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Post War Farming Adjustments & Opportunities in South Dakota

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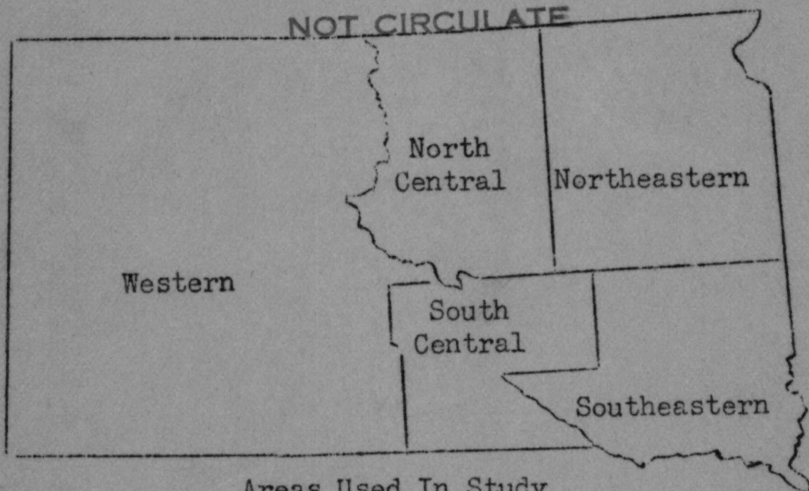
POST WAR

FARMING ADJUSTMENTS & OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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POST-WAR FARMING ADJUSTMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES
IN SOUTH DAKOTA *

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The approaching post-war period makes it desirable to focus attention on the opportunities and problems involved in the settlement of demobilized ex-service men and others on farms and ranches in South Dakota. It will also be essential to determine some of the desirable changes that have and should take place in size of farms in the various parts of the state. It is hoped that both prospective farmers and persons working on resettlement plans will profit by past farm experiences and by the opinions of farmers.

A state-wide survey of post-war farming intentions and opinions of farmers regarding resettlement possibilities and farm adjustments was completed by South Dakota State College recently. It was felt that the opinions of bona fide farmers on the number of farms that might be for rent or sale to new farmers, the minimum size of farm needed to provide a satisfactory income, and on other important resettlement problems would be extremely valuable to prospective farmers and others concerned with resettlement problems. This report summarizes some of the important post-war farm adjustments reported by the 2,600 farmers completing survey schedules.

The study showed that about 82 percent of the farmers expect to operate the same farm after the war or have already made arrangements for a son or son-in-law to take over the farm. (Table 1.)

Table 1. POST-WAR FARMING INTENTIONS

Farmers intentions	South-east	North-east	South Central	North Central	Western	State
	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent
Operate same farm	80	81	80	88	85	82
Retire from farm	8	7	8	7	11	8
Other farming plans	12	12	12	5	4	10

Of the remaining farmers, 8 percent expect to retire with the other 10 percent indicating that they expect to buy or rent another farm or have other farming plans. The farmers in the North Central part of the state indicated the highest proportion expecting to operate the same farm, whereas the farmers in the Western half of the state showed the highest percent expecting to retire. The survey indicates that about half of the retiring farmers expect to sell their farms and the other half rent their farms to good tenants. (Table 2.)

Table 2. PLANS OF RETIRING FARMERS

Percent planning to	South-east	North-east	South Central	North Central	Western	State
	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent
Rent farm	4.2	3.7	3.9	4.2	8.5	4.2
Sell farm	2.8	3.3	3.4	3.6	11.1	3.8
Estimated number of farms						
	number	number	number	number	number	number
For rent	980	700	230	320	990	3220
For sale	630	640	200	270	1290	3060

* The field work on the survey schedules was carried out by the Extension Service under the supervision of S. W. Jones, former Agricultural Planning Specialist.

This would make available somewhat over 6000 farms through the retirement of present farmers. However, it should not be assumed that farmers are awaiting the end of the war to retire. Although present prices are an incentive to continue farming, many farmers are so short of help or reaching such an advanced age that they are forced to quit farming. Others are finding the present time a profitable one to dispose of their personal property through farm auctions.

