

Across the

**Editor's Desk**

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fashion relatively favorable to the family dairy farm, please note that I have limited these favorable prospects to those dairy farms large enough to be efficient. Many present small dairy farms that are in the tradition of family operation will disappear as their operators choose better-paying less-damaging off-farm jobs. A dairy farm that is too small to be profitable and that nevertheless requires a man to be on the job 365 days of the year certainly does not have a bright future. Not many young men are likely to commit their lives to this kind of undertaking, and if they were, probably their wives would not.

It won't be large-scale dairy farms that cause the small dairy farmer to quit, it will be the greater attractiveness of off-farm employment.

It may be that family farmers can build their own backfire against current trends, through farmer cooperatives. Family farms are developing their own approach to the need for size and the integrated structural form. As I said before, cooperatives can retain much of the decision-making at the farm level and still achieve the marketing advantages associated with size and an integrated operation. The dairy industry is moving in this direction.

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The family farm is a durable and resilient institution. It has survived war, depression and natural disaster. Up to this point, with the exception of the broiler industry and a few other sectors, it has survived a technological revolution. It has strong ideological support, supplied through the political system.

There is nothing inexorable about the trend toward large-scale agriculture. Legal tools are available to check the trend: prohibitions of one sort or another, graduated taxes, and limitations on the amount of government payment going to any one farm.

With a representative government, the people can have any kind of agriculture they want. And I think they will insist on having what they want.

Suppose for a moment that the large-scale farming units are more efficient than family farms. People are asking whether, in an affluent a country as the United States, efficiency should be the sole criterion for the form of agriculture we are to have. We now supply ourselves with food—the best diet every, anywhere—with something less than 17 percent of our income. If we stay with the family farm and improve its efficiency, the percentage of income spent for food will go still lower. Should we adopt a new and greatly different system so as to drive food costs down even faster? Should we sacrifice a form of agricultural production that has served us well, that has produced good people as well as good crops and livestock?

This is a fair question. The answer to it is properly social and political as well as economic. I believe this to be a major farm

policy issue of the decade ahead.

And I do not think our agriculture need be or will become monolithic, relying on one managerial concept only. We are a pluralistic country socially, politically and economically. The fact that the trend has been in the direction of large-scale units does not mean that this trend must be extended until it embraces all of agriculture. Nor does it mean that large-scale farming units should be abolished. I see no good reason to prevent us from having a farming system that is partly large-scale and partly family farms. Those who believe in market competition should also believe in the appropriateness of competing institutional forms.

For most American agriculture, the family farm can continue to be the major organizational form.

If it is permitted the flexibility that will allow the efficient use of modern technology and management.

If it is provided with good research, education and credit.

If it makes wise use of the principles of cooperation.

If it continues to enjoy the good will of the public.

All these things are possible if we decide we want it that way.

**Editor's Note:** The December 16 news letter of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives made the following comment on President Nixon's recent proposal to retain the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but move some functions to other departments:

President Nixon's latest proposal for reorganizing USDA would remove much of the

department's political clout and essentially leave it as a shell of its former self.

The plan, recently unveiled by the White House, would leave the USDA intact with its own secretary, but would shift several key agencies to other departments. Leaving could be agencies with a powerful political wallop: meat and poultry inspection, fruit and vegetable grading, food stamps, Soil Conservation Service, and the Forest Service.

Each of the three agencies performing consumer services has strong political backing in urban and suburban areas. And, the Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service have a history of strong political strength in rural America.

"If the Administration's plan is approved, price support programs would be about only activity left in USDA with any significant political influence," said Dick O'Connell, secretary, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. He pointed out that the proposed revision would pare USDA programs down to those that are basically regulatory or informational in nature.

"This revision," asserted O'Connell, "would greatly reduce agriculture's political clout and make it more exclusively that exercised by the people left in farming."

The White House announced concerning the proposed reorganization said USDA "peripheral activities" will be transferred. "This is like calling for the removal of the brain, heart, lungs and kidneys as peripheral organs while pretending that a viable human being remains," O'Connell declared.

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The following commentary on the egg industry's economic condition was made in the December 6 news letter of the Northeast Egg Marketing Association (NEMA):

The large white egg price in New York dropped to 30 cents a dozen the first of the month. This reflected a net price to producers of 17 to 18 cents a dozen for all eggs sold on a grade yield basis.

At the same time breaking stock weighing 52 lbs. gross (48 lbs. net) was bringing 23-24 cents a dozen or a net of 20-21 cents. With breaking stock yielding the producer 2-3 cents a dozen more than eggs going into cartons the inventory. This was the first week in November well ahead of any holiday business.

The better inventory, higher breaking prices and anticipation of approaching holiday business there was real pressure on the market to move up. It did advance 8 cents in eight trading days and remained strong through the holiday and the balance of the month. Unfortunately, the 39 cents level that was reached was still short of what was needed to return a profit to the average producer.

The brown large price went off in sympathy with New York prices to a low of 37 cents a dozen, still reflecting a spread of 7 cents a dozen. This spread was maintained through most of the month with an average 5.8 cents for the month the widest spread for any month to date.

At a time when producers in other parts of the country were losing heavily and facing bankruptcy, the average of 40.9 cents for large brown eggs was a lifesaver to brown egg producers.

It was possible to accomplish this only because NEMA had the cooperation of the entire New England egg industry. We hope the day may come when the whole industry can work together as effectively and reap the same rewards.

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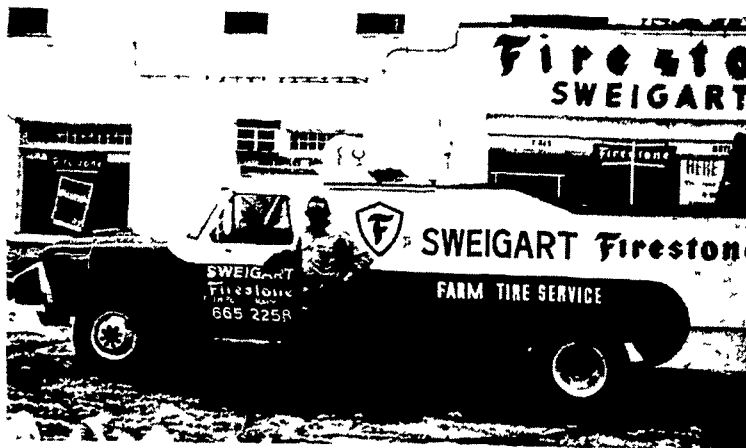
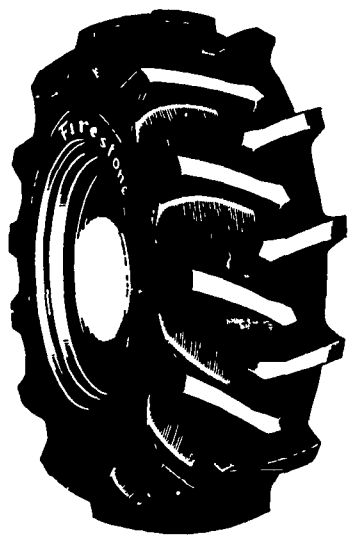
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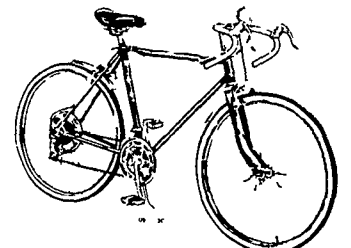
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