

\$500 More a Year Farming: How to Make It.

1.—By Finding Out Where we Stand and the Causes of Our Present Backward Condition.

FIVE hundred dollars more a year for the average Southern farmer: how can we get it?

There is no bigger question than this before the farmers of *The Progressive Farmer's* territory; and as Editor Poe has already shown in his Washington City address, there is no bigger question before our people generally—our bankers, our merchants, our professional men, our railroads, and the business world as a whole. It is fundamental to all Southern prosperity.

There is no question then as to the desirability of our "\$500 more a year" program—nor do we believe there is any question as to its feasibility.

According to the official figures of the last United States Census each farmer in the North Atlantic States (the New England States, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) earned \$984 a year, while each farmer in the South Atlantic States (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland) earned only \$484 a year—or exactly \$500 a year less for the average farmer in *The Progressive Farmer's* territory than for his brother farmer just north of him.

Able as we are to grow in our territory every crop which our Northern brothers grow, besides having (1) a better climate, (2) a longer growing period, and (3) an absolute monopoly of the greatest of all American export crops, cotton, the 40,000 Southern farmers who read *The Progressive Farmer* have resolved to show their wide-awake Yankee neighbors that we can at least farm as well as they can—and we have accordingly set out in this series of articles to consider together just how we can get the extra \$500 a year we ought to have.

As a foundation for working out this \$500 more a year, moreover, we recognize three things as essential:

(1) It is needful that we realize our true condition. Little real progress will be made without a full knowledge and appreciation of the fact that we are not accomplishing all that we might.

(2) We must find the true causes of the present backward condition of our agriculture, and—

(3) We must diligently seek and apply the means to remove these defects in our present agricultural system which prevent us from winning our full measure of success.

"Where Are We At?"

T THIS New Year season therefore let us, like prudent business men, take stock generally of our present condition and ascertain in what particulars we have not been receiving sufficient for our labors to enable us to secure and enjoy as many of the necessities, comforts, and pleasures of life as befit the dignity of a hard-working American citizen-farmer.

Let us face the stern facts as to the real condition of our agriculture. And we can best ascertain this real condition, we must admit, only by taking the results obtained and methods used by our Southern agricultural workers and comparing with the results and methods of other agricultural workers in other sections. As examples, therefore, let us take three North Atlantic States—say Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania—and compare them with three South Atlantic States—Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, which comprise the main part of *The Progressive Farmer's* territory; and let us take three North Central States—Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois—and compare them with three South Central States—Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The facts as shown officially by our last Government census as to farming methods and profits in these areas are given in the table at the top of column 2.

The first big fact that strikes us in this table is that the average farmer in the territory comprising the States of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana, is earning three and one-half times what the average farmer of *The Progressive Farmer's* territory is receiving for his labor.

In other words, every time the farm worker in these States goes to the house at sundown, he has

WHAT THE CENSUS SHOWS.

	Mass. N. Y. Penn.	N. C. Va. S. C.	Iowa. Ill. Ind.	Miss. La. Ala.
Average Annual Earnings of Each Farm Worker.....	\$388.96	\$184.12	\$663.89	\$189.55
Average Number of Acres Cultivated by Each Farm Worker.....	33	22	63	16
Average Value of Implements and Farm Machinery for Each Farm Worker.....	\$150.12	\$ 22.33	\$110.91	\$ 36.19
Average Number of Horses and Mules for Each Farm Worker.....	1.38	.77	3.17	.91
Average Number of Dairy Cows for Each Farm Worker.....	3.41	.56	2.56	.59
Average Value of Live Stock Sold and Slaughtered for Each Farm Worker.....	\$ 68.33	\$ 23.37	212.91	13.29

produced three and one-half times as much as his probably equally hard-working brother worker in *The Progressive Farmer's* territory. And since actual living expenses for both are about the same, the margin of profit left the Northern farm worker is not only three and one-half times, but several times three and one-half times, as much as the Southern farm worker gets.

