

Farmer co-op business hits record high

WASHINGTON, D.C. — total business volume exceeded \$43.5 billion in 1977, a

record high, according to data compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Randall Torgerson, deputy administrator for cooperatives in USDA's Economics, Statistics, and Cooperative Service, said the increase in the dollar volume resulted largely from higher prices for farm production supplies sold by cooperatives, although certain farm product marketings also showed increases.

The 1977 volume was an 8.7 percent gain from the

preceding year's \$40.1 billion, Torgerson said.

The three components of total co-op business volume are marketing (the volume of products sold), farm supplies (volume of fertilizer, chemicals, fuels, feed and other inputs sold to co-op members), and related services for members such as trucking, storage, ginning, drying and similar services.

Torgerson said the number of cooperatives dropped from 7535 to 6736 primarily for two reasons:

688 of the associations were reclassified (and thus not eligible to be included in the report) and 111 cooperatives merged, consolidated, acquired other cooperatives or dissolved during the year.

Torgerson said the 1977 membership figure of 5.8 million was down 2.5 percent from 1976's 5.9 million reflecting the continued reduction in the number of farms and farmers. National membership in cooperatives exceeds the number of farmers because some farmers belong to two or more cooperatives, Torgerson said.

Memberships per association averaged 868 compared with 784 for the preceding year.

The marketing component of the business volume was up 7.7 percent from 1976 and totaled \$32.1 billion. Grain, the leading farm product, increased to \$11.9 billion, up 11.5 percent.

Marketings of several other commodities also increased, with miscellaneous products (hay, forest products, resale items), up 63 percent; cotton and cotton products, up 34.7 percent; and wool and mohair, up 19.7 percent.

Commodities that declined the most were tobacco, down 30.4 percent; rice, down 18.9 percent; and dry edible beans and peas, down 15.1 percent.

Farm supply volume of \$10.6 billion, up 12.2 percent, increased mainly from higher volumes of petroleum products and feed. Petroleum products rose 19.9 percent, to \$2.5 billion; and feed went up 13.6 percent, to \$2.8 billion. Fertilizer was the third highest of the farm supply items at \$2.4 billion (up 6.2 percent).

Other supplies that showed increases were miscellaneous supplies such as small hardware items, up 14.6 percent; and building materials, up 13.9 percent.

Volume of other services related to the farm business rose to \$893 million, a 4.4 percent increase over a year earlier.

Minnesota continued to have the most cooperative with 768 and the most memberships with 573,147. North Dakota was second in cooperatives with 455, and Wisconsin third with 451.

Wisconsin was second in memberships with 364,687, and Indiana third with 331,591.

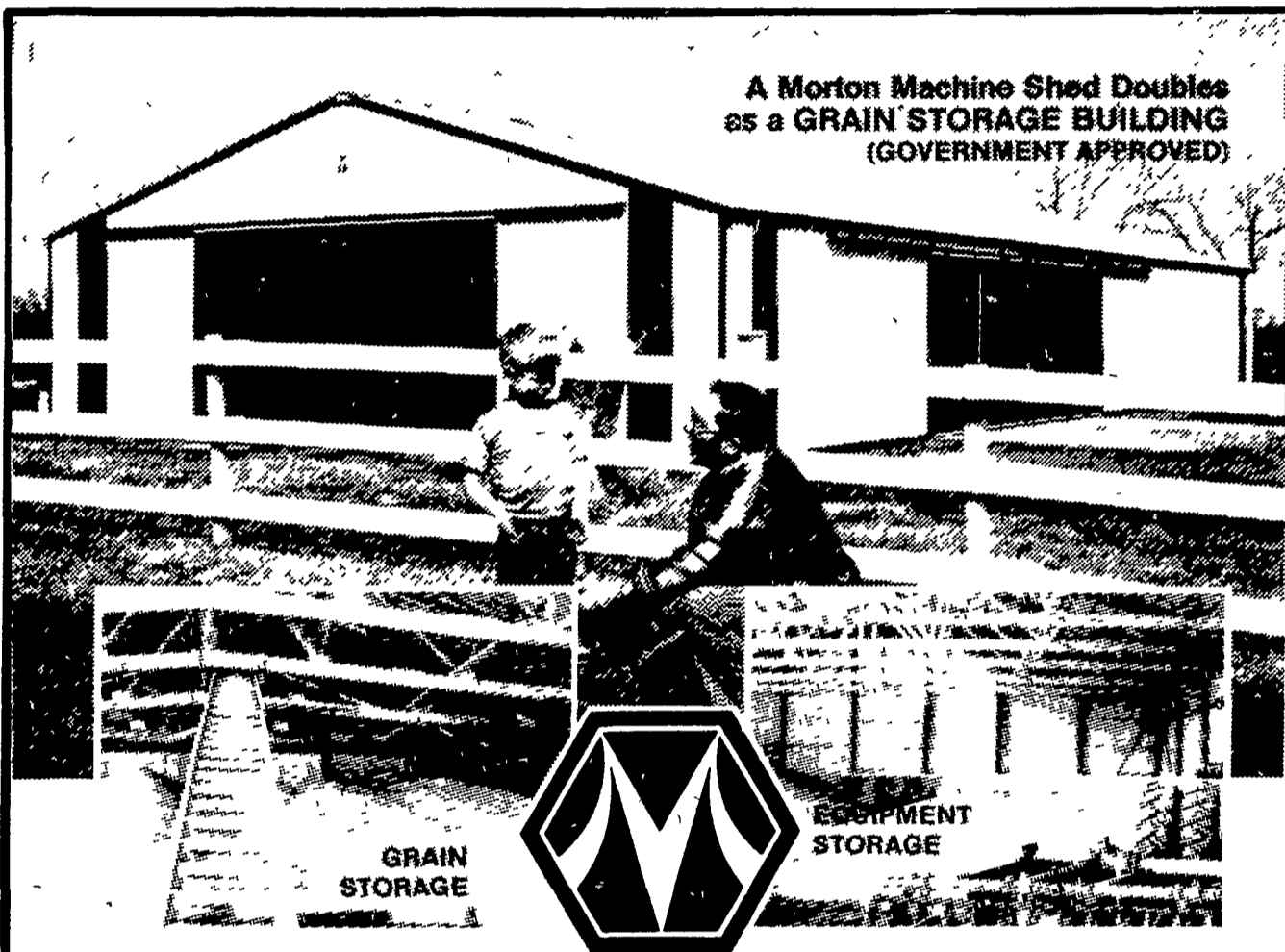
The leading state in combined marketing, farm supply, and related service volume handled by cooperatives was again California was \$3.8 billion, or 8.7 percent of the total. Iowa ranked second, with \$3.4 billion and 7.9 percent, Minnesota followed with \$3.1 billion and 7.1 percent.

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