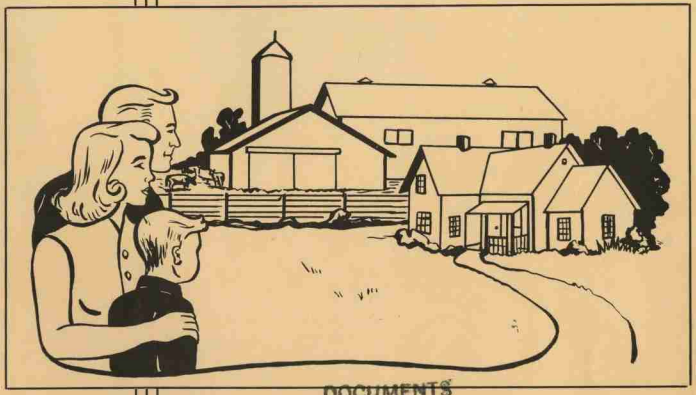
Farm Families Plan Their Future



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SOUTHERN FARM MANAGEMENT EXTENSION PUBLICATION NO. 6
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THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

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Foreword

Rapid changes in production technology and economic conditions influence farm business operations. These changes must be met by the farm family if living standards are to be maintained or improved as we desire.

Many farm families in the South request individual counsel and guidance on organizing their farm businesses. Others require help with the adoption of new methods and practices. Delay or failure in making vital decisions often penalizes the less aggressive farm families. Assistance can be given them more effectively through the farm unit approach—involving the entire family.

Extension workers have had more experience taking information to farm families in a piece-meal fashion. In most counties they have had insufficient time for individual counseling. In striving to build a more effective extension program we hope this gap can be closed.

The material in this booklet describes work now underway which we hope to expand. The procedures used in farm and home development vary among the states. But the results are the same—improved family living.

This booklet is the result of the work of the Southern Farm Management Extension Committee. Responsibility for developing the publication was assigned to a subcommittee composed of C. H. Bates of Texas, W. L. Carpenter of North Carolina, M. C. Rochester of South Carolina and E. P. Callahan of the Federal Extension Service. In carrying out its assignments, the subcommittee was given valuable suggestions by other members of the Committee.

The arrangements under which this publication was prepared were made through the cooperation of the directors of the Extension Services of the Southern States, the Farm Foundation and the Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The booklet was approved and published jointly by the Extension Services of the twelve Southern States.

David S. Weaver, Administrative Advisor,
Southern Farm Management Extension Committee

Farm Families Plan Their Future

Present Situation - The Problem and Need

FARMERS adopt new methods and make adjustments in their farming systems in hope of increasing their incomes and levels of living. These changes usually "pan out," but not always. Adjustments usually entail more cost, investment or risk. To pay the higher costs and make the additional investments, farm families are often obliged to forego (for the time being anyway) things they want or need.

On the other hand, farmers who fail to make changes that increase their efficiency are "left behind." Their incomes (and their families' levels of living) suffer a relative decline, as the efficiency of other farmers is increased.

In such a situation an individual farmer and his family frequently have important and difficult decisions to make.

Today, farmers have more opportunities than ever before to increase their efficiency. They and their families also are faced with more important and difficult decisions under present conditions.

During periods of rising prices or relatively favorable returns, the choices made are less likely to determine whether the families make progress in improving their living standards. When conditions reverse and incomes decline materially, it becomes much more important that the right decisions are reached. These conditions exist now.

A major portion of the two million farm families in the South are more conscious today of the need for getting the maximum returns from every resource at their command—land, labor, equipment, livestock, buildings, credit. Economic forces are buffeting them. Many farm operators may not survive as farmers unless some help can be given them in improving their overall use of their resources. Others will fail to live up to their capabilities.

With the need for total farm output reduced appreciably as our economy approaches a "peace-cold war" level, some cutback in major crops is imperative. Other adjustments are not yet completed on many farms.

Some of the recent changes which have been significant to southern agriculture are (1) relatively greater importance of livestock

in the overall farming pattern, (2) improved cultural practices of cash, feed and pasture crops, (3) greater use of mechanical power and equipment and (4) increased knowledge of disease, insect, breeding and feeding problems.

Farm families vary in financial position, tenure, family living desires, technical skills, managerial abilities, and many other factors which affect their application of the newest methods.

Obviously, a few have made the maximum application of all the improved practices now known. Certainly, the advantages of each separate improvement are not fully realized until all are integrated into a sound business operation. To get this done on the individual farm unit requires careful planning for farm and home development.

What Is Farm and Home Development?

Farm and home development may be defined as a process in which a particular farm family's resources are considered and definite decisions or plans made for realizing their main goals.

The procedure for doing effective farm and home development is neither simple nor highly standardized. However, it can be mastered by teamwork of a cooperative, interested farm family and a patient, aggressive group of extension workers.

It is the most effective method known for dealing with some types of problems on individual farms. County extension workers already are doing the work in some form and to some degree.

