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AN AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ARIZONA

By CHESTER L. MARSH, '25

**A One Crop System Has Never Proven Successful. Then, Why
Should We Continue To Practice It
Here.**

WHAT is your planting program for the coming year? If you are one of the majority, it is probably a simple one, consisting perhaps of seventy-nine acres of cotton and one acre of house pasture; or seventy-nine acres of alfalfa and one acre of house and barn; or maybe it is just forty acres of lettuce. Of course, not all farmers are using such a cropping system, but these can almost truthfully be called typical cropping plans for the Salt River Valley. While a one-crop farm has a good many advantages, it has by far a greater number of disadvantages. It is true, that for short time renters, or owners who are on their own place for the first year, and perhaps under some other special conditions, that some one crop may be the most profitable. It is equally true that, in the long run, the one-crop system is not the most profitable for the land owners or those having long time leases. At least such is the case in the New England States and the Central States. They are finding it to be true in the South and Northwest, and it is only a question of a few years until it will be known to be true here, for our soil is scarcely more fertile or our economic conditions greatly different from those of the above mentioned sections all of which have had to come to crop rotation.

When alfalfa hay is selling for fifteen dollars a ton and everyone is talking seventy-five cent cotton, it is useless to suggest crop rotation, in fact it is dangerous, for many would think you crazy and you would be an outcast in a farming community. During the slump of 1920, (which was more disastrous than necessary, due to the fact that the whole Valley was practically dependent upon cotton) farmers were willing to listen to anything that sounded half reasonable. Taking advantage of this opportune time to introduce a system of crop rotation, Mr. G. E. Thompson, at that



A FIELD OF HEGARI WHICH SHOWS THAT SOIL FERTILITY HAS NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN.

time Agronomist at the University of Arizona, Mr. H. C. Heard, former County Agricultural Agent of Maricopa County, Mr. C. J. Wood, foreman of the Salt River Valley State Experiment Farm, and others, drew up a tentative Agricultural program for the Salt River Valley, and submitted it to the farmers. These men mentioned above have made a special study of the existing conditions in the Valley, and are in a position to make a program which is worthy of the most careful consideration. Because the report is from such good authority, because it is so concise and well stated, and because it is as good today as it was in 1920, it is given below in full.

TENTATIVE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM FOR THE SALT RIVER VALLEY.

In submitting this program we wish first to call attention to the following facts and principles:

1. The agricultural history of the world shows that there never has been a permanent profitable agriculture based on a one crop system.
2. The Agricultural history of the world fails to show a single permanent profitable system of agriculture on a large scale that did not include the handling of livestock. (Truck farm-

ing near cities and the various orchard industries made possible by commercial fertilizers may be considered exceptions.)

3. The agricultural history of the United States does show that the farming communities that have been most prosperous and the individuals that have been most prosperous have been those communities or those individuals that have had from two to five important sources of income.

4. A prosperous agricultural community has for its foundation a home owning people.

5. If an agricultural people are permanently to retain possession of their homes, they must so balance their agriculture as to provide:

(1) Food for the farmer and his family. (Garden products, poultry and poultry products, milk, and butter.)

(2) Rough feed for the livestock of the farm.

(3) Livestock sufficient in numbers to utilize the by-products of the cash crops of the farm and the rough crops grown on portions of the farm that cannot be used to produce cash crops.

(4) A cash income by producing some crops or products readily sold and converted into cash; and

(Continued on Page 14)

AN AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM FOR ARIZONA

Continued from page 3

(5) For the permanent fertility of their land.

To successfully do these things farmers must diversify and rotate their crops, and more than that—they must “balance their farming operations.”

In balancing the farm operations, we believe that, year after year, each farmer should (a) carry approximately the same number of acres in each crop; (b) grow reasonable acreage of one or more cash crops; (c) provide enough rough feeds so that nothing but concentrates need be purchased in caring for the farm livestock; (d) provide for growing some soil-building or soil-improving crops; and (e) so arrange the farm operations that the year's labor and the year's income will be as evenly distributed as possible.

Recognizing the facts and principles above enumerated, and warning against the dangers of a sudden change in our agricultural system, we believe that, as rapidly as is consistent with good farm management, each farmer of the Salt River Valley should so arrange his business and his crop-

ping system that not less than twenty-five percent nor more than fifty percent of his farm shall be seeded and kept in Hairy Peruvian alfalfa; that not more than thirty percent of his land shall regularly be planted to pure Pima cotton; that not less than twenty nor more than forty percent be planted to grain crops of some kind. Early Baart wheat should be at least a portion of this crop if plantings can be made before January 1st, if forced to plant after this date, barley should be given the preference over wheat, that, if not otherwise provided for, grain sorghums, corn, or other forage should be planted immediately following the small grains; and that sufficient livestock should be kept to utilize the feed provided by this plan.

The introduction of new crops may, in course of time, make it advisable to vary the percentage of crops indicated; but farmers are warned against the planting on a large scale of new, untried, or unproven crops or crops with which they are personally unfamiliar.

The committee recommends as of special importance the organization of cooperative associations of farmers for the purpose of marketing their crops and other products.

(Signed)

G. E. THOMPSON, Professor of Agronomy, University of Arizona.

H. C. HEARD, County Agricultural Agent, Maricopa County.

C. J. WOOD, Foreman Salt River Valley State Experiment Farm.

And others.

Did the farmers of the Salt River Valley accept this plan? Did they give it a fair trial?

They certainly began to, and even those who never saw the program began to practice some of the ideas it advocates. Much land was returned to alfalfa, dairying operations increased, more grain was sown and there was a general move towards crop rotation. Why? Because, they found it was not wise to labor and use expensive equipment for four or five months a year, then spend the other seven or eight months feeding hay purchased at a high cost, to work horses and drive around in big cars, only to learn at the end of the year that they had made, perhaps several thousand dollars less than nothing. Some learned a lesson here they will not soon forget. Others who can't resist the temptation to take a chance are again playing the cotton game too strongly for their own safety. Suppose a farmer does make good for the next six or seven years on cotton alone. Will he have saved enough during this time to carry him through an expensive period of reclaiming his depleted soil? And who can tell but what cotton will be an excellent price during the time he is trying to rebuild his soil. Why wouldn't it be better to plant only a reasonable portion of his land to cotton each year, thus eliminating the necessity of the slow and costly process of soil rebuilding later on, and also being sure of getting his share of good cotton prices, that are just as likely to exist ten years from now as they are today.

Think it over. Reread the above Agricultural program, consider its numerous phases, and with a little reasoning see if you wouldn't rather practice the stable form of Agriculture it advocates, which has been the making of all successful farming sections, rather than following the speculative, booming type that is almost sure to break one if he stays with it for any length of time.

NOTE: The writer acknowledges the aid of Mr. C. J. Wood, Foreman of the Salt River Valley State Experiment Farm, and wishes to thank him for permission to use the above Tentative Agricultural Program, and for other valuable suggestions.

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