

The 1936-37 County Planning Project



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I. Purpose Of This Bulletin

This handbook of information has been prepared for use primarily by county planning committees whose members are responsible for the administration within the county of the county planning project which is being conducted by the Texas A. and M. College Extension Service in cooperation with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

II. Agricultural Planning Up To The Present Time

BEFORE 1933. Farmers have always had to do a certain amount of planning though up until recently their efforts at planning usually have lacked coordination, that is, there was little if any connection between the planning done by one farmer and the planning done by his neighbor. To be sure there have been scattered cases where groups of farmers, recognizing their common interest, have banded together and attempted to solve their problems by collective action. Outside of the question of determining where certain crops are to be planted on a farm, nearly all of a farmer's production and marketing problems are problems the solution of which might well be a collective undertaking.

This lack of coordinated action on the part of farmers has often resulted in serious embarrassment to them. Cotton farmers, upon gathering a crop, have discovered too late that their year's operations would have been more profitable had they, as individuals, planted a little less cotton and a little more of something else. Growers of many specialty crops like cabbage and tomatoes frequently have had to let their crops rot in the field as the cost of marketing them on a glutted market would not justify their being gathered.

In spite of the self evident fact that even a little planning would help farmers smooth out some of the sharp turns in their economic road, it was not until 1933 that farmers

were able to plan on a national scale. The agricultural land of the United States stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico; this land, viewed from a national standpoint, constitutes one big farm and the men who work it are, in reality, one big farmer, yet until recently they steadfastly refused to act like one. As a result, they faced the ridiculous situation of being operators of a rich but unprofitable farm.

AGRICULTURAL PLANNING UNDER THE AAA. It is a familiar fact that the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 provided the first opportunity American farmers ever had for group planning of their farming operations in a business like manner. Much has been said about administrative mistakes made in connection with this undertaking, and probably more has been said about the inconsistencies noted in the policies pursued, but when one considers the size of the undertaking and the emergency conditions prevalent at the time the agricultural adjustment programs were begun, it is surprising that farmers encountered no more difficulty than they did in executing such a program. Certainly the progress which has been made would justify the adoption of unusual methods.

Everyone has recognized that there are certain disadvantages to a cooperative farm program that operates from the central office DOWN to the farm, rather than from the farm UP to the central office. At the same time, no one questions the fact that a central agency is needed to gather essential statistical facts, to act as a clearing house for other valuable information originating in a number of widely separated places and to perform those duties necessary to coordinate the the action of the individual units so that the common objective will be reached with a minimum of lost motion. These principles are demonstrated in the use of county committees to administer the agricultural adjustment programs to the producers, the use of the state office as a connecting link between the county committees and the Washington office, and, finally, in the use of the United States Department of Agriculture with its fact gathering agencies scattered all over the world.

The present county planning project is one step in a farm program whereby it is intended to effect a desirable combination of the best features of both plans, that is, of the "farm UP to the central agency" plan and of the "central office DOWN to the farm" plan.

III. The 1935-36 County Planning Project

Early in 1935, the Program Planning Division of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration undertook a project that was intended eventually to develop the machinery for county planning by farmers. There were two major steps made in 1935: First, the experiment stations in the various land grant colleges tackled the problem with their trained research staffs and outlined within broad limits the direction that they thought the agriculture of the state should take. Second, the farmers themselves were asked to consider the agriculture of their own state, counties and communities and outline the changes which they thought ought to be made by agriculture in the future. Here we see two agencies whose background and daily work differ very much from each other being asked to plot the future course of agriculture, an industry in which both groups are vitally interested. A comparison of the "answers" given by each group is to be furnished the county planning committees when the information is finally analysed in Washington.

Although most of the committeemen who are working on the present project are familiar with the county planning work that was done in the winter of 1935 and spring of 1936, it perhaps would be wise to review in some detail the farmers' part in the 1935-36 county planning project.

Farmers and farm women all over the United States were asked to give their specific opinions on the probable future trend of certain basic data relating to agriculture. It was necessary that this information be broken down into statistical series on a large number of items in order that a worthwhile analysis could be made. These items covered a range of subjects from population, number of farms, and use of farm land, to the production of numerous crops and livestock products.

Farmers in this state were asked to apply two questions to the various items and to furnish a numerical "answer" for each. The first of these questions, designated as question 2a, read as follows after some changes were made in the original statement of the question because of the Supreme Court decision of January 6, 1936 on the constitutionality of the Agricultural Adjustment Act:

Estimate probable production of the various farm products in 1936, assuming normal weather conditions, present farming practices and prospective prices.

The second question, designated as question 2b, read as follows:

Estimate probable production of the various farm products in 1936 assuming normal weather and prospective prices, but without either production or marketing control, and if farm practices had been adjusted to maintain soil fertility and control erosion.

In other words, question 2a asked what would happen to the various crops in 1936 if each farmer planned his 1936 farming operations just as he did several years ago when there were no government agricultural programs. That is to say, "What would my 1936 farm set-up be if I, as an individual farmer, knew at the time I began planning my 1936 farming operations that my ONLY guide was my individual judgment on the wise thing to do with weather expected to be normal and prices expected to be at a level determined by the 'best guess' I could make."