The Farm Family's Part in Farm and Home Development

The primary requisite to planning for development is that the farm family have the desire to improve their operations, or at least one important decision to make in the conduct of their business. Its members must have faith in the extension workers, especially at the county level. They must understand that the agents' contribution is information and help in "thinking through" their problems. They should know that the planning process will involve the disclosure of facts about personal business, such as indebtedness.

Family members must recognize that they are to make the decisions, carry them out, and be responsible for the outcome. Also, they need to know that changes and adjustments in the plan should be made as conditions demand.

The Agents' Role in Farm and Home Development

While farm families are making decisions continually, many of them need educational help in making their most important and difficult decisions. These are the decisions that affect the whole farm business and, usually, the family as well.

These are the questions to which *blanket recommendations are not the answer.* For example, "Shall I go in debt to build up a herd of cattle?" "How much of my land shall I put in improved pasture?" "How much should I invest in equipment?" "Should we buy the adjoining tract of land that is for sale?" "Can we afford a new house?" County extension agents are in an especially good position to give families such help.

The educational help they need is of three kinds:

1. *They need help in thinking of the several possibilities that are open to them.* County extension agents have a wider range of observation than most farm people. This enables them to suggest possibilities the family hadn't thought of.

For example, a family deciding whether to buy an adjoining tract of land often hasn't thought of many of the various other ways the money could be invested, or of all the good uses they could make of the additional land.

2. *They need some specific information.* For example, what kind of land is for sale? To what crops or uses is it best adapted? What improvements and treatments would be needed to make it produce optimum yields of each of the crops for which it is suited?

What would the improvements and the treatments cost? What yields could be expected? What prices would the crops be likely to bring, or what uses could be made of them in the farm business? What is the outlook for land prices? In other words, how likely is it that an equally suitable tract of land will be for sale later at a lower price? How likely that the price of land will go up?

3. *They need help in thinking through possibilities to arrive at the decision that is best for them.* For example, why do they want more land? How would the purchase affect the family's net worth? Cash reserve? Credit? Is the possibility great that it could lead to serious loss? How much would it add to prospective net income? Family satisfaction? Would some other use of the money be expected to add more to net income or satisfactions?

What does the planning and development procedure involve? The process of working out a plan may differ in some details, but the main steps usually include:

1. Listing the principal goals (desires) of the family—education, home improvements, debt, retirement, etc. These help determine the annual income needed.

2. Listing the principal resources of the family—land, buildings, machinery, livestock, money, credit, markets and family workers.

3. Listing the major alternatives that are open. (The possible uses that the family could make of its resources to earn income and satisfactions; changes that could be made in crops produced, livestock kept, equipment, etc.)

4. Choosing the long-range plan (the alternative or combination of alternatives) most likely to provide the necessary income by:

(a.) Preparing a budget (a summary of annual operations) for present farm business.

(b.) Preparing similar budgets for alternatives that are considered practical. (Sometimes partial budgets are sufficient.)

5. Outlining the principal steps (or priority order) for moving toward the chosen long-range plan. This usually involves partial or complete annual budgets showing the planned changes and expected results. Whenever additional capital will be needed, its definite source should be indicated. If debts are involved, their retirement (time and amount) should be indicated in the plans.

A farm and home plan once made and put on paper is not the end product. No family has the ability to do the job once and for all.

Farmers are confronted with weather hazards, changes in costs and prices, new techniques and practices and new machinery.

A farm and home development plan must be adjusted or revised to meet changes that occur. A plan for development is a guide. It is not a blueprint which must be followed in every detail.

What Results Can Be Expected?

Over the South many farm families are enjoying greater security and more satisfactory living because of good planning and careful management. Some have succeeded primarily because economic conditions have been favorable.

The real test of whether the farm unit approach to development was effective is shown if the families have (1) faced critical situations and met them, (2) set their goals then worked toward them, (3) acquired some skills and capacities for analyzing their business and (4) learned that continuous effort must be given to adoption of improved methods.

The examples of successful farm and home development cited in this report typify effective extension work. Space allows only four brief reports. The county extension workers in the respective states invite further study of the families named. But let the results speak firsthand.

The Ladners' Bid for a Brighter Future

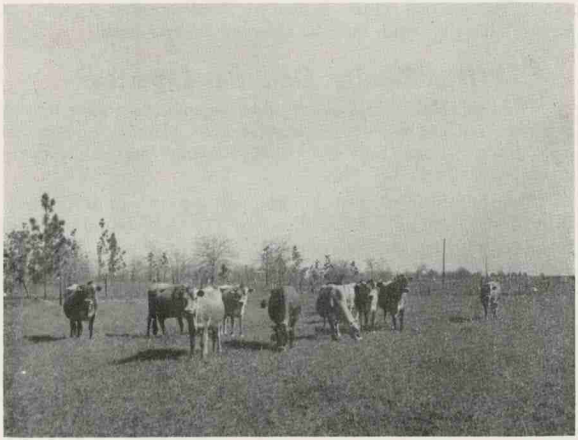
The keen interest of their son in 4-H Club work was one of the main things that inspired the Ladners to take a chance. They took the chance, and they won.

