

IN ANNUAL FARM OUTLOOK — The Squeeze Is Tightening For Farmers, Agent Foresees

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(County Agent)

Each year through the cooperation of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agricultural Economics at N.C. State College, and other agricultural agencies, up-to-date information and statistics are prepared on progress in agricultural enterprises during the past year and predictions or the outlook for these enterprises during the coming year.

In this article, an attempt will be made to briefly give the outlook on farming operations for 1960, particularly as they concern our farmers in Macon County.

Squeeze On

First, let's briefly look at the overall economic situation of the United States as a whole. Two things are clearly indicated from a quick look at 1959: (1) Non-farm people are enjoying the most prosperous year in history and; (2) Farmers are being squeezed

more and more by high costs and low prices. Even though overall economic activity has been at record levels farmers have not shared in this prosperity.

In 1959 more goods and services were produced and used in the United States than ever before. The gross national production amounted to 479 billion dollars and it would easily have reached the 500 billion mark had it not been for the steel strike. This is 37 billion dollars more than in 1958. Consumer spending exceeding 311 billion dollars in 1959. This spending includes such things as food, clothing, automobiles and trucks, appliances, medical, dental, services, expenses, etc.

Government spending, which includes federal, state, and local governments in 1959 amounted to approximately 98 billion dollars. This is five billion more than 1958.

Private investment spending in 1959 reached 70 billion dollars, which is the highest in our history. Private investment spending consisted of residential construc-

tion of new facilities.

Spending Up

The outlook for 1960 in general is that consumer spending will continue to rise, government spending will also increase. Gross national production will exceed the 500 billion dollar mark. Employment will be at a high level, wages will average slightly higher, consumer incomes and expenditures will likely increase, and farm income will be lower.

So much for the general economic situation of the United States as a whole. Now let's take a quick look at the outlook and predictions on certain specific farming enterprises that definitely concern our Macon County farmers.

Larger Crop

The 1959 burley tobacco crop is estimated to be some 7 per cent larger than 1958. Carry-over supplies from previous years are slightly less and total supply for 1959-60 will be approximately 1 per cent less than the previous

year. Farmers in Macon and surrounding counties took a definite beating on their tobacco this year due to so much rain and fog during the cutting and curing season. This condition caused a definite reduction in both quality and poundage which reflected a drastic reduction in price per pound and total income from their tobacco. Domestic use of burley tobacco is expected to increase slightly due to increasing number of cigarettes being manufactured. Exports are expected to remain steady because of rising economic conditions abroad and the improved dollar position in foreign countries. This indicates that prices for burley in 1960 should remain good provided quality is anywhere near normal.

Feed Surplus

The feed situation in the United States shows a surplus carry-over of corn, oats, barley, and milo of 166 million tons, or 5 per cent more than ever before. North Carolina shows 2.8 million tons, or 8 per cent more than 1958. Hay production is 9 per cent lower in the United States and 4 per cent lower in North Carolina than 1958. The outlook for 1960 on grains is that grain feed will average a little lower than 1959 due to the tremendous carry-over of supplies. Indications are that higher prices may develop on good quality alfalfa and lespedeza hays. Supply of all feeds in relation to numbers of livestock to be fed appears to be very adequate.

Hogs Increasing

Hog numbers have been increasing for two years and the 1959 pig crop of 104½ million is 10 per cent higher than 1958. The critical point in this hog cycle is expected to come in the fall of 1960. No price increases in swine are anticipated during 1960.

Money In Sheep

Sheep raising is an enterprise that is not being given as serious consideration as should be in Macon County. There is money to be made in sheep, provided proper care and management are used. Sheep numbers in the United States during 1959 were close to 30 million head with a 2 per cent larger lamb crop than in 1958. The outlook on lamb prices for 1960 are good with prices for both lambs and wool averaging close to the 1959 level.