Question 2b, on the other hand, asked what would happen in 1936 if the situation were similar to that in question 2a BUT if every farmer, along with his individual determination of what he was going to do on his own farm, decided that he would IN ADDITION adjust his farm practices so as to maintain soil fertility and control erosion.

IV. Continuation of the County Planning Project in 1936-37

GENERAL OBJECTIVES. "Answers" to questions 2a and 2b were supplied by the county committees in 204 Texas counties. It is intended in the present project, (1) to cooperate with the county agricultural conservation committees in making recommendations for the 1937 agricultural conservation program, (2) to formulate agricultural production goals for a sound long-time land use program, and (3) to make recommendations for a 1938 agricultural conservation program in the light of goals established for the long-time land use program. Each of these steps is considered in detail in the discussion which follows:

1. Cooperate with County Conservation Committee

Should the county agricultural conservation committee hold meetings to discuss county recommendations with regard to the 1937 conservation program, the county planning committee will be expected to cooperate with the county conservation committee in any way possible.

2. Formulate Long-time Goals

The formulation of long-time goals will involve two steps:

A. Review of Question 2b.

The county planning committee should review the estimates made by such committee last spring in answer to question 2b.

In column 5 of the mimeographed county schedule will be found the figures submitted by the county committee for the various items listed. (See page 27 for a more complete description of the county schedule). Not all counties in the state submitted a report last spring, and in many cases where the report was received, the estimates were hastily made because of delays in the program due to conditions over which neither the county committee nor the state committee had control.

Column 7 of the schedule is to be left blank except in cases where the committee is instructed by letter from the state office to insert data for selected items. It is expected that column 7 will thus be used only by a few counties.

When the committee feels that the report on question 2b made last spring should be revised, such revision should be inserted in the column marked (xxx). If no report was made by the county last year on question 2b, estimates should be made by the county planning committee and inserted in column 6, the heading of which is left blank on the schedule.

It will be noted that individual farmers who fill out the farm plan sheet (see page 30 for a complete description of the farm plan sheet) will not be asked to furnish estimates on question 2b. From a study of the results secured when the farm plan sheets are analysed, the planning committee should be able to supply an estimate for question 2b that will be in line with the committee's recommendations on question 3. Only information relating to question 3 and to the goal for 1938 is listed by individual farmers on the farm plan sheet.

B. Answer to Question 3.

This step involves a determination of the "answer" to question 3. The estimates made for the county by the county planning committee are to be inserted in column 8 of the county schedule. Question 3 reads as follows:

Estimate probable production of farm products in the county after all land not adapted to agriculture has been shifted to other uses, and after sufficient time has elapsed to permit such changes in farm and woodland management practices as are necessary to maintain soil fertility and control soil erosion, and to permit those shifts between agricultural enterprises which seem clearly desirable and susceptible of practical accomplishment.

The following statement which should clarify the meaning of questions 2b and 3 has recently been issued by the Washington office:

"Since there is some evidence that a few of the states did not interpret question 2b as it was intended, it is appropriate here to restate the meaning of this question. It simply aims at the most probable production if farming systems and

practices NECESSARY for soil conservation (control of erosion and maintenance of fertility) WERE ACTUALLY adopted. There was no significance last year in applying the question to 1936 except to relate it to question 2a, and to eliminate all changes that might possibly affect the estimate except those necessary to maintain fertility and control erosion. It is, in effect, an estimate of probable production, under normal weather conditions, that might be expected under a program which would upset existing farm systems and practices only to the extent that is necessary to maintain fertility and control erosion. It presupposes that soil conservation is a desirable goal in national agricultural policy and that public subsidy will be used to accomplish this purpose where necessary. No consideration, therefore, should be given to the question of whether farmers can AFFORD to make the necessary adjustments without subsidy. The question is, what would be the most probable production if changes NECESSARY to conserve the soil were made? Among other things, these may include changes in farm population and size of farms if this type of reorganization is considered necessary for soil conservation.

“From one point of view, it is unfortunate that the question was ever related to 1936, but this was done especially to prevent the inclusion in the estimates of any changes in yields which might result over a period of years due to changes in crop rotations. Only in this respect can the question be considered as a request for a ‘short-time’ recommendation. It involves no conclusions as to when or how the recommendations can be put into effect.

“Looking to the future, question 2b should be interpreted as described here. It is an estimate of probable production under normal weather conditions, if only ONE element in a sound long-time land use program were adopted; namely, necessary changes in the use of land IN FARMS in the interest of soil conservation. As such it is a part of question 3, which includes, in addition, not only the possible effect upon yields of changes in rotations necessary for soil conservation but also two major additional elements as follows: (1) The shifting of all land not adapted to agriculture to other uses, and

(2) shifts in enterprises, for reasons other than soil conservation, which seem clearly desirable and susceptible of practical accomplishment. Desirable shifts in enterprises may involve changes in farm population and size of farms in addition to those taken into account in answering question 2b.