In 1944 Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Ladner and their 13-year-old son, Virgil, owned and operated a small farm in Pearl River County, Mississippi. Their farm consisted of two acres of pecan trees, five acres of unimproved pastures and 15 acres of cropland.

The family operated a 20-cow dairy by grazing the cows in the woods almost 100 percent of the time. The five acres of pastures were used to graze work animals and a Jersey bull. Most of the winter feed for the cows had to be purchased, and most of the winter milk checks went to pay feed bills. This system of farming wasn't earning much net income for family living.

The farm home had no modern conveniences such as running water or electricity.

The Ladners wanted a better living, and they wanted to provide some future in farming for Virgil, their youngest child, who had been an enthusiastic 4-H Club member since 1941. They studied



several possibilities, and discussed them with a number of people including the county extension agents. They concluded that their opportunities were very limited unless they could get more and better land.

A tract of about 400 acres of cut-over land eight miles away was for sale. Most of it could be cleared for pastures and crops, and it could be bought on terms. The Ladners felt they would be taking a chance to buy it. A collapse of prices or a heavy medical expense, for example, could wipe out their equity. On the other hand, it offered prospect of a larger and more efficient farm business, a much better living and an opportunity in farming for Virgil. They decided to make the down payment on the 400 acres.

For two years Mr. Ladner and his son would go over to the new tract and camp for six days each week, clearing land, preparing it and gradually putting it into a cropping system. At the end of two years, sufficient land had been cleared and put into crops and pastures to enable them to construct a new home there.

The first pasture on the new farm—a 16-acre plot—was established as a 4-H Club project. It was seeded according to recommendations at that time in Dallisgrass, common lespedeza and white clover, and fertilized according to Extension Service recommendations.

Later, it was to serve as a pilot plot in the establishment of pastures for approximately 100 head of dairy cattle.

Five registered, bred dairy heifers were purchased as another of Virgil's 4-H Club projects in 1945. Virgil was one of five 4-H Club boys whose loans to buy livestock were recommended by the Pearl River County Livestock Association. Credit with the Hattiesburg Production Credit Association, established in this way, was used extensively in the further development of the farm business.

A farm plan covering the entire 400 acres was made out. As is true of all long-range plans this one was revised somewhat as it was put into effect over a period of years.

The Ladner farm was in the heart of the tung section. Since there was plenty of suitable land, and tung nuts promised to be a profitable crop, plantings of tung trees were included in the farm plan along with expansion of the dairy enterprise.

In carrying out their plan, the Ladners relied heavily on the county extension agents for further counsel and information in connection with such steps as taking soil samples, terracing, laying out fence lines,

culling cows and selecting heifers for replacements, harvesting silage and seeds, insect control and forest management.

A 4-H award made to Virgil in 1949 indicates that the Ladners plans were being worked out. It was a plaque awarded by the National Dairy Producers Federation for all-round efficient dairy production. It read: "Efficient Production Award for Superior Achievement—4-H Club Work—State of Mississippi—1949."

An adjoining 80-acre tract was purchased in 1952. Today there are approximately 30 acres of bearing tung trees, 30 acres that have not yet reached bearing age, and 40 more acres set out in 1954.

Approximately 50 acres are of improved pastures, part in Dallisgrass and white clover, and part in Dallisgrass and common lespedeza. Approximately 100 acres are devoted to temporary grazing crops, both summer and winter. During the winter these 100 acres are in fall-sown Camellia oats for grazing. Crimson clover is sown with most of the oats. In summer these 100 acres are in Alyce clover or Pearl millet, or both. About 50 acres are devoted to corn, hay and sorghum silage for the livestock.

There are now approximately 60 dairy cows—30 registered Jerseys and 30 grades—and about 40 calves and heifers. Home-grown pastures, hay and silage are the basis of the ration. Milk sales amount to about $16,000 annually.

The six-year-old tung orchard is probably one of the highest yielding orchards in the area. It produced approximately 2½ tons of nuts in its fifth year.

The land, all of which is rolling, has been well terraced. Pastures, fences and roads have been laid out for convenience and to provide for soil conservation. The land that is not in pastures, crops or orchards is devoted to the production of long-leaf yellow pine established by reseeding and protected by fire lanes.

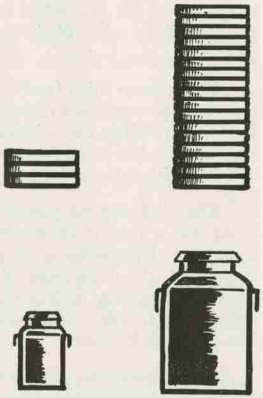
The home has been remodeled according to the home demonstration agent's suggestions for maximum convenience. It consists of four bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, front and side porches and a bathroom. The kitchen is equipped with an electric stove, refrigerator and sink. There is butane gas heat, a television set and a 20-cubic foot freezer. The Ladners do a good job of producing food for home use.