Now these things, we submit, ought not so to be. The figures we have just given show the average results per farm worker, because some readers might otherwise think that a greater number of workers per farm might account for larger profits on the Northern farms, and we have shown that this is not so. Considering then that the average North Carolina farm (1900 census) produced only \$398 worth of products, the average South Carolina farm only \$439 worth, and the average Virginia farm only \$516 worth, we strike an average of \$451 a year per farm for the three States. An addition of \$500 more a year therefore would bring us only to \$941 per year per farm, whereas Illinois showed in the last census year \$1,309, Indiana \$921, and Iowa \$1,598 per farm, or an average for the three States of \$1,276. Certainly, therefore, with an average of \$1,276 in these three States we are reasonable in aiming at "\$500 more a year," or a \$941 average for our territory.

We Can't Blame It on the Land.

AND NOW let us come squarely to the point and face some other unpleasant truths. Since our incomes are less than one-half what the above table, compiled from the last Census Report, shows are made by the farm workers of other sections, it is apparent that we are not doing as well as we ought; and we may, therefore, ask ourselves why are we not getting more for our work?

The popular answer will be that our lands are not so fertile, and in a measure that is true, but it is not the chief cause of our low earnings. The last Census Report shows that an average acre of improved land in the States of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana produced \$12.32 worth of farm products, while an average acre of improved land in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia produced \$11.27 worth of farm products. The product of an average acre of land in *The Progressive Farmer's* territory is only \$1 less than in those States where the average earnings of the farm worker are three and one-half times as great.

This, therefore, does away with the plea that poorer land is chiefly responsible for our poorer results.

Another reason given to account for our low average earnings per worker, while our production per acre is comparatively high, is that our crops are such as to necessitate greater cost in production. That our crops, as they are produced, cost more in proportion to selling price than in some other sections is true, but it does not follow that this is necessarily so. The high value of our products per acre are due to the nature of our special

crops like cotton and the higher prices which we receive for such crops as are common to both sections. These higher prices are due to the fact that we are largely buyers of nearly all these common farm products, while the farmers of the other States named are exclusively sellers of those products.

Five Reasons for Our Poor Returns.

IN THE WHOLE, then, why are our average individual earnings so low?

And the answer is—

- (1) Because we use less agricultural knowledge.
- (2) Because our soils are less productive.
- (3) Because we use less machine labor and more hand labor or man labor.
- (4) Because we use too few horses and mules.
- (5) Because we have too little live stock to consume waste products and increase the fertility of the soil.

These are not the only causes of our low average earnings, but they are the principal ones that we may hope to correct. Let us take them up separately and consider them fairly and see if our diagnosis is correct.

Our Neglect of Farming Knowledge.

FIRST then, we have mentioned as one main cause of our backwardness that "we use less agricultural knowledge."

It is not our purpose, at this time, to devote much space to a consideration of this cause of our small earnings. That we fail generally to use the agricultural knowledge available, and which is used by good farmers everywhere, will be readily admitted, and it is equally certain that this results in decreasing our earnings. Our large colored population accounts for part of this failure to avail ourselves of the agricultural knowledge available, but not for all of it. Nothing short of nine months public school each year, compulsory attendance, and a reorganization of our public school teaching will correct the deficiency.

Why Our Soils are Not More Fertile.

SECONDLY, we have said, "Our soils, on the whole, are less productive than those of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana."

Why is this so? Our soils have been in cultivation longer, but soils ought to get richer under cultivation instead of poorer. Perhaps our soils are not so fertile because of the difference in the materials from which they were originally formed—perhaps? But in all probability our soils are not so productive (1) because of our warmer climate which favors the decay of the organic matter, or humus, in them; (2) because of the heavy rains that wash and leach our soils so badly; (3) because we do not feed our farm products to live stock, but sell them, thereby robbing the land of its fertility; (4) because our crops are largely clean cultured crops that rob the soils of their humus which causes them to wash and leach worse; (5) because our soils are bare and exposed to heavy winter rains instead of having a winter cover crop growing on them, or being covered with snow and improved by freezing; and (6) because we do not use sufficient agricultural knowledge in our farming. These are obstacles we have to face, but obstacles we can overcome. Our safety and deliverance lie simply in facing them squarely and then adapting our system of farming so as to overcome them.

We Use Too Much Hand Labor.

THIRD. We use too little machinery and too much hand labor.

Man labor is always more expensive than machine labor. One man with modern machinery could do the work that two, three or four men with us now do and increase his earnings two or three fold. In proof of this, refer to the table above, and you will see that each farm worker in

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