“Thus, in neither 2b nor 3, should any farm management considerations be introduced which are not involved in these three aspects of a long-time land use program. To do so would be to confuse the results beyond the point of possible interpretation. It would be sufficiently difficult with only three elements included; and that is precisely the reason why question 2b is confined only to the problem of soil conservation. This means that existing practices with respect to the use of varieties, strains, labor-saving machinery, and other production technology should be assumed in answering these questions, where changes in such practices are not necessary for soil conservation and desirable changes in the combination of enterprises.”

Thus we see that question 3 is somewhat similar to question 2b although there are important differences between them. They are alike in that each of them applies the “test” of maintaining soil fertility and controlling erosion; that is, in each question it is assumed that farm practices will be such as to maintain soil fertility at its present level and to control soil erosion in the future. In question 3, however, it is to be assumed that enough time has elapsed to permit all land not adapted to agriculture to be shifted to non-agricultural uses. It is evident that this kind of shift in land use, desirable as it is from a practical viewpoint, would no doubt necessitate in many counties of the United States changes and adjustment of such a revolutionary nature that many people would be disposed to attack the validity and desirability of the plan simply because it would bring such sweeping changes in existing institutions. It is hoped, however, that committeemen and others working with this project will lay aside local prejudices and view the problem as though they were disinterested parties preparing an unbiased recommendation in a scientific manner.

Another way in which question 3 is broader in scope than question 2b is that question 3 assumes that farmers will make "those shifts between agricultural enterprises which seem clearly desirable and susceptible of practical accomplishment". In other words, not only will there be a shift into non-agricultural uses of land unsuited for agricultural purposes, but the farmers who continue to operate farms will when it is practical and desirable make changes in the various agricultural enterprises on those farms such as changes in the kinds of crops grown; changes in the kinds of livestock produced; and changes in the relative importance of crops. A "desirable change", among other things, would include any change which will tend to effect a permanent improvement in the farmers' standard of living.

It should be remembered that a desirable change, according to this definition, might necessitate painful short-time adjustments. It might be desirable, for example, to move some farmers out of a county entirely and return to forests or grass the land from which they have been trying unsuccessfully to secure a decent standard of living, and at the same time treble the size of most of the remaining farms so that the land can be shifted from cotton to livestock production. Perhaps the few farms left should then be decreased in size and made into truck farms. In this example the suggested adjustments would mean decreasing the population of the county, a shift that many people would oppose, and it would mean changing the principal agricultural enterprises in some sections of the county, another shift that would meet opposition from some people.

It should be remembered, however, that this project is not intended to induce any community or county to upset the present economic organization of the county. Neither is it intended to advocate the application to any county of recommendations made by any agency. This project proceeds on the assumption that the present system of agriculture found in many sections is not necessarily the most desirable one that could be had. It does not attempt to identify who or what is responsible for the mal-adjustments that exist. It does hope

to secure from farmers a factual statement of desirable long-time changes in land use policy. Farmers, because they have lived on the land and daily have come face to face with the problems of agriculture, should be well qualified to speak.

3. Goal for 1938

Recommendations for a 1938 agricultural conservation program should be made in the light of goals established for the long-time land use program. In this connection each committee should do three things:

A. Numerical Estimates.

The committee should determine how far toward the goals established in answer to question 3 the agriculture of the county should go in 1938 which is the year when the states are to assume responsibility for setting up and administering the agricultural conservation programs. The committee's opinion is to be set down in column 8 of the county schedule and is to be arrived at after the committee analyses the estimates made by individual farmers in column 8 of the farm plan sheet.

B. Recommended Practices.

The committee should suggest what practices should be paid for under the 1938 program, and at what rates of payment. After due deliberation by the committee on this subject, the committee's recommendations of practices to be paid for under the 1938 program, together with other recommendations on rates of payment, should be set up in narrative form and forwarded to the state committee at the same time the county schedule is returned.

C. Administrative Machinery.

The committee should designate the administrative machinery which it thinks should be set up for this purpose. The committee's report on this subject should be made a part of its recommendations with regard to the 1938 program as outlined in the preceding paragraph.

V. Procedure for Conducting 1936-37 Project

STATE COMMITTEE. The present county planning project is being conducted cooperatively by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the State Extension Services. The administration of this project in Texas is in the hands of a committee made up of six members of the Texas Extension Service staff: G. E. Adams, Assistant State Agent; Mildred Horton, Vice Director and State Home Demonstration Agent; Lola Blair, Specialist, Foods and Nutrition; Roy W. Snyder, Supervisor-Specialists' Work; S. A. McMillan, Extension Economist in Farm Management; W. E. Morgan, Extension Economist in Agricultural Planning. The chairman of this committee is Mr. Adams. Mr. Morgan is the secretary.

It is the duty of this committee to supervise the county planning project. When the statistical information called for in this project has been secured by county committees, the state committee will prepare a summary of information from the various counties for transmittal to Washington. When similar information from all states has been sent to Washington and analysed, the state committee will pass on to the counties the results of such analysis.