Not all of the returning veterans will be in the market for farms. Many farmers have already made arrangements to divide their farms or to go into partnership to accommodate a son, son-in-law or other veteran or war worker after the war. About 8 percent of the farmers indicated that they have already made plans to accommodate a son at home. (Table 3.)

Table 3. PLANS ALREADY MADE TO ACCOMMODATE SON,
SON-IN-LAW OR OTHER VETERAN OR WAR WORKER

Plans to accommodate	South-	North-	South	North	Western	-----State-----	
	east	east	Central	Central	percent	percent	number
	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	number
Son at home	8.6	8.1	11.2	5.9	6.9	8.2	5,500
Returning son or son-in-law	7.8	4.1	7.3	3.8	7.9	6.1	4,200
Other veteran or war worker	1.8	1.7	2.6	1.9	2.3	2.0	1,300

An additional 6 percent have made arrangements for a returning son or son-in-law and two percent expect to make room for other veterans or war workers. It is estimated that farmers have already made plans to accommodate about 4,200 demobilized sons and sons-in-law and for 1,300 other demobilized ex-service men and war workers. About 5500 sons now at home are expected to be provided with farms after the war.

Present high farm income has made it possible for many farmers to purchase additional land for a returning son. There are also indications that some servicemen are sending home their savings to apply on the purchase of a farm.

What do farmers think about the possibilities of reducing the size of their own farms to accommodate additional farmers? What is their estimate of the minimum size of farm needed to provide a reasonable level of income? The majority (85 percent) of the farmers indicated that the farms they are operating are large enough to provide a satisfactory income. (Table 4.)

Table 4. FARMERS OPINION OF SIZE OF FARM

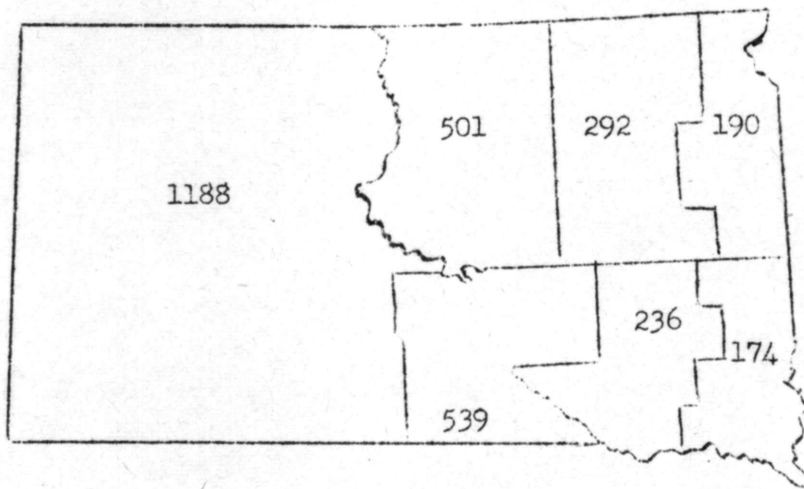
Farmers opinion	South-	North-	South	North	Western State	
	east	east	Central	Central	percent	percent
	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent
<u>Changes on own farm</u>						
Farm large enough	87	84	84	87	83	85
Farm too small	5	4	6	5	9	5
Farm too large	8	12	10	8	8	10
<u>Changes on other farms</u>						
Shifts to larger units	20	20	44	20	45	27
Shifts to smaller units	16	21	15	16	14	17
	acres	acres	acres	acres	acres	acres
Minimum size of farm	205	242	530	501	1188	520

About 10 percent of the farmers felt that their farms were larger than they expect to operate after the war and 5 percent stated their farms were too small. Wartime pressure for increased food production has made it necessary for some farmers to operate larger farms than they would ordinarily do. Some of this additional land will be available for new farmers. However, most of this land becoming available through this source will not be provided with buildings and will not be of sufficient acreage to provide an economic unit.

