

Filter Tip Smokes Cost Half Market

BY J. A. HUTTON
President, Tobacco Associates, Inc.
The shift to filter tip cigarettes has cost us half of the market for light bodied, mild tobacco and almost doubled our market for heavier bodied tobacco with flavor and aroma. It is generally recognized that under the present program we have been producing too much of tobacco. As we have pointed out from time to time, the present program does not provide adequate incentives for the production of good quality tobacco. The large quantities of tobacco low in flavor and aroma which we have produced, particularly during the past two years, are the result of (1) the varieties used and (2) cultural methods practiced by tobacco farmers, such as planting tobacco too close in the row, topping too high or not at all, failure to sucker and improper fertilization.

The decision announced by the U. S. Department of Agriculture on December 15, 1956 in correcting the variety part of the problem for 1957. There remains the problem of eliminating, in 1957 and future years, the incentive in our present program to follow the wrong cultural practices, and the longer term approach to the variety problem.

ACREAGE - POUNDAGE SYSTEM PROPOSED

For dealing with this overall problem on a more permanent basis, a combination acreage and poundage system of allotments for individual farms has been proposed. This revised overall system has been discussed at meetings held with farm groups in recent weeks in the different parts of the flue-cured tobacco producing area.

Such a revision in the present marketing quota program has been incorporated in several bills which have recently been introduced in the Congress. Some of the bills which include this provision and their sponsors are:

Senate Bill No. 1219 by Senator W. Kerr Scott of North Carolina.
House Bill No. 4790 by Congressman Herbert C. Bonner of N. C.

House Bill No. 4788 by Congressman Jennings of Virginia.
NOT LIKE 1953 POUNDAGE PROGRAM
The designation 'acreage and poundage allotments,' generally used in referring to the system embodied in these bills, is often mistakenly thought to mean poundage quotas similar to the system used in 1953. It would be more accurate to say that a change in the present method of determining the individual farm allotments is proposed.

New proposal would work thus way: During any given year, a farmer would sell — free of penalty — all the tobacco he produced on his allotted acreage. If, during the given year, the production exceeded the poundage allotment established for the farm, his yearly acreage and poundage allotment would be reduced below his 'base' allotments the following year to offset such overproduction. If, on the other hand, because of unfavorable weather, plant diseases, or any other reason, his production was below his poundage allotment, his acreage and poundage allotment for the following year would be increased by an amount equal to the underproduction.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE LEGISLATION—ALL TYPES

Some of the more important general provisions of these bills which would apply to all kinds of tobacco under marketing quotas including flue-cured are as follows:

(1) Whenever the Secretary of Agriculture determines that the total supply of one of the kinds of tobacco for example flue-cured is substantially larger than the 'reserve supply' requirements, and that one of the causes for this over-supply is increased yields per acre, he may conduct a special referendum of the farmers who produce that kind of tobacco to determine whether they favor the inauguration of a system of combination acreage - poundage allotment for each individual farm.

(2) A 'base acreage allotment' would be established for each farm which would be the acreage allotment established under the present law, plus the farm's pro-rata share or any increase in the national acreage allotment made possible by the switch to the acreage-poundage combination allotment.

(3) A 'base yield per acre' would be established for each farm which would be the same as the yield established for the farm for 1957 under the Acreage Reserve Program of the Soil Bank Act. Generally speaking, under the Soil Bank program, the yield per acre is the average of the three highest yields obtained for each farm during the six year period 1950-55, with a maximum limit of 125 per cent of the county average yield and a minimum of 20 per cent of the county average yield.

(4) A 'base poundage allotment' would be established for each individual farm, which would be the product of the 'base yield per acre' for the farm, multiplied by the 'base acreage allotment' for the farm.

(5) The individual farm 'acreage allotment' and farm 'poundage allotment' for each farm for the first year the new system was in effect would be the same as the 'base poundage allotment' and the 'base acreage allotment' referred to in paragraphs 2 and 4.

(6) Each year thereafter the yearly acreage and poundage allotment for each individual farm would fluctuate upward or downward from the 'base,' or remain the same, depending on whether the pounds sold from the farm during the preceding year were above, below or the same as the yearly poundage allotment for the farm.

(7) If the national marketing quota were increased or decreased by the Secretary of Agriculture, each individual farm would get its pro-rata share of the increase or decrease and such increase or decrease would be reflected in the 'base acreage allotment' for the farm.

(8) When it has been decided by the Secretary of Agriculture that a special referendum will be held for a kind of tobacco, each farm operator producing that kind of tobacco will be notified, prior to the date of the referendum, of the base acreage, base yield per acre, and base poundage allotments that will be effective for his farm if the referendum is approved.

(9) If one-third or more of those voting in the referendum voted against such a system, it would not be inaugurated for that kind of tobacco and the acreage allotment system in effect prior to the special referendum would be continued.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF PROPOSAL FOR FARMERS

Some of the advantages of the program that would be developed under the proposed legislation are as follows:

The artificial incentive for a farmer to produce the maximum pounds of tobacco on his allotted acreage would be removed. There would be no reason, in order to 'keep up with the trend,' to plant tobacco 12 and 14 inches in the row, put the rows close together use highest yielding varieties available without regard to the characteristics of the varieties, or use extremely heavy fertilization disregarding the maximum point at which good quality of leaf results.

On the other hand, there would be incentive for each farmer to produce the highest quality of tobacco possible by using all the good cultural practices known to him, such as adequate spacing in the row, adequate spacing between rows, keeping within recommended rates of fertilization, and using the varieties which are best adapted to producing good quality tobacco on his individual farm.

(2) Each tobacco farmer would retain his fair share of the total market.