DISTRICT AGENTS, COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENTS AND HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS. District agents, county agricultural agents and home demonstration agents are to participate in this project only to the extent that **presentation of all pertinent facts** will be made to the farmers and farm women who are themselves to determine any recommendations or proposals that come as a result of this work. County agricultural and home demonstration agents are expected to lend such assistance and advice as may be requested by the farmers, and it is their duty to assist the county planning committee in the preparation and transmittal of the county data.

COUNTY COMMITTEE AND AGRICULTURAL AND HOME DEMONSTRATION COUNCILS. It is intended that the project be administered within the counties jointly by the agricultural and home demonstration councils or by a committee representing these councils. In most instances it prob-

ably will be desirable to appoint a county planning committee of five or more persons who are to be chosen from the membership of the two councils. Following instructions from their district agents, the county agricultural and home demonstration agents should call a joint meeting of the two councils at which time the county planning project will be explained in detail. At the time of this meeting the county planning committee should be selected by the Chairmen of the Councils and a schedule of community meetings should be worked out. The plan for community meetings should provide for cooperation with community agricultural associations. One member of the county planning committee should be present at each community meeting, and such other members of the committee or councils as are necessary to assist in conducting the community meeting should attend.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS. The community meetings should be called by the presidents of community agricultural associations, where such exist. A member of the county planning committee who is well acquainted with the details and objectives of the project should lead the discussion at the community meeting. After the meeting is called to order by the chairman, the discussion leader should outline briefly the nature of the project which is being conducted. The leader should make every effort to encourage discussion of the material by everyone present. If the members exhibit a tendency to agree with the general trend of thinking of one or a few persons who appear more or less to dominate the situation, encouragement should be given to the presentation of an opposite viewpoint by directing the discussion to any one present who is known to possess an opinion opposite from that presented. The discussion leader should refrain from "taking sides" in the arguments although at times it will be necessary to suggest alternative sides to any given proposition in order to round out a full discussion of the matter. The meeting is not intended to arrive at a conclusion—it is intended to stimulate thought among farmers on past, present and future farm problems. Any conclusions to be drawn from the project will be arrived at by the county planning committee after it has

studied certain information which individual farmers supply on the farm plan sheet.

The discussion leader should use any method of presenting the subject matter which is thought best. The outline suggested below will be found useful in many cases. Because of local conditions, many leaders may wish to change the order of presentation of some of the items and to add other topics for discussion. The outline probably suggests more topics than can be discussed at one meeting. **THE DISCUSSION LEADER SHOULD PLAN THE MEETING CAREFULLY IN ORDER THAT ENOUGH TIME WILL BE LEFT AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION PERIOD TO ENABLE THE FARM PLAN SHEET TO BE FILLED OUT BY THOSE ATTENDING.** This is very important. It is desirable that a blackboard be available and that frequent use be made of it, especially in the presentation of data relating to the county and state.

Suggested Outline of Community Meeting Discussion

1. Meeting called to order by chairman
 - a. Explanation of county planning project
 - (1) The need for agricultural planning
 - (2) Planning under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration
 - (3) How the present project started—this project a continuation of one begun last year.
2. Discussion of Economic Background Material (use county data sheets, and wall charts if available)
 - a. Population trends (wall chart—neg. 61)
 - (1) How does the county trend compare with the State? The United States? (see county “trend sheet” used last year for data on trend in county population.)
 - (2) What differences do you note between the trend in non-farm population and in farm population?

- b. Wholesale Prices on Farm and Non-agricultural Products (wall chart—neg. 53.)
 - (1) When prices rise, which one rises the highest?
 - (2) When prices fall, which one falls the lowest?
- c. Production and Prices of Agricultural and Manufactured Products (wall chart—neg. 48.)
 - (1) What happens to the production of manufactured products when prices fall?
 - (2) How about agricultural production?
 - (3) Do you see any relationship between this and the movements of wholesale prices indicated on the preceding chart?
- d. Prices Received and Prices Paid (wall chart—neg. 52.)
 - (1) When farm prices fall, do the prices paid for manufactured goods, for capital (interest) and for taxes behave accordingly?
 - (2) How long has it been since the farmers' produce has exchanged on even terms for the goods he buys?
 - (3) What has happened in recent months?
- e. National and Gross Farm Income (wall chart—neg. 60)
 - (1) National Income—
 - (a) At what period did agricultural income behave like non-agricultural?
 - (b) Was there ever a time when agricultural income increased faster than non-agricultural?
 - (c) When non-agricultural income was steadily increasing during the 1920's, what was happening to agricultural income?
 - (d) What relationship does this fact have to the curve for farm population? (see 2 a. above)
 - (2) Gross Farm Income
 - (a) Which group appears to have fared better in the last ten years, the farmers who cultivate crops or the ranchmen and dairymen?

