

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CHANGES IN THE WORK\* OF FARM WOMEN  
AND GIRLS CAUSED BY LABOR SHORTAGES

STATE NORTH CAROLINA

NAME OF PERSON

(Summary from 24 home agents)

ANSWERING Ruth Current, State Home Agent

Since many farm women and girls are doing different work from what they did before Pearl Harbor, or are doing extra farm and household work, please give us your opinion and that of members of your State staff on the following questions.

1. FARM WORK: What farm work are farm women and girls in your State doing MORE of this year than last? Specify by type of farming and defense areas.

Planting, cultivating, harvesting, and marketing farm crops such as tobacco, cotton,  
peanuts, sweet potatoes, cane for molasses, wheat, beans, and cabbage; women and  
girls have been responsible for a greater share of the garden work and in some counties  
for it entirely; many have accepted the whole responsibility of farm with young boys  
and old men (Negro) as hands; entire management of farms in many sections left entirely  
to the women as the men are off in defense work and boys are serving in the armed  
forces; some women and girls have helped with the repair of fences and farm machinery,  
some have driven trucks for the first time, some have driven the tractor and worked  
the combine.

2. Estimate the percentage of farm women and girls in your State who are doing (a) farm chores, (b) field work, (c) operating power machinery in 1942 and 1941. Use the following table.

Farm work	Estimated percentage in	
	1942	1941
a. Farm chores customarily done by men	47.8%	26.9%
b. Field work (planting, hoeing, cultivating, picking, and harvesting crops).	39.5%	40.1%
c. Operating power machinery (tractors and trucks).	64%	3-2/3%

\* See definition of terms on page 3.

3. How have changes listed under questions 1 and 2 affected household work? What household problems have become harder? What ones easier?

Lack of time and physical exhaustion from farm work have caused many of the women to neglect their home duties - many usual household tasks are delayed or go undone. Little time is left for food preparation, cleaning, laundry, etc. Getting water into house from wells and springs is a problem with labor shortage. Rural electrification, recent in some counties, well established in others, and still to be established in some has solved the time problem to a certain extent with labor shortage, especially where labor-saving equipment had been bought. Those who could afford to buy new are unable to find labor-saving equipment for sale. More home sewing is required as ready made clothes are more expensive and do not wear well because of poor workmanship. More difficult to find time for canning when doing so much farm work. The whole family have helped at night in some instance. Transportation problem adds difficulties but community haulers appointed in each neighborhood in some counties is easing this problem (Polk County). Neighborhood leaders are a big help.  
(See page 2-a)

4. What is the Extension Service doing to help farm women and girls adjust to changes you have indicated above? If you have publications aimed specifically at these problems, enclose copies when you return the inquiry blank.

Extension is helping farm families to adjust to these changes. Home Agents are carrying to the farm family information on improving family relationships, conserving time, food, clothing, household and farm equipment, nutrition, preparation of meals, budgeting of time and money, marketing methods, urging women to take better care of themselves and their families and to find time for rest and relaxation and recreation. A blanket program for home demonstration clubs in 1942 was devoted to meeting this emergency and assisting farm families to adjust (See copy attached). Neighborhood leaders, community gatherings, and sharing are all encouraged by Extension. Red Cross First Aid, Home Nursing, and Canteen courses (see page 2-a)

5. What do you think ought to be done?

Neighborhood leaders organized and well trained, holding monthly meetings to discuss problems - these families in walking distance of each other. A neighborhood hauler would help get the surplus produce to town.  
Emphasis should be given to the importance of health to the homemaker and her family. Already there are indications that women have worked beyond their physical endurance. Encourage better organizations and planning in the home and on the farm. Further organize community cooperative activities. General education in homemaking followed-up by simple, brief bulletins. County-wide programs timed to State and National programs.  
Help worked out on a national basis to aid farm families.  
Release of more labor-saving equipment.

Help given families in evaluating importance of jobs to be done, weighing of values and making decisions as to the "must" tasks. (See page 2-a)



Question 3 (Answer continued from page 2)

Household Problems that Are Easier:

Amount of work has decreased when several members of family have left home to work or serve in armed forces and this has meant less work in meal preparation, house cleaning, laundry, and marketing.

Those who have labor-saving electrical equipment have found this a boon in this day of labor shortage and more time given to farming. Rural electrification has greatly eased the home duties in many communities.

Question 4 (Answer continued from page 2)

have been carried to the rural people by home agents as well as information on the various rationing programs, Civilian Defense, etc.

Through regular home demonstration club meetings and demonstrations.

Through food conservation demonstrations in every neighborhood for all.

