

Adapting Yesterday's Buildings To Today's Type of Agriculture

The rapidly changing pattern of US agriculture is reflected in excessive labor requirements on many farms on which service buildings are obsolete or not easily adapted to labor-saving equipment, the US Department of Agriculture says.

This situation was reported to members of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers at their 51st annual meeting, which opened June 23 at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The meeting continued through Wednesday and will emphasize engineering needs and developments in farm structures, power and machinery, soil and water hydrology, drainage, irrigation and erosion.

THE SUMMARIZED results of the ASAE's efforts to anticipate farm building requirements for the future were reported by USDA agricultural engineer Wallace Ashby, as chairman of the association's committee on Farm Structures Research Needs and Statistics, to members attending

the session on farm structures. Ashby is head of farm structures research for USDA's Agricultural Research Service at Beltsville, Md.

His committee report is based on replies to three questions submitted last October to heads of departments of agricultural engineering and other selected respondents in the United States and Canada.

THE REPLIES, totalling about 500, indicated an urgent need for more efficient and economical farm service buildings and more livable farm houses. Answers also emphasized the need for information and technical assistance that will help farmers meet their building problems more adequately, Ashby said.

Questions on which answers were received through 22 college department of agricultural engineering in this country and two in Canada, were:

1. What is the most urgent problem affecting farm buildings of the farmstead as a whole?
2. What major changes in farm practices that will affect farm buildings do you expect by 1967?
3. What major problem related to farm structure of the farmstead will need solution by 1965?

REPLIES TO these questions, Ashby said, were received from staff members of college departments, farmers, county and home demonstration agents, Vo-Ag teachers, country bankers, dealers in building materials and equipment, and many others.

A problem often mentioned by the respondents is how to adapt existing buildings for more efficient production. Since it is impractical to replace all obsolete buildings in the near future, ways must be found to improve them. Adaptation of existing buildings for the transition from diversified operations to larger, more specialized enterprises re-

quire special attention.

Buildings for tomorrow must be efficient and easily adapted to changing agriculture. Mechanization of building operations will require efficient but not too costly systems of handling agricultural materials.

Situations and trends affecting farm buildings were described by those replying to the three basic questions. One trend Ashby reported, is that farms are becoming larger as land is consolidated into fewer operating units.

OFTEN AN owner is unable to find sufficient use for farmstead improvements, though he is short building space at the home farm.

Another trend indicated by the replies is the increase in the size and specialization of live stock production operations. Many existing buildings do not meet new requirements which lean toward more confinement and drylot feeding.

Changes in feed crop handling methods were also indicated as a well-marked trend that affects building design. The changes in methods of harvesting, storing, and preparing crops, including farm drying and hermetically sealed storage, are resulting in feeds that are easily handled and used, such as field-shelled corn, pelleted forage, and liquid feeds.

Other trends cited in the replies were (1) rising wages and scarcity of dependable labor, (2) more stringent sanitary and other code regulations, (3) rise of contract farming, which has greatly affected poultry production and is moving into cattle and hog production and (4) perpetuation of farm building obsolescence, because few farmers or rural builders are skilled in applying new developments in building design or in materials handling systems.

FARM SERVICE buildings must provide a healthy environment for livestock, efficient use of feed, and production of high-quality products. There must be safe storage and efficient means of conditioning and handling crops and other materials and adequate means of storage and maintaining farm equipment.

Replies summarized in the report also stressed need for ex-



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panded research in order to keep pace with farmers' needs and with research in other fields. Many replies stressed the need

for better communication between research workers in government and industry, and farmers, builders, and dealers.

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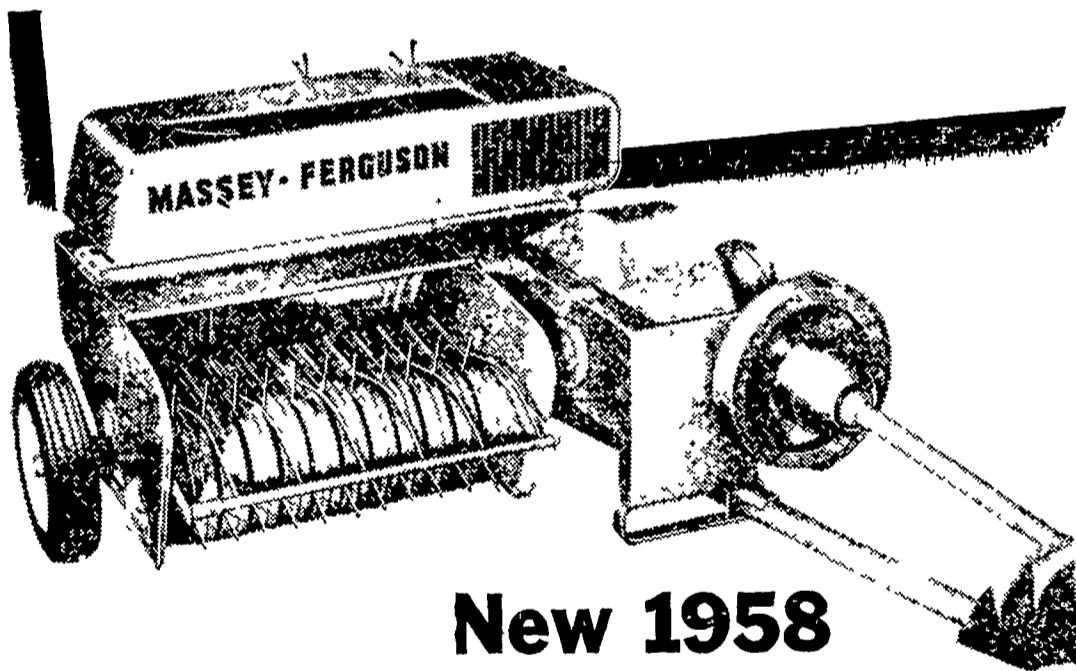
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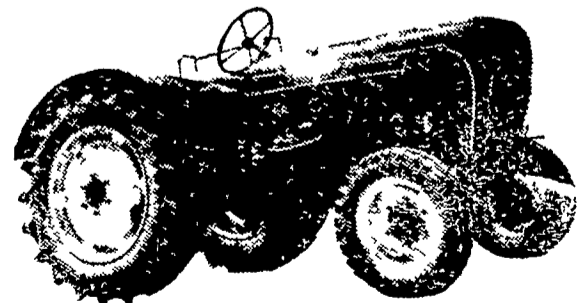
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