- f. Volume of Agricultural Exports (wall chart—neg. 57)
- (1) Has the general 60 year trend of agricultural exports been upward, downward or a combination of both?
 - (2) Does the movement of the trend line for the last 20 years suggest that exports are related to farm income?
 - (3) If there is any relationship, would you expect to raise exports by increasing farm income, or would it work the other way?
- g. Trend in Number of Farms (county schedule)
- (1) Has the number of farms in this county been increasing or decreasing? Why?
 - (2) How does the county trend compare with that for the State? What reasons can you assign for significant differences, if any?
 - (3) If the number increases in the future, what effect will it have on the income of other farmers in the community? Will it increase average income because more farmers will attract new industries to the community or because greater production will enable every one to market his products more efficiently since better roads and more buyers will be needed? Who will pay for the roads?
 - (4) If the number decreases in the future, what will be done with the land in these farms? What will happen to taxes? Who will pay them? What will happen to schools, roads and other services that taxes furnish? Where will the people who leave go? What will they do?
- h. Farm Tenure (data relating to this topic are being compiled by the state committee, but the data may not be available for distribution to the counties until after some community meetings are held. If the county planning committee feels that this topic should be discussed, it will be a simple task for the committee to

compile from copies of the United States census the data on number of farms in the county operated by owners, part owners and tenants.)

- (1) Examine the trend in types of tenure for farms in this county. Has tenancy been increasing or decreasing, that is, has the number of farm owners been increasing or decreasing relative to the number of farms?
 - (2) Suggest explanations for any significant changes.
- i. Land Use in this County (county schedule and "trend sheets" used last year in the county planning project)
- (1) Has percentage of cultivated land in farms (crop land) relative to total farm land been increasing or decreasing in this county? Why?
 - (2) Which crops or classes of livestock are responsible for the major part of the change?
 - (3) Does the present situation appear to be stable?
 - (4) In the future what changes, if any, ought to be made in the various uses to which land in this county is adaptable if farmers are to receive a **fair return for their work**, that is, if farm families are to receive enough income from the operation of their farms to maintain a desirable standard of living? What are the major items in a desirable standard of living? Is there anything else besides adequate food, clothing and shelter? What else?

(Note: The discussion on the preceding items could continue indefinitely. When a convenient point is reached, the discussion leader should direct the attention of the meeting to the recommendations which farmers made last year on this project, pointing out that the answer to question 2b involved the determination of probable production in the county when suggested changes in the county agricultural picture were not of such a fundamental nature as those involved in a consideration of question 3. It follows, then, that a review of last year's recommendations would be helpful in arriving at a proper answer to question 3.)

3. Review of Question 2b. (Column 5, county schedule)

If no report was made last year, the discussion leader should not spend any time on a discussion of question 2b but should proceed at once to the consideration of question 3. If question 2b is to be discussed, the leader should study column 5 of the county schedule carefully before the meeting and introduce the topic by a statement something like this:

“In last year’s county planning project we were discussing the agriculture of this county and trying to visualize what the agricultural picture would look like if all the farmers shifted their farm practices around so that soil erosion would be checked and soil fertility maintained. Now last year we were concerned ONLY with the question of what changes would be necessary in order to accomplish this; we did not consider additional changes which we thought would be desirable for any other reasons. Later on in the meeting I am going to ask you to fill out some information for your farm when all these changes will be considered, but right now let’s see what the county planning committee said last year. Apparently the committee thought that we had too many acres in cultivation and not enough livestock in this county, because they suggested that in order to make proper use of our soil we ought to decrease crop acres about ___ per cent, increase pasture land by ___ acres, and carry ___ per cent more cattle on the farms in this county”

The figures appearing in column 5 can thus be interpreted and discussed by the leader, but the discussion should be handled so that enough time will be left to explain question 3 and have the farm plan sheets filled out by those in attendance.

4. Discussion of Question 3.

Before the meeting the leader should read carefully the discussion of the meaning of question 3 appearing on pages 8 to 11. The topic can be introduced by a statement such as this:

“Let’s discuss what the agricultural picture of this county would look like under certain conditions. Now there aren’t many people who are well enough acquainted with this county

to know exactly what the county picture would be, but we all know what our farms look like, so perhaps we had better try to think in terms of our own farms, and then if we get some information down on paper for our own farms we can put it together and get a good idea of what the county picture should be.

“Remember, what we have in mind is a sound land use program for this county—you can think of it as a sound program for your farm. But what are the conditions under which we are to consider this question?

“First (the leader should list on the blackboard as they are named the points which are set down on the back of the farm plan sheet) let’s assume that there will be normal weather conditions. (Discussion of what is meant by this should follow.)

“Second, we are assuming that the land in this farm will be used in such a manner as to maintain soil fertility and control erosion. (The discussion on this and succeeding points should be thorough, and all those present should be urged to enter into the discussion.)

“Third, we are going to assume that all land in this farm not adapted to agriculture, which includes livestock production, will be shifted to other uses. (Game refuges, parks, and so on. What other uses are there for such land?)

“Fourth, let’s assume that when farmers plan the amount and kinds of crops to grow and the number and kinds of livestock to keep, their judgment is influenced by aims other than soil conservation alone. (Other aims may include the establishment of a decent standard of living and may involve changes in population, size of farms, and radical shifts in crops and livestock produced.)