Timely hints to neighborhood leaders each month. They in turn pass these along to their neighbors.

Neighborhood meetings at which helpful suggestions are made on (a) Improved storage, (b) Gardening methods, (c) Improved home and farm practices, etc.

Question 5 (Answer continued from page 2)

We should instill into our people the desire to sacrifice willingly, to work diligently as possible in order that we and others might enjoy the privileges of democracy. We are still a pampered set.

Our farm agents could train our girls and women in repair jobs about the house and farm and in certain farm management problems. Home agents could take special training in these problems.

Our women and girls should be trained in home defense, actual use of

firearms, according to one of the leading club women in Currituck County.

Farm prices should be high enough for the farm family to have the things in the same proportion as the wage earner. As long as farm incomes are too low to meet the needs of the family more and more of our young people will seek higher wages elsewhere. In many cases our young people go off to work and make from \$35.00 to \$50.00 per week, while those who stay at home cannot get much cash in many months. We have in mind a very fine rural girl who remained at home and worked a whole year and only had \$80.00 in cash.

Poultry feeds are higher than the finished poultry products. Cotton is nearly always produced on rising prices for fertilizer and day labor, when the selling price in the fall is low.



6. Make comment regarding how big the problem of changes in work of farm women and girls looms in relation to all problems handled in the entire extension program.

Extension means more and is doing more for farm people than ever before and this is one of our greatest problems, this change in the work of farm women and girls. The material we use with them must be simplified, more so than ever. It is hard for farm people to change with such speed as this emergency demands and we must help them to adjust to it.

Finding time for all farm and home work is difficult. More and more, Extension must teach farm people how to plan and organize their work.

From the standpoint of health, women and girls are having to do much hard work, too much with too little time left for rest and no time for recreation. They cannot maintain physical fitness and good health over a long period of time unless they plan their work accordingly.

Extension workers can train neighborhood leaders in small groups. These leaders in time will carry information to all sections of the county where Extension Workers do not have time to go. Simple literature of third grade level is recommended on subjects: conserving food by canning, drying, storing; food values, food preparation, and serving meals; increase supply of vegetables and the con-  
(see page 3-a)

7. How can the Federal Extension Service help you with this problem? Be specific. If through literature, what type and subject, etc.?

Illustrated literature that is brief and simple, wording that can be understood by an uneducated person. Many points could be gotten over to our farm women and girls through simple pictures and drawings (some of the cartoon type) but these must be specific.

Literature on planning and management, readjustment, spending money wisely, and wise use of time, farm crops, gardening, food production.

Encourage special training for home agents in home repairs and certain farm practices.

Visual aids on these subjects.

A simple time schedule made available, simple enough for any woman to understand, listing duties and who should perform them, the schedule to be hung where every member could read and check by it.

More tires for farm cars and trucks. Better truck crop markets, especially on sweet potatoes.

\*DEFINITION OF TERMS: This inquiry is concerned with changes in work of the unpaid working women and girls of farm operators' families as distinct from the hired worker.

WORK: Farm: Care of livestock, poultry, milking, planting, hoeing, cultivating, picking, harvesting, marketing, repair of farm equipment, planning, etc.

Household: Preparation and serving meals, house cleaning, care of children, washing and ironing, sewing, bread, butter,

and cheese making, canning, preserving, repair of equipment,  
planning, etc.

Please return to Mary Rokahr, Extension Economist, Home Management,  
Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.,  
by September 15.



Question 6 (Answer continued from page 3)

servation of all home equipment.

Federal Extension Service can help by by preparing bulletins that give more specific information in a shorter and more concise form.

More patriotic appeal to the rural family in regard to the value of agriculture in our National Defense program. A greater realization of women's part in winning the war, especially in relation to Agriculture, food production and conservation, better nutrition.

A deeper sense of responsibility in holding our farm life together for the future and in keeping the farm home intact for the time when the fathers and brothers return.

The Federal Extension Service could provide more money for travel of its agents into the rural sections so that they may further the education of farm people who cannot get information otherwise. More transportation facilities would permit agents to visit homes where lack of such facilities do not permit the women to attend club meetings. (This suggestion has come from one of our Negro home agents).

The Federal Extension Service can help the local agents by providing special institutes in emergency methods and procedures for meeting the problems of change of women's work and other problems which have been brought about by the war. (This suggestion has come from one of our Negro Agents).

Because of the low educational standards of the masses of our farm women, the Federal Extension Service can help by publishing simplified editions of some of the more essential Extension bulletins, especially those on home management, food and nutrition, child care and development, clothing, and personal improvement. (This suggestion has come from one of our Negro Agents).