There are two tractors with complete equipment for cultivation and hay making, and a farm truck. A well-designed service area gives access to implement sheds, a loafing barn for the cows, poultry houses and a feed barn. A trench silo is maintained for storage of 160 tons of silage. Silage is harvested with a field chopper and packed with a tractor. The dairy barn has hot and cold water and modern milking machines.

The family today consists of Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Ladner and Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Ladner and their young daughter. Virgil and his father have been working under a partnerhip agreement for several years.

The Ladner farm has served on several occasions as a demonstration of a balanced farm and home business. On such occasions the Ladners have always delighted in showing farm people of South Mississippi who visited their farm the results of an effective farm and home plan actually carried out.

With sales of milk and tung nuts plus sales of surplus seeds, feeds and animals, the farm has a gross income



1944 1954

of approximately $20,000 per year. Both the gross and net income are several times greater than they were before the Ladners decided to buy more and better land and to plan and work toward a brighter future.

The elder Mr. Ladner says that without visits by the county extension agents, he probably would still be following a mule and grazing cows in the woods. The county extension agents say they would feel compelled to investigate should some member of the Ladner family fail to visit or call the office at least twice per month. And when improved methods are available, the Ladner family will be one of the first to adopt them and to work them into a continuing farm and home improvement program.

Crop-Livestock Balance Works for the Ellens

Neither making adjustments nor working closely with the county extension agents is anything new for Nash County, North Carolina Farmer J. R. Ellen.

Thus, when a group of leading farmers conceived the idea of a special agent to handle a balanced farming program in the county in 1948, it was natural for the Ellen family to join the program. The program was put into effect in the spring of 1949, with the county paying half the salary of the special agent and 50 farmers paying the other half.

The 160-acre Ellen farm was primarily a cash crop farm—tobacco, cotton and peanuts—with 20 acres of corn fed to four brood sows and their litters. When the farm was passed on to heirs in 1938, Mr. Ellen bought out other heirs, thus giving him the 160 acres, approximately half of which is in cultivation.

The first step in putting the balanced farming program into effect was a conference between the special agent and the farmer. Since most of the farms in the program were relatively successful cash crop farms, the major aims of the program were increasing income from cash crops and adding supplemental enterprises where economically practical. Mr. Ellen decided on the following changes to be put into effect on his farm.

1. *Fertilization.* Soil tests revealed most fields were low in potash, and that he was not using enough fertilizer for most profitable production, especially on tobacco.

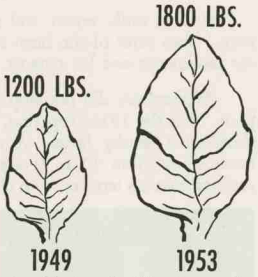
2. *Rotation.* Wherever possible, the crops on the Ellen farm were put into a three-year rotation. The primary reason for this rotation was to aid in controlling nematodes and diseases in tobacco.

3. *Beef.* A small enterprise seemed to fit into the Ellen system of farming, along with hogs, as a good supplemental enterprise. Two bred, grade Hereford heifers were bought, and several dairy cows on the farm were bred to a beef bull in 1950.

4. *Pasture.* Five acres of native pasture were seeded to a Ladino-fescue mixture in the fall of 1949.

5. *Feed supply.* Several acres of alfalfa were seeded in 1950 to supplement the pasture.

6. *Woodland management.* Fifteen acres of the approximately 80 acres of the forested area on the Ellen farm were selected for woodland management.



Has the money invested in the program been returned to the farmer? Many times, says Mr. Ellen.

Although peanuts and cotton have shown little increase in yield, tobacco yields have increased from 1,200 to 1,800 pounds per acre as a result of better fertilization and a good rotation.

The beef enterprise has grown to eight brood cows and a herd bull. In addition to adding to the family food supply, the sale of beef is adding to the income sheet.

Improved pasture is giving better utilization of poorly-drained land not suited to row crops. Four additional acres were seeded in 1953 to take care of the increasing beef herd.

The alfalfa failed, due to poor drainage in the soil. However, 11 acres are now being double cropped to provide the necessary feed supply. After small grain is harvested, six acres are seeded with sorghum for grain. Another five acres are seeded to lespedeza and harvested for hay.

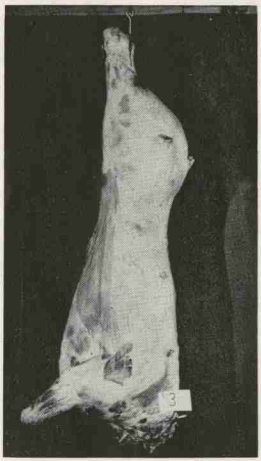
The woodland management is paying off and spreading. During the first year the farmer netted $1,700 from his woodland operation. The 15-acre tract has been selectively harvested, and during the winter

Mr. Ellen and his two tenants are selectively cutting the remaining woodland areas on the farm—adding additional income to the Ellen farm (both actual and potential) and at the same time improving the labor efficiency.

