much out of an apple crop as does the man who cared for the orchard and picked the fruit and barreled it and delivered it to the station, that there is something wrong. In short, there are too many middlemen and their profits are too large.

Here is a problem, to the solution of which our wisest men may well give their best thought. It is inconceivable that such a wasteful and unjust system of distribution should be permitted to continue much longer, but it is one thing to recognize its evils and another thing to cure them. We have no panacea

to offer for this state of affairs, but it seems to us that one remedy, in many individual cases, must at once suggest itself: Whenever and wherever he can, the farmer should sell his products directly to the consumer. He can thus get more for them, and the consumer can get them for less cost. In many cases he can do this directly—by securing regular customers for his butter or eggs or vegetables, but this necessarily means that he must have a regular supply of these products and be prepared to guarantee their quality. In other cases, notably in the case of truckers, fruit growers and dairymen, co-operative associations, which will deal directly with the consumer, at least with the retailer, will help wonderfully.

It is a big problem and one which must be solved, if the farmer is ever to profit as he should by the higher prices the consumers have to pay for farm products.



[Courtesy Mobile and Ohio R. R.]  
POULTRY YARD OF R. L. McBRIDE, NEAR MOBILE, ALA.

**This Week:** *The Demonstration Work, Buying Farm Implements Judiciously, In Praise of Stock Husbandry, Better Rental Contracts, Women's Institutes, The True Spirit of Christmas, Buying Live Stock by Mail, Observations in Japan, Guernsey Cattle, December Garden Work.*