More Milk

Dairying is one of our main income producing enterprises in Macon County. It is also one of the most stable farming enterprises in the United States and shows less fluctuation both in production and price than most any agricultural commodity. In North Carolina during 1959, some 875 million pounds of grade A milk was sold, an increase in sales of 4.6 per cent. More milk was produced on fewer dairies, indicating a slight increase in size of herds and a definite improvement in quality of dairy cows with a trend toward improved feeding conditions. Outlook predictions for dairying suggest a continued rise in production and consumption for 1960, with an average price per hundred for grade A milk testing 4 per cent of close to six dollars. This figure is approximately the same as received in 1959.

Big Enterprise

Beef cattle is also an enterprise of great concern to our Macon

County farmers. Most of our cattle, however, are marketed as grass fat cattle rather than grain-fed. Beef cattle numbers are at an all-time high and further expansion appears likely. The 1959 calf crop in the United States amounted to 43,328,000 head, total cattle and calves in 1959 on the farm was close to 102 million head and is expected to continue to rise. Cattle-on-feed in 1959 was 10 per cent above 1958. The outlook for 1960 is that cattle marketing will continue to increase steadily and that the price will be from \$2 — \$3 per hundred lower. A sharper break may be expected in the price of feeder animals, cows, and other low grade animals.

Market Needed

Fruits and vegetables bring in a sizable income for our farmers, in the county and could mean a great amount more if adequate markets were available. The trend of consumer spending in this field is more and more toward processed foods, which means that the producer will be selling more to the processor than to the fresh market in the future. The outlook for fruits and vegetables for 1960 appears to be favorable due to somewhat lower acreages and yields in 1959. Predictions are that Irish potatoes will be higher in price, also apple prices should

Bad Situation

Poultry production, which has in years past provided a big gross income, has about hit bottom and has now become a very serious problem for our farmers. The picture at the present time is still very gloomy. The market egg and hatching egg situation show some indications of slightly higher prices by the fall of 1960. This is due to drastic reductions in laying birds on the farms during the last year. Broiler prices are not expected to be much higher for 1960 than 1959, even though there has been a reduction of broiler placements on the farm. This is due in part to the cheap price of pork which competes on the market with broiler meat.

Not So Good

For the average farmer these outlook predictions are not at all encouraging. It is the same old story, "the farmer will have to pay more for the things he has to buy, and take less for the things he has to sell". He is truly in the squeeze. Therefore, it is even more important than ever before for the farmer to do a good job of farm management. This means increasing production, improving

quality of his products to assure the best prices possible, watching costs and keeping them as low as possible, keeping records so that he knows where his dollar can best be spent, and in general trying to do a better job in his farming operation.

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Farm Is Defined By '60 Census Of Agriculture

What is a farm? The U. S. Census Bureau, now engaged in taking the 1960 Census of Agriculture, has come up with a new definition.

The new specifications call for either more acreage or higher farm product sales. For a place of 10 acres or more, farm product sales must be \$50 or more a year to qualify as a "farm". Where the acreage is less than 10 acres, actual sales must exceed \$250 a year.

Since 1950, the census bureau had labeled a "farm" any property measuring three acres or more, providing it produced \$150 worth of agricultural products a year. Property smaller than three acres qualified if actual sales total \$150 or more.

It's estimated that about four million farms in the U. S. will qualify under the new label. This will be a significant decrease from the number now listed as "farms."

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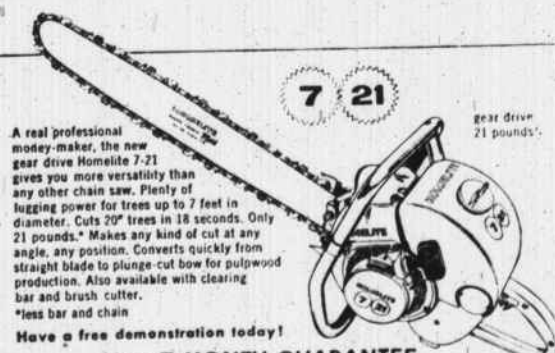
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