Another way the labor on the Ellen farm is used effectively during the winter when little field work is required is in meat processing. Most of the livestock sold off the farm — both pork and beef—is partially processed. The hogs are sold as hams and sausage; the beef carcasses are dressed and sold by quarters. Usually, when a beef animal is slaughtered, one quarter is kept for home use and three quarters are sold. Mr. Ellen says selling meat animals in this fashion adds $30-40 to each beef animal he sells and $15-20 to each hog.

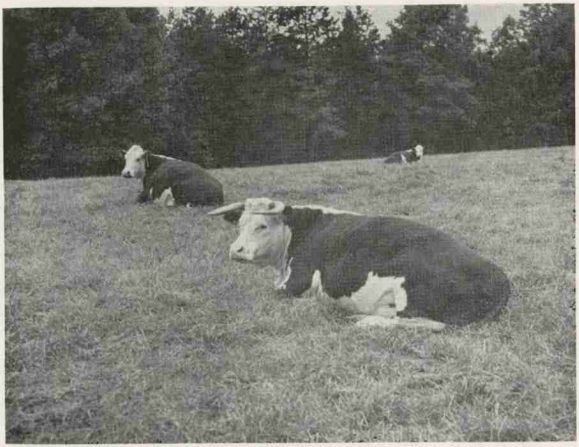
Surplus milk, butter and eggs are sold throughout most of the year. Two acres of the farm are used for garden and truck crops for the landowner and his tenants. Each tenant has a family cow.

Adjustments did not stop with the creation of the balanced farm plan. For the 1954 crop year, Mr. Ellen has rented an additional 20 acres on a nearby farm. A decrease in the cotton acreage on the home farm from 17 to 9 acres was one reason. Also, Mr. Ellen realized that his tenants, with children getting large enough to do more field work, could handle additional acreage. Prospects for lower prices in 1954 were also another incentive for renting the additional acreage.



With reasonably favorable weather conditions, the farmer is sure he will be able to maintain the gross farm income of $10,000 to $12,000 during 1954 and the years ahead. There is a good prospect income will be increased. Making adjustments to maintain income, Mr. Ellen believes, is important in holding good tenants on the farm.

If 1954 turns out to be a good crop year, the farmer is planning to put in approximately 20 head of feeder steers to winter on pasture and forage and then finish them out



with some grain in the spring. He is also planning to increase the swine herd to five brood sows.

Mr. Ellen has been making changes to meet the changing times.

Family Planning and Teamwork Win for the Shaffers

For 19 years the Oscar Shaffer family had struggled along as tenants on cotton farms in Delta County, Texas. They decided to change this in 1936 when they bought a 74-acre blackland farm.

But their troubles still were not ended. Cotton allotments restricted their money crop and the levels of living for Mr. and Mrs. Shaffer and their two children. They were "growing cotton and corn on the blackland fields and putting nothing back into the soil." Cotton root rot and declining yields were becoming real problems.

In 1942 they made another change. A conversion from mules to tractor power was made, and additional land was rented.

Disaster struck in 1945. The home and all its furnishings were lost in a fire. Eighteen-year-old Stanley wanted to go to college, and

started in September of that year. But three months later a poor cotton crop forced him to return home.

The Shaffers had their backs to the wall.

The county agricultural agent discussed with Mr. and Mrs. Shaffer the possibilities of a larger place located on a paved road, if their smaller place could be sold. Stanley wanted to farm and the 157-acre place they were considering would provide them slightly more land than they were operating, including some land they were renting.

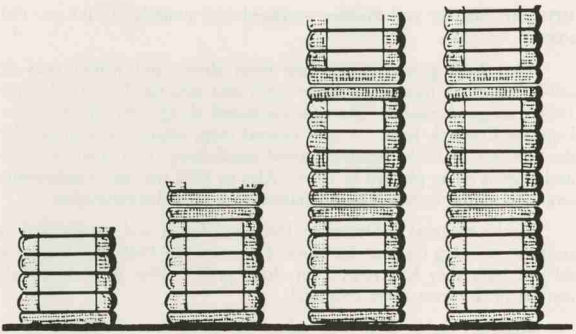
The larger farm had the disadvantages of gullied slopes and soil of low productivity and the dilapidated house was barely livable. But together the agent and the family considered how future goals might be reached if they could improve the soil and add more land and equipment as profits permitted.

After the family decided to buy the larger farm, Mr. Shaffer lost no time in getting the agent to assist him in laying out terraces and drainageways. The terrace-width strips were planted to sorghum in the spring, hay cut in July, and terraces built on 135 acres before fall rains set in.