“Fifth and lastly we are going to assume that a reasonable amount of public funds will be used to facilitate these adjustments by farmers. (Someone no doubt already will have raised the question of whether farmers can afford to make those changes which appear to be desirable. In the discussion of this, the point should be made that soil conservation and an

adequate means of support of population, that is, conservation of human as well as physical resources, are assumed to be desirable aims and that the country probably would save money in the long run if steps are taken as soon as possible to accomplish these aims.)”

5. Filling Out the Farm Plan Sheet.

After question 3 has been discussed enough so that its meaning appears to be generally understood, copies of the farm plan sheet should be distributed to the farm operators in attendance. Each farmer present should receive a copy of the farm plan sheet and be asked to fill it out. **IT SHOULD NOT BE ANNOUNCED AT THE MEETING THAT SOME OF THE SHEETS ARE TO BE SET ASIDE FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION WHEN THEY ARE RETURNED BY THE FARMERS.** The leader should familiarize himself with the instructions appearing on the farm plan sheet so that questions which arise can be answered quickly.

ALL OF THE INFORMATION FOR COLUMN 4 SHOULD BE FILLED IN BEFORE ANY DATA ARE INSERTED IN THE OTHER COLUMNS. The leader should point out that the figures which the farmers place in column 4 relate to how the farm was operated in 1936. He should read the list of items appearing on the sheet and should pause long enough between items to enable every farmer to make the proper entry for his farm. If this plan is followed, questions relating to the meaning and interpretation of the various items will be discussed and all will receive the benefit of such discussions. Particular attention must be paid to the instructions on how to handle double cropping. Remember that the county planning committee will need to summarize the data entered on the sheets and that the community meeting offers the only chance the committee will have to secure proper answers from many of the farmers.

After column 4 is complete, producers should proceed to column 6. Be sure everyone understands that the entries for column 6 represent the farmer's best judgment on the number of acres of the various crops, number of livestock, and so

forth that his own farm should have if it is operated under the assumptions enumerated in the instructions appearing on the sheet. In other words, column 6 is used by the farmer in answering question 3 for his farm. As in the case with column 4, the discussion leader should read the items and have all the farmers make the entries on their sheets before proceeding to the next item. There no doubt will be considerable discussion of these items, and perhaps some disagreements by farmers in the recommendations made by their neighbors. Column 8 should be filled out in a similar fashion after all producers have completed column 6.

SELECTING A "SAMPLE" GROUP OF FARMERS TO FILL OUT FARM PLAN SHEETS. Although the meeting should be open to all parties who are interested and although every one who attends will be asked to fill out a farm sheet, only the sheets submitted by certain selected farmers are to be used in summarizing the results. This fact, however, should not be announced at the community meeting. The committee should bear in mind that its objective is to measure the average opinion for the entire community and that the reason for using a sample is to cut down the amount of work involved. If a farm plan sheet is filled out by every farmer in the community, there is no question but that the committee will have a record of the true sentiment of the farmers in that community.

When there is a large number of farmers in the community, however, the tabulation of farm plan sheets for every farmer would require a vast amount of work. Statisticians have known for a long time that the results secured from the examination of a properly chosen sample can be applied to the entire community to secure a reliable answer representing the opinion of the entire community. Naturally, the larger the sample, the more reliable are the results when one applies the findings from that sample to the whole community. After a certain size sample is secured, however, the results obtained from the use of a bigger sample are no more reliable than the results secured from examination of the smaller. The committee, therefore, should

exercise great care in choosing its sample. If the sample is properly chosen and is big enough, conclusions drawn from that sample will represent within a small degree of error the true opinion of the entire community.

From a list of all farmers in the community, a random selection of about five percent of the farmers should be made. If a purely random selection is made, it is likely that some of the individuals whose names are chosen will be farmers who ordinarily do not participate in community activities such as this one. A special effort should be made, however, to secure the attendance of all the farmers whose names have been selected. If, for example, one desires to pick out 25 farmers in a community and at the same time secure a representative sample of ALL the farmers in that community, he should not make his selection from any single area within the community nor should he pick the names from an incomplete list of representatives of the community.

There is available in the county agricultural agent's office a list of farmers who are participating in the 1936 Agricultural Conservation Program. If this list includes every farmer in the community, a random sample in that community could be taken by picking out every fifth or every tenth or every twentieth record, etc., depending on the number of names desired. If, on the other hand, three-fourths of the farmers in the community are represented by the names on this list, only three-fourths of the total number of farmers chosen for the sample should be taken from this list, the other one-fourth being picked at random from a list of non-signers.

Perhaps in many instances a complete list of farmers in the community will not be available. In this case, a random sample should be chosen from the available information, but every effort should be made to include in the sample the correct proportionate number of individuals whose names for one reason or another are not on file in the county agricultural agent's office.