Farmers were also questioned on post-war changes in size of other farms in their community. About one-fourth (27 percent) of all of the farmers indicated that they expected farms and ranches to become larger while about one-sixth (17 percent) expected a shift to smaller, more intensive farms.

A high proportion of the farmers in the South Central and Western parts of the state expected farms and ranches to become larger. Recent research on size of farm bears out this indication of the need for increasing the size of farming unit on a rather high proportion of the farms in those two areas. A recent study showed that about one-third of the farms and ranches in Brule County in South Central South Dakota and almost half in Meade County in the Western part of South Dakota are below an optimum size needed to provide full employment for the available labor. This compares with less than one-seventh of the farms below optimum size in Moody County which is located in the Eastern part of the state. Farm size has shown very little change in the Eastern counties since 1930.

The farmers estimate of minimum size of farm ranged from about 170 acres in the Southeastern to over 500 acres in South Central to well over 1100 acres in the Western areas of the state. This estimate of minimum size of farm ranged from a low of 140 acres in Clay and Lincoln counties to a high of 2,800 acres in Harding county. Had this survey been taken during the less favorable years prior to the war, the farmers' estimate of a minimum size of farm would undoubtedly have been higher in some areas.



Farmers' estimate of the minimum acres per farm required to provide a satisfactory level of income for 7 areas in South Dakota.

Post-war farming plans were somewhat different for the owners, part-owners and tenants. A higher proportion of the owner operators in the state are of retirement age than is the case with the part-owners or tenants. Most of the owners have also been farming for a longer period.

Almost 11 percent of the owners indicated they expect to retire after the war with less than 3 percent of the tenants expecting to quit farming. (Table 5.)

Table 5. EFFECT OF TENURE ON FARMERS' POST-WAR INTENTIONS AND OPINIONS

Intentions	Owners	Part Owners	Tenants	All Farmers
	percent	percent	percent	percent
Operate same farm	83	83	77	82
Retire from farm	11	8	3	8
Other farming plans	6	9	20	10
<u>Farmers Opinion of own farm</u>				
Farm large enough	86	84	85	85
Farm too small	7	4	7	5
Farm too large	7	12	8	10

However, about one-fifth of all tenants plan to buy or rent other farms or to make other farming arrangements after the war. This would seem to indicate that tenants are building up savings to improve their tenure status. Many farmers have been buying farms during the present war period. This trend toward more owner operated farms will undoubtedly continue as long as farm prices are favorable.

The part-owner group indicated the greatest expectation in reducing the size of their farming unit after the war. The owners and tenants reported about an equal number of farms too small and too large. The farmers who own part of their land and rent some additional land are operating much larger units than are either the full owners or tenants.

Considerable opportunities are in prospect for full-time and seasonal farm laborers after the war. Somewhat over one-fourth of the farmers expect to hire one or more full-time workers and almost half of the farmers expect to hire some seasonal labor. The expected demand for farm workers seems to be state-wide. The estimates of the full-time workers needed appear to be high. However, some of the full-time work is probably for a four to six-months', spring-to-fall season. It would appear that there will be about 19,000 full or part-year farm jobs and about 32,000 seasonal farm jobs available after the war.

Table 6. NUMBER OF FARMERS EXPECTING TO HIRE ONE OR MORE WORKERS AFTER WAR

	South-east	North-east	South Central	North Central	Western	State
Expect to hire						
Full-time workers	5600	5900	1600	1900	4000	19,000
Seasonal workers	8300	9300	3000	4200	6800	31,600

A prospective farmer with no previous farm experience or with limited capital would be much better off working as a hired hand on a good farm until he has acquired sufficient experience and capital to assure a greater degree of farm success. Such experience would also prevent a beginner from investing and possibly losing his entire capital in a venture which he might later not find to his liking.

Many returning veterans will have developed special skills during their specialized training program. Training and experience with trucks, tanks and other machinery and equipment would be excellent background for many veterans to engage in occupations such as mechanics, blacksmiths and other mechanical jobs. The returning veteran might also consider other occupations related to agriculture such as trucking, feed grinding, seed cleaning, fencing and many other jobs which farmers usually are too busy to do themselves.