Stanley joined the Merchant Marines after leaving college and returned in August 1946 to find that the crop was rather poor again. They faced a heavy land payment and things looked dark. Stanley took an industrial job to help tide the family through to another harvest—with hopes of things turning out better. All of them longed for a new home, especially for the sake of 15-year-old Barbara, now in high school.

Meantime the Shaffers discussed with their county extension agents a program involving nine other families as farm unit demonstrators. They volunteered to be the tenth family. Under this program a five-year cropping plan was set up in the fall of 1946. This included 60 acres of Austrian winter peas under which high-analysis TVA phosphate was used to supplement materials from the PMA. The following seasons Hubam clover and winter peas were planted on one-half the land used for cotton and corn. Mr. Shaffer obtained sufficient credit from the local bank to buy a grain drill, grain binder and a small grain combine to thresh the clover.

Stanley returned in April to help with the farming. He and his father sought suggestions from the agent and others for reducing cotton root rot and boosting total production. They had faith in legumes and fertilizer doing this. Their 1947 cotton crop proved they were



1947 1948 1950 1953

right. That fall the harvest was 58 bales from 155 acres—an average of 190 pounds of lint cotton per acre. This was 70 pounds above the 1946 average yield on 150 acres.

Prospects of this crop spurred their dreams for the new home. The county extension agents obtained several building plans from the extension engineer. They decided on a three-bedroom design and completed construction in December 1947. Having reached one major objective gave the entire Shaffer family renewed hope. Their determination became even more firm as they planned with the extension agents for other improved practices.

They carried out a complete insect control program on their 1948 cotton crop. Previously, no systematic control measures were used, although insect damage was usually heavy in this 40-inch rainfall belt. Mr. Shaffer bought a six-row dusting machine in June and applied insecticides regularly. Stanley learned to make infestation counts and to keep up with Extension Service recommendations. He even helped the neighbors with their insect problems.

The average cotton yield was 213 pounds of lint in 1948, about 25 percent above that where no control measures were used. This yield convinced the Shaffers of the benefits of insect control. In 1950 they harvested 524 pounds per acre when neighbors using no control had to harvest from six to eight acres to get a bale. In

1953 Mr. Shaffer and Stanley averaged 532 pounds of lint on 130 acres.

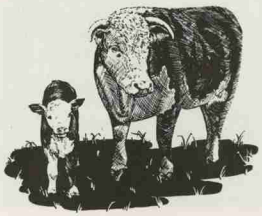
They have gradually switched from clover and winter peas as soil-builders. A mixture of hairy vetch and oats has been used since 1951 with good results. The oats, combined along with the vetch, are kept for livestock feed. A new oilseed crop, sesame, was grown by the Shaffers in 1953. Sesame proved satisfactory on a small acreage and more is being planted in 1954. Also in 1954 the use of anhydrous ammonia under cotton is being started as a trial demonstration.

Stanley married in December 1948, and father and son decided to continue working together for their objectives. In 1949 they bought a 64-acre tract they had rented for three years. This gave them full control of 40 acres more cropland.

Another major step was taken in 1949—the purchase of a mechanical cotton picker. However, the added cost of defoliation, difficulty of handling in large cotton and other factors caused them to sell the picker in 1951.

In 1950 Stanley asked his Dad to help him buy an 85-acre farm across the road from their home. They wanted to start a livestock enterprise and this tract made a total of 306 acres. They cleared 16 acres of elm brush by bulldozing. This made 50 acres available to be developed into pasture. They bought 17 Hereford heifers, several of which were registered, and a registered bull. With these, the father-son team set out to produce registered breeding stock to get the most from their small livestock operation.

Another 37-acre pasture was bought in 1952, and sheep were added to the livestock enterprise to aid in weed control. The combined livestock sales totaled $1,287 in 1952 (first year of calf production) and $2,230 in 1953. Returns from livestock are expected to increase as the Shaffers' plans are developed.

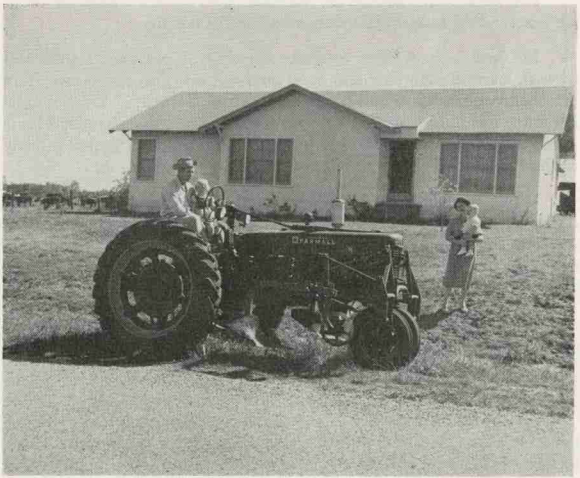


Work toward improved pasture and adequate feed supplies has included seeding of 10 acres to Kentucky 31 fescue, which the 1952 drouth ruined. Ryegrass in the fall, overseeded with Madrid clover, has replaced the fescue. Twenty acres of alfalfa were planted to provide high quality forage to supplement the pastures.

