

FARM WORK FOR JULY

By B. L. MOSS

THERE is still time to plant the stubble land to a second crop, in case this has not already been done. In the lower half of the Cotton Belt, Mexican June corn may be planted up to the fifteenth of July with fair chances for a good yield. With corn at two dollars a bushel and likely to remain high, a yield of corn even smaller than the average may prove quite profitable. But at any rate get some crop that is fit for food or feed growing on the land at once. Cowpeas are excellent for man and beast and the land. Soy beans are good, and so are sorghum, millet and sweet potatoes. If there's any really good excuse for the stubble land growing weeds instead of food and feed, we haven't found it.

Twenty-five-cent cotton looks good to the cotton raiser. Prices may go lower, but we expect the present crop to sell for prices averaging above anything seen by the Southern farmer for fifty years. In view of this situation, it is nothing more than sound sense to make every acre in cotton do its utmost. This means right now that intensive cultivation should be given to destroy grass and weeds and save the moisture for the growing crop. Shallow cultivation, too, should be the rule—about two inches in the humid sections of the South and about three inches in the drier sections of Texas and Oklahoma.

Over most of the South the boll weevil is now a factor to be considered in cotton raising. In fighting this enemy, we would at this season place rapid, efficient cultivation first as a control measure. For some reason the weevil, though a native of Mexico, has never been able to thrive in blazing hot, dusty cotton fields. By keeping the soil stirred, we create conditions that apparently force the weevil to seek fields where the cultivation is less efficient. At any rate, we know that the clean, well cultivated field as a rule suffers much less weevil damage than the one where cultivation is indifferent.

Much may also be done to hold the weevil in check by picking and destroying infested squares. This, however, is a control measure that must be used judiciously, using when possible unemployed children, rather than regular hands, to pick the squares. Certainly we would never recommend square picking at the expense of cultivation, rather preferring to cultivate thoroughly and then pick and destroy all the punctured squares that our labor supply will permit.

Just how late to cultivate is a question with many farmers at this season. To answer it intelligently, it is necessary to consider the ends sought in cultivating a crop. Admittedly the two most important of these are weed and grass destruction and saving moisture. Now since growing crops require moisture and are harmed by weeds, it is evident that cultivation should be kept up during the life of the growing crop so long as we conserve the one and destroy the other. Where corn is clean and well worked when it begins to tassel, we doubt if much is to be gained by continuing cultivation, since any cultivation, to be effective, must inevitably break some of the corn roots. A possible exception may be found where peas or beans are drilled between the corn rows, in which case a light cultivation may be of great benefit to the peas or beans without seriously damaging the corn roots.

With cotton, the case is somewhat

different from that with corn. Before the boll weevil came, cotton kept on making bolls until frost, provided the moisture supply was adequate, and of course this is still the case in territory still free of the weevil. This being so, we would say that where there are no weevils cultivation will probably pay until the cotton begins to open. Where the weevil is severe, particularly in the lower half of the Cotton Belt, little fruit is set after

August 1, and as a rule we would hardly recommend cultivating after this date. Of course there may be exceptions, but the rule will generally hold.

A study of the summer rainfall from east Texas east along the Gulf Coast to Georgia and Florida, in a belt extending some 150 miles inland, has led the writer to the conclusion that on an average March-planted corn is less safe from drouth-injury than corn planted in May. In the belt mentioned, the average June rainfall is decidedly less than for either July or August. This being true, it stands to reason that corn

planted in March and reaching its critical stage in June is not so safe as the May-planted corn that will begin to make ears during the wetter months of July and August. This season thousands of acres of very early corn has been ruined by dry weather in the lower South, while later plantings may still yield well.

It's going to be hard to make the sweet potato acreage too large this season. The crop is one of the best for food that we have, and it is a good hog feed as well. Besides, over much of the South plantings made in July and even up to early August can be counted upon to yield well.

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