It is suggested that the sample so chosen constitute five per cent of the total number of farmers in the community. This rule, however, is a flexible one. If only ten farmers live in the community, all of them should be asked to prepare farm plan sheets. If, on the other hand, there are 2,000 farmers in the community, a sample of 50 farmers, or 2.5 per cent of the total, would be just about as reliable as a five per cent sample of 100 farmers. In other words, when unusual conditions are present, committeemen should exercise their judgment in deciding on the size of samples, but in every case a sample of at least ten should be secured.

About the only inflexible rule to remember in this connection is that the sample can be too small but that it never can be too large for reliable results. The community organizations in most Texas counties represent a membership of about the same number of farmers, and a straight five per cent selection would in most cases yield a sample of about 25 farmers.

ANALYSING THE FARM PLAN SHEET. When the farm plan sheets are returned to the discussion leader at the end of the community meeting, the county planning committee should separate from the others the sheets submitted by farmers whose names appear on the random sample list and summarize the figures appearing on these sheets. If the committee wishes to examine the remaining sheets, there no doubt will be instances where the committee will find an interesting comparison between the data secured from sheets submitted by farmers whose names are on the random sample list and the data from sheets submitted by others.

The committee should use a blank copy of the farm plan sheet to fill in the summarized data for the community. In doing this, for example, the entries for 1936 corn acreage (line 1, column 4) on all sheets submitted by farmers chosen in the sample should be added up and the sum entered in line 1, column 4 of the blank sheet. When each line has thus been handled, column 4 of the community summary sheet will give a combined picture of the 1936 farming operations of all the farmers in the group.

The entries appearing in columns 6 and 8 likewise should be totaled. When column 6 is filled out, the committee should calculate each column 6 entry as a percentage of the corresponding entry in column 4 and enter such percentage in column 7. Column 7 will then show the combined opinion of selected farmers on the long-time objective for their farms, such opinion being expressed as a percentage of their 1936 farming operations.

The entries in column 8 of the community summary sheet should in a similar fashion be expressed as a percentage of column 4, and the percentages should be entered in column 9.

After community summary sheets are completed for each community in the county, the committeemen will have the facts before them when they prepare the county summary. In using these community summary sheets to arrive at a county figure on the answer to question 3 and on the goal for 1938, committeemen should be careful not to average the community percentages to arrive at the county percentage change. A SAFE RULE TO REMEMBER IS THAT PERCENTAGES SHOULD NEVER BE AVERAGED.

If the committee desires to secure the county percentage changes recommended by all the farmers, it should add up the entries made in columns 4, 6 and 8 of the COMMUNITY summary sheets and place the combined entry on a COUNTY summary farm plan sheet. The percentage figures for the county should then be calculated from these county data.

These community and county summary sheets are intended merely as a guide to "farmer opinion" on question 3 and on the 1938 goal. None of these sheets is to be sent to the state committee. The information secured from the sample is only one of the facts which the county committee should consider when the committee meets to determine its recommendations for the entire county. Such recommendations are to be entered on a blank mimeographed county schedule and are to be in terms of acres and livestock numbers, NOT as percentage changes from a given base.

The latest historical information appearing on the county schedule is for the year 1934. The recommended shifts in the county agricultural picture (as determined from the analysis of the farm plan sheets) are based on 1936 farming operations. It is of the utmost importance that this fact be understood fully by the county committee. The committee, in short will have to use its judgment in determining a "normal" base acreage on which to apply the recommended percentage shifts, and the answers thus secured must be reviewed by the committee and, if necessary, changed to conform with the best estimates that the committee can make.

For example, assume that the census figures for corn acreage in the county show 1909 harvested acreage as 1,500, 1919 acreage as 2,000, 1929 acreage as 3,500, and the 1934 or drought year acreage as 100. Assume in addition that the producers who filled out farm plan sheets show that their combined 1936 acreage of corn was 465 and that their recommendation for the long time objective on their farms was 400 acres, or a decrease of about 14% FROM THE 1936 LEVEL. Examination of these figures shows that corn acreage was increasing sharply from 1909 to 1929, but the 1934 figure gives no accurate indication of what was happening to corn acreage after 1929. The committeemen will have to estimate the trend up to the the year 1936 from such information as they have—in many instances they will have to rely on their memory of what has been happening since 1929.

Suppose that the committee's estimate of normal harvested corn acreage for the county in 1936 is finally set at 4,000 acres. Applying the 14 per cent decrease recommended by the selected farmers for their farms, a figure of 3,440 for the long time objective is secured. This figure should be examined carefully by the committeemen. Perhaps they will decide that it is "out of line" with reasonable farm practices, that it is either too high or too low. If such is the case, the committee should submit on its report only the final figure which is decided upon. Thus we see that the result secured from an examination of the sample of farmer opinion is to serve merely as one of the guides that

the committee must follow in determining its final recommendations.

VI. Forms and Material to be Used in County Planning Project

The following forms are to be used in connection with this project:

1. WALL CHARTS — copies of the various wall charts to be used this year were sent to all county agricultural agents last winter in connection with the 1935-36 county planning project. These charts are to be used as an aid to the discussion of the economic background material. Economic material such as this is particularly well suited as introductory matter for a discussion on county planning. Such material is of general interest and is connected in some manner with almost any farming activity that one can suggest. It is to be noted that only a few of the charts are mentioned in the suggested outline for conducting community meetings appearing on page 15. The discussion leader, keeping in mind that the community meetings should not last longer than one session, should use his own judgment in picking out additional charts to use and in the elimination of some of the charts suggested.