Through careful planning, determination and hard work, the Shaffers have realized most of their goals. Within eight years, they built their own home, then assisted Stanley to build a comfortable six-room house in 1951. Both homes have modern bathrooms, convenient kitchens, and some labor-saving appliances. The elder Shaffers added a 20-foot home freezer in 1952 and both families use it for food preservation. This includes liberal amounts of vegetables and fruits from the home garden and orchard, and a variety of home-raised meats. Both have automatic washers. The home grounds are landscaped and attractive lawns maintained.

The Shaffers are continuing to plan and expand their business. In 1954 they began building a 30 by 50-foot granary and seed house for handling their crop of 25 to 30,000 pounds of vetch and oats. Equipment includes a separator, seed cleaner and a power loader to facilitate handling the grain-vetch mixture. If cotton acreage is restricted further in the years ahead, vetch seed will provide a larger share of cash crops; the oats will be used to creep feed calves and grow more sheep.

Little wonder that the Shaffers have in less than 10 years expanded from 74 acres to 343, and increased their inventory of



equipment from less than $1,000 to approximately $15,000. Their livestock inventory in 1945 stood at $325; today it is around $4,800.

This two-family team of aggressive Shaffers now comprise seven members. (The Stanley Shaffers pictured on page 21 have a daughter 30 months old and a son 6 months of age.) They continue to look to the agricultural agencies for counsel and technical help. They work faithfully at providing themselves a good and satisfying living. Satisfactions are shown not only through what they have to enjoy, but in the wonderful spirit in which encouragement and help are given to neighbors. "The Shaffers are among the best," the neighbors say.

Better Living for the Keiffers

The C. M. Keiffers of Jasper County, South Carolina, overcame the disadvantages of limited resources, poor land and a disaster to build up a productive farm business, build a new home, provide well for seven children, and contribute materially to rural progress in their community.

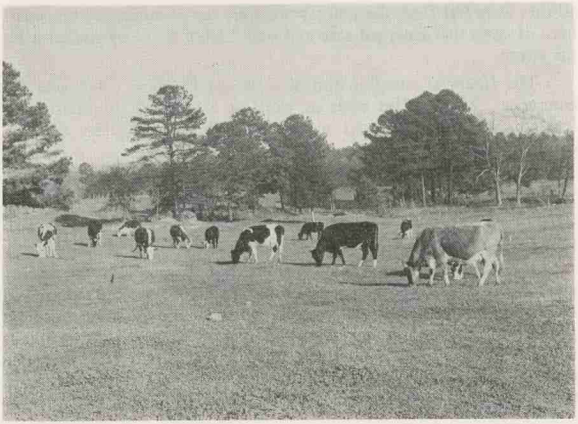
For these achievements the Keiffers won a 1951 award of merit for outstanding accomplishment in balanced farming.

Mr. and Mrs. Keiffer attribute these accomplishments to a will to work, careful planning, and good guidance and encouragement from the county agricultural and home demonstration agents. Other public agencies, including the Soil Conservation Service, the Farmers Home Administration and the State Forestry Commission contributed directly to the plans the Keiffers developed and put into operation.

When the Keiffers married and started farming in 1933, they had the old Keiffer homestead, 30 acres of land suitable for cultivation, 25 acres of unimproved pasture, and about 285 acres of woods and swampland. For working capital they had a few simple tools, a mule and two milk cows.

At first the farming program followed the usual pattern for the community—corn, small grain, hay, and a few hogs for market, plus poultry, milk cows and a garden for home use. Additional cash came from timber.

As the family increased, the Keiffers realized more keenly the need for a better farming program with more income possibilities. Mrs. Keiffer, who had been reared on a tobacco farm, believed their land



would grow good flue-cured tobacco. Thus, a few acres were added for a much needed cash crop. Also, farm surpluses of milk, eggs and vegetables were sold to customers in nearby Hardeeville. All of this helped, but it wasn't quite enough for a growing family.

Mr. Keiffer discussed their situation with the county agent. During several visits by the agent in the month that followed, he and the Keiffers considered the resources on the farm, market opportunities and the goals of the family. The agent pointed out three main factors: (1) There was ample land that could be cleared for pasture; (2) Mr. Keiffer liked cows; (3) There was a good market for milk in the deficit areas of Savannah and Charleston. On the strength of these, Mr. and Mrs. Keiffer decided to go into Grade A milk production, although it looked like a big undertaking.

The Keiffers followed a program of developing pastures and growing into the dairy business. Heifer calves were kept in the foundation herd and additional cows bought as circumstances permitted New customers were taken on as the milk production increased. Slowly but surely they were moving ahead.