Under such a proposal, an individual farmer could not have his farm allotment reduced because his neighbor or the next county or even the next state increased their average yield per acre. If average yields for any area increased during any given year compared with the previous year, only the individual farms which were responsible for this increased production would be cut back so that during the following year there would be an offsetting reduction in production on the farms which were responsible for the increase.

Therefore, a farmer who follows good cultural practices and produces good quality tobacco is not forced to take a reduction in allotment at some later date by those who disregard all practices which would result in the best quality of leaf and try only to get the highest poundage on the allotted acreage.

(3) Acreage measurement problems would be greatly reduced. There would not be an incentive under such a program for a farmer to produce more than his allotted acreage since, if he overproduced in poundage, his allotments would be reduced the following year.

(4) Each tobacco farmer's allotments would remain relatively stable.

Each individual farm would be given a base acreage allotment and a base poundage allotment based on that farm's production history. 'Bases' would be changed only in response to changes in the level of domestic consumption and exports. If a farmer stayed within his acreage allotment but overproduced his yearly allotment for the following year, his poundage allotment would be reduced enough below the 'base' to offset the overproduction. If, on the other hand, a farmer produced less than his poundage allotment during a year, his allotment for the following year would be increased above the 'base' by the corresponding poundage.

(5) Tobacco Farmers would have a new type of insurance without any cost or premiums.

If unfavorable weather conditions or plant diseases or any other type of misadventure decreased production on an individual farm in any given year, the acreage and poundage allotment for that farm for the following year would be automatically increased to the extent necessary to make up for the current year's reduced production on his farm.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS

House Bill No. 4750 by Mr. Bonner of North Carolina would make the following additional provisions applicable to flue-cured tobacco only: Direct the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a special referendum within 30 days after the enactment of the act if he determines that the marketing quota and individual farm acreage allotments could be increased to offset the reduction in total production which would result if individual farm poundage allotments were inaugurated.

House Bill No. 4788 introduced by Mr. Jennings of Virginia would make additional provisions applicable to Burley tobacco only.

OTHER LEGISLATION PENDING

Among the bills indirectly affecting tobacco are the following: Several bills have been introduced in both the Senate and the House providing for the continuation of the Public Law 480 programs and increasing the amount of money available for these programs in amounts ranging from one to four billion dollars. Public hearings will probably be held on these bills later in this session of Congress.

Miss Southerland Writes From S. A.

MISS AMIGOS (my Friends)
ELANOR SOUTHERLAND
The International Cooperation Class ended January 24th but I was held in Washington till January 28th so I could stop in Panama to observe the program there, this gave me some free time and I enjoyed visiting with friends and doing more sight seeing. I really did learn to enjoy Washington the three weeks I was there.

My plane left Washington at six-thirty in the afternoon. We only stopped in Miami for a short time. It was four-thirty in the morning when we got to Panama. Every one was speaking Spanish and I wondered just what I should do. It was a good feeling when a red cap came up to me and asked if I were Miss Southerland! I was the only lady in the group so it was not hard for him to locate me! He told me that an Embassy car and driver was waiting for me. When the customs official heard this he let me go without opening my bags. This is a courtesy shown United States employees. They took me to the Trivoli Hotel where Americans on orders usually stay. At nine thirty Phoebe Harris, a home agent from Arkansas who has been working there for three years came for me to go to the office and meet the others there.

Then we planned a trip to visit some of the local home agents, their offices and the work they were doing. It was hot and I had only winter clothes which I had really needed in Washington so we went uptown and I bought a cotton dress. It felt grand and I was so glad to have it as we drove for two hundred miles. Part of the time we were on the Pan American Highway which is under construction and it was very dusty.

Phoebe explained the work as we drove along and we visited with one agent. She took us to see a lady who had built a new adobe stove with a chimney. Never have I seen a woman in the states with a completely new kitchen have any more pride and happiness than she had. Also she was very appreciative of the help the agent had given her.

The next day we saw furniture which the women had learned to make. It was so interesting to see the originality each had used in making pieces for her home. We visited a small experiment station they have there.

On the way we were fortunate to be at the locks when a ship was coming through so we stopped to see it. Certainly it was a grand experience for me to be able to talk to an agent who had been working in a foreign country for a number of years. She had a wonderful philosophy about the work and it helped to prepare me for the work here.

The Club women I met could not understand English and I could not understand Spanish but they were so friendly and would always pat me on the shoulder. This is a friendly custom they have instead of shaking hands so much. Phoebe would tell them that I was coming to Colombia to work as she was working there. Many of them told her to tell me that they hoped I would like the work here. I could just sense a friendly feeling even in their words. 'Ins too has helped me to be friendly with the folks here.'

I arrived in Bogota at five-thirty. Again I wondered what I should do since every one spoke Spanish. Soon a young fella came in the room where all the passengers were waiting and called for Miss Southerland. I followed him and he soon had my suitcase and was motioning for me to follow him. As we entered the outside door I saw three girls waving. I waved and then decided they must be waving to some one else, because I did not know anyone in Bogota. I looked around but there was no one there so they must have been waving at me. I soon learned that three secretaries from the office had come to meet me. That was a grand feeling and from that minute on I was made to feel at home in Bogota.

Two of the wives came with me

to the Tequendama Hotel and stayed for dinner. Later a couple from the office sent a pretty potted plant to my room. Another couple took me to church on Sunday. One couple invited me to a party and another invited me to their home. Not only were the Americans friendly and thoughtful but the Colombians in the office were very nice. Most of them speak some English. At the hotel one person at the desk speaks English and usually one of the waitresses in the dining room. The menu is written in English and in Spanish.

I am sure I will enjoy this experience but I see now that my first and biggest job will be to learn Spanish. I can not do much work until I can understand the folks and can express my thoughts to them. So far the next few weeks I shall be working hard on my Spanish lessons.

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