2. COUNTY SCHEDULES — the county schedule is a three page mimeographed form. The state committee will supply each home demonstration agent and each county agricultural agent with one copy of the schedule on which the basic data have been inserted in columns (x), (xx), (3) and (4). These basic data are taken from the United States censuses and the information from the last two censuses is inserted for most items. Earlier information, in some cases going back to the 1900 census, is available for selected items. Each county will receive in addition a limited supply (about 10) of blank county schedules for use by the members of the planning committee and by council members who assist in holding the meetings. The census information should be inserted on these blank schedules by some one in the agents' offices. Two copies should be set aside for use by the committee when the final county figures are decided upon.

Column 5 of this schedule contains the figures submitted by the county planning committee last spring in answer to question 2b if such an estimate was made. If no estimate was submitted, the committee is asked to insert in column 6 data representing the answer to question 2b. Column 7 is to be used only when the county is instructed to do so by the state committee. Column (xxx) is to be used by the committee if the committee wishes to revise a previous estimate on question 2b.

The committee's estimate on question 3 is to be inserted in column 8. Similarly the estimated goal for 1938 is to be inserted in column 9.

The last column on this schedule is to be used by the committee for notes and comments such as explanations of double cropped acreages. A satisfactory explanation of such acreage duplication for the counties will be easier to make if the committee follows the same procedure in making estimates for the county as is outlined for the use of individual farmers in the instructions appearing on the farm plan sheet.

After revising the results secured from use of the farm plan sheet and after taking into consideration such other information and facts as can be secured by the committee, the committee should fill in columns 8 and 9 on a blank county schedule and send a copy of such schedule to the state office. The committee should by all means keep one copy of the completed schedule in the county file.

The instructions appearing on the farm plan sheet will explain the meaning of most of the items appearing on the county schedule. As is readily seen, the farm plan sheet simply rearranges the order of the items appearing on the mimeographed county schedule. The following schedule items do not appear on the farm plan sheet:

- No. 1. Rural Farm population
- No. 2. Number of farms
- No. 16. Total land area (of the county)

No. 18. Average yield corn for grain

No. 21. Average yield cotton

No. 28. Average yield wheat

It is felt that estimates for these items should be made by the committee without attempting to secure estimates from individual farmers on the farm plan sheet. In other words, it is believed that, since the farm plan sheet is to be filled out by selected farmers with information relating only to the farms operated by them, such farmers should not be confused by being asked to supply information for the listed items on their own farms and to supply in addition their estimates of county data for the missing items.

The explanations appearing on the farm plan sheet are written primarily for use of discussion leaders and are worded so as to apply to an individual farm. These instructions, however, explain the meaning of the items listed on the mimeographed schedule, that is, they offer an explanation of the meaning of the census data.

In addition to the aforementioned explanations of individual items, the following explanations of schedule terms is given for the assistance of county committeemen:

Item 16, Total land in farms, may exceed the entire land area of the county because the census lists the entire area of the farm as being located in the county where the farmstead is situated.

Items 17 to 42. The data are on a harvested acreage basis and the year referred to by the census is the calendar year preceding the year in which the census was taken. Thus the acreage figures appearing under the 1935 census column represent harvested acreage for the year 1934. Similarly, the other years are 1909, 1919, and 1929.

It would not be wise to pick out every fifth year in a series as short as twenty-five years and use the data so selected as a measure of the trend of such data over the period because some of the years so chosen may represent years during which conditions were very unusual. The severe drought

of 1934, for example, will make the harvested acreage items for many counties appear ridiculously low, and the committee should keep this limitation in mind when using the census data given. For a similar reason, the data on average yields also are likely to be unreliable if used as a single measure of long time trend.

Items 45, 47, 48, 49, 50. Note that the census data for these items are not comparable because the dates on which the census enumerations were made differ from one census year to the next. In addition to the explanations furnished by the dates appearing in columns (x), (xx), (3) and (4), the following explanation with respect to cattle and swine is made: The figures for the 1930 census in items 45 and 47, all cattle and all swine, are the numbers on farms April 1, 1930, born before January 1, 1930. Thus death losses, purchases and sales between January 1 and April 1 must be accounted for before the figures listed for the 1930 census can be considered as comparable with the figures appearing for the 1920 and 1935 censuses which were taken on January 1.

3. FARM PLAN SHEET — in column (1) of the farm plan sheet are listed the line numbers. The numbers appearing in column (2) identify the items as they are numbered on the mimeographed county schedule. Note that the items appearing in column (3) are set up in a "balance sheet" plan with harvested acreage appearing first, the deduction for double cropped acreage coming next, and the enumeration and description of other land in the farm coming last. The meaning of the other columns appearing on the sheet is explained in the instructions appearing on the back of the sheet.

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