

Costing Guide

Farm Costs and Practices
*In the Production of Walworth County
Crops and Livestock*

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CONCLUSIONS

The complete utilization of the data presented in the preceding pages necessitates a detailed knowledge of the individual farm business and operations that is available on but a very small percentage of the farms. Certain phases of the data, however, may be used to advantage by individual farmers. One farmer will stress a special phase of the farm business represented by a particular part of the data, while a second farmer, because of his personal interests or information, will utilize an entirely different part of the information.

There are certain types of facts, or standards, which should be of value to every dairy farmer of Wisconsin, as they represent the outstanding enterprises, sources of income or costs of the farms. Because of their importance as either major sources of income or items of farm expense, changes in the organization or operation of the farm which directly affect these items will be reflected in the net farm income more quickly and tangibly than will other changes of minor importance.

A third series of facts pertain to the probable relationship of future prices of both the sources of income and items of farm expense. These are important whenever the present relationships of either the sources of income or expenses are changed to a considerable degree. This work necessitates the study of the probable trends of prices of these commodities over the series of years during which the suggested organization is effective. If the changes in price relationships are not large these factors will be of less importance than are effective organizations based upon economy of production.

Wisconsin farmers, for example, depend upon the dairy herd for from two-fifths to four-fifths of their gross income. The newer areas of the state have relatively fewer dairy cows than the older areas. The east central and southeastern part of the state receive about three-fourths of the gross income from the dairy herd. There were practically no farmers who did not depend upon the dairy herd for the main source of income. The market demands for dairy products will probably be maintained with no considerable change in price relationships. It is desirable for these reasons to remember that any farm system suggested for this part of the state will be built around the dairy herd.

The costs of producing milk or butterfat upon the individual farms are of first importance if the sale of dairy products is to continue to be the important enterprise. The factors affecting costs per pound butterfat, as indicated by the points brought out under the discussion of the dairy herd, should be considered in connection with the individual farm. For example, what farm practices, as found upon the farms of this area, resulted in greater economy of butterfat production? A categorical list of the factors may indicate their relative importance in this connection and will suggest the comparisons to be made. Butterfat production and the quantity and

types of feed used per cow account for most of the variations in costs per pound butterfat, while differences in labor utilization was a minor factor in its effect upon the production of butterfat.

Likewise with the crops which not only form the basic part of the feed for the dairy herd, but also are the major crop enterprises of the area, it will be desirable to indicate those practices and factors which make for economy of production. The factors as worked out for the area covered by this study will be found discussed under the respective major crops, *e. g.*, corn, oats, barley, timothy and clover hay, and alfalfa hay.

In determining what crops to produce either to supplement or to complement the basic part of the rotation the "principle of comparative advantage"⁹ is the active principle. The application of this principle requires attention to the maintenance of soil fertility and competition of crops for labor as well as the livestock requirements and market demands. The selection of secondary livestock enterprises also is the result of the application of the same "principle of comparative advantage"; and this can be done only as the relation of the respective enterprises to other phases of the farm business as well as to market conditions are determined.

Economic considerations cannot be divorced from political action and economic implications which result from political actions necessitate a study of and, in some cases, the anticipation of political action.

True it is that the possibility of economic gain serves as a premise for economic action and that the success of this action is usually measured by some monetary yardstick. If the effectiveness of a particular farm organization is altered because of a change made in some law of the state or because of the change made in some public regulation, it should result in a net income which varies in proportion to the change.

⁹J. D. Black—"Production Economics." Part Two—Chapter VI.

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