In 1940, however, the Keiffers suffered a severe financial set-back when a coastal storm struck the farm, destroyed the crops and demolished a barn filled with tobacco ready for the market. About

all that were left from the year's work were the pastures and the small herd of cows that emerged safe and sound from a nearby thicket after the storm.

The financial situation forced a change in plans. To meet the emergency, Mr. Keiffer went to work at a shipyard in Charleston, leaving the farm operations in the hands of Mrs. Keiffer and the children.

With the outbreak of World War II, it was not until 1946 that Mr. Keiffer returned to full-time farming. By that time it was like starting anew. Many farm and home improvements were needed, but now there was some cash saved from the off-farm employment.

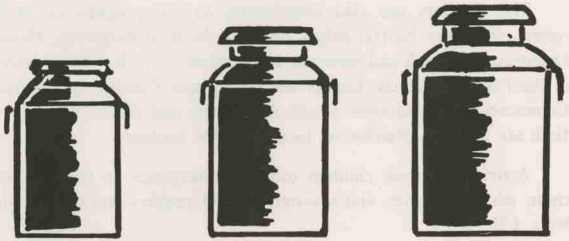
Mr. Keiffer again sought planning guidance from the county agent. With his help and counsel some good cows were purchased to increase the dairy herd. A sound management program for breeding, production and marketing was put into operation. From plans furnished by the agent a Grade A dairy barn was built. At the same time pastures were renovated and fields were fenced so that crops could be grazed after harvest.

A lime and fertilizer program was mapped out to maintain a high level of production from crops and pastures. Mr. Keiffer became a cooperator in the county agent's test demonstration program for new fertilizer materials furnished by the Tennessee Valley Authority for pastures and grazing crops.

The dairy began to pay. Some milk was still being retailed locally but the bulk of the production was sold on a wholesale basis.

The help of the children enabled the Keiffers to handle their farm operations with a minimum of hired labor. Therefore, much of the farm income could be reinvested in farm improvements and production items. A new tractor and other equipment were purchased. An adjoining 28-acre tract of cropland was bought, which made possible a better arrangement of fields for cultivation and cropland that could be seeded to winter pastures.

A woodland management plan was started on the farm. In 1947



1947 1950 1953

Mr. Keiffer won first place in the five-acre woodland-thinning contest in his county. Sales of pulpwood added extra income.

Later turkeys were added to provide more income until an adequate volume of business could be reached in the dairy operations. Existing facilities were converted for this enterprise with little cash outlay.

Additional ideas on better farming methods and practices were gathered at the Clemson Farm and Home Week. Mr. Keiffer attended one year to learn more about dairying and feed production. The next year Mrs. Keiffer attended. Her interest was more on the home side and many good ideas were gained on house planning featuring the U-shaped kitchen. Their attendance at Farm and Home Week perhaps led to the family's most outstanding accomplishment—a new home.

Mr. and Mrs. Keiffer had been thinking a long time about the home they wanted to build to replace the old house that had long passed its time for comfort and utility. They drew plans and revised and rearranged until they worked out a scheme where they could remodel and add to the old home. A farm housing loan was obtained through the Farmers Home Administration to go along with lumber produced on the farm.

The new home, completed in 1951, has a living room, dining room, U-shaped kitchen, five bedrooms, and two baths. It is adequately furnished for comfort and convenience and is well equipped with modern labor-saving appliances.

The Keiffers are also contributing to the progress of their community. Mrs. Keiffer helped organize the local Purrysburg Home Demonstration Club and serves as its president. Mr. Keiffer is active in the Palmetto Electric Cooperative, the Jasper County Agricultural Committee, the Production Credit Association and the Farm Bureau. Both Mr. and Mrs. Keiffer are local 4-H Club leaders.

Activities of their children include participation in their church choir, school activities, and a variety of 4-H projects and county and State 4-H events.

The Kieffers believe in the philosophy of making a living at home as well as having sufficient income to meet necessary expenses and maintain a good level of living. A pantry well-filled with home-canned vegetables and a freezer full of farm-raised products show that the Keiffers are good providers for their family.

Further farm developments are in the plans of Mr. Keiffer. He is gradually turning rich swampland into productive pasture to provide a year-round grazing system for his cattle. And there is a twinkle in his eye when Mr. Keiffer talks of a father-son partnership and a herd of 60 milking cows, all registered, that they envision for the future.

These Decided on a Better Future

Others are ready to make decisions too. The Ladners, Ellens, Shaffers and Keiffers faced up to the situations on their farms. They decided a better life could be theirs if their farms were producing more income.

They called on their county agricultural and home agents for help. The agents responded. Their counsel provided ideas, basic facts and inspiration to try for improvements. The farm and home plans worked out jointly by the farm family and the agents several years ago are paying off today in higher incomes and more pleasant rural living.

YOU, the county extension worker, are in the key position to carry out farm and home development in your county. It's a challenge for us all.

SOUTHERN FARM MANAGEMENT EXTENSION COMMITTEE

* * *

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