

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

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FARMING HAZARDS IN THE DROUGHT AREA

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Letter of Transmittal

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D. C., December 27, 1938.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit an analysis of the natural and economic factors which have determined the relief needs of farm families in 13 selected areas of the Great Plains. The counties surveyed range from fertile farm sections practically untouched by drought to counties laid waste by drought and its attendant disasters.

The report is based on an intensive analysis of the farm operations of a selected group of almost 1,000 farmers and the effect on these farmers of drought conditions. It has been possible to analyze the rural relief and rehabilitation problems of the areas surveyed in terms of specific, local conditions and to formulate suggestions for a long-time program of agricultural readjustment. This readjustment involves increasing the size of many farms in order to provide farmers with adequate incomes in good years to carry them over the frequent drought periods. Larger acreages would also permit increased pasturage in some sections and give farmers the benefit of the more stable income that comes with livestock production as opposed to crop production.

The combination of farms or redistribution of holdings necessary to effect the increase in size of farms would displace few farmers from their county of residence in most of the regions surveyed. One region studied, the Red River Valley of North Dakota, is favorably situated and could absorb many displaced farmers from the drought counties if costs of resettlement were not prohibitive.

The study was initiated by the Division of Research, Statistics, and Finance of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in cooperation with the Division of Farm Management and Costs of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. It was completed by the Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

This report was prepared under the direction of Howard B. Myers, Director of the Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, and under the supervision of T. J. Woofter, Jr., Coordinator of Rural Research, and C. L. Holmes of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The data were collected and analyzed under the supervision of T. C. McCormick of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and M. R. Cooper of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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