

# The Dairy Business

By  
Newton Bair

If you are not a full-fledged optimist about the future of farming in general and dairying in particular, you might as well retire next week. The business of farming demands a bright outlook, or it is doomed to failure. Let's try to see if there is anything to lift our spirits in 1985.

For one thing, we are not operating in an over-crowded field of employment. Farmers are now in one of the smallest minority population groups ever known in history. We are now **LESS THAN THREE PERCENT** of the total population of the country. And we number only about **THREE-TENTHS OF ONE PERCENT** of all the farmers in the world. Yet we produce 64 percent of the world's soybeans, 56 percent of the grapefruit, 46 percent of the corn, 31 percent of the sorghum, 23 percent of the cotton, 18 percent of the wheat, 14 percent of the eggs, and 13 percent of all the pork.

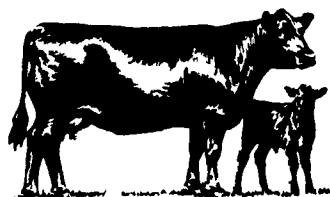
Fifty years ago, one American farm worker produced enough food for 10 people. Twenty years ago, he produced enough to feed 31 people. Ten years ago, it was enough for 56 people. Today, one farm worker produces enough to feed nearly 80 people! And the total farm work force involved includes all those unpaid or underpaid family workers as well as the full time paid farm workers! It either makes you swell with pride, or want to cry.

Our efficiency is due partly to hard work. But it is really more the result of very high investment in modern technology. It now seems that the only way we can sustain that growth and productivity is to keep on investing more and more capital in even more refined and advanced mechanical, electronic, chemical and managerial know-how. All we need to continue the trend is the assurance or hope of a reasonable return on our investment. And, of course, a good, sound source of capital without risking our very neck to finance the deal. It will take a lot of delicate fine-tuning of our managing ability to make it work.

**The Trouble With Efficiency**

Maybe we have overdone this efficiency thing a little bit. The trouble with maximum production is that it always creates a little surplus that immediately depresses the price in the market place. So, efficiency of production creates a self-sustaining cycle of overproduction because agriculture depends on a continuing biological growth that can't be stopped in midair. Animals must continue to eat, cows continue to give milk, and planted crops keep right on growing.

Even a bank loan becomes like a pregnant cow. It immediately develops a need to continue the gestation until the fetal loan is paid, and also requires constant feeding with fresh and expensive interest. To terminate any kind of pregnancy can be unhealthy, to say the least! So even a pregnant loan should be made with the idea of a profitable offspring. Talk that one over with your banker!



**Ideas Will Be The Tools Of The Future**

We must approach the next couple of years with imagination as well as optimism. Agricultural research, Agricultural Extension, and ag industry will keep right on pumping up our productivity, barring any road blocks thrown in by nature or politicians.

But the most exciting prospects

for success and security lie in the imaginative brain power of farm leaders. Ideas, fresh and new, on every part of farming, will be the farm tools of the future. They will go far, beyond the production process, into advertising, promotion, new products and new uses for farm products, and some regulation of supplies, to avoid depressed prices.

We'll never avoid all of the risks

involved in farming, but since we are already in a very small minority group, the rest of the population does owe some consideration to our survival. The brightest hope for the future is the knowledge that farmers and farm workers are an elite group of people that all the rest can't live without. Keep that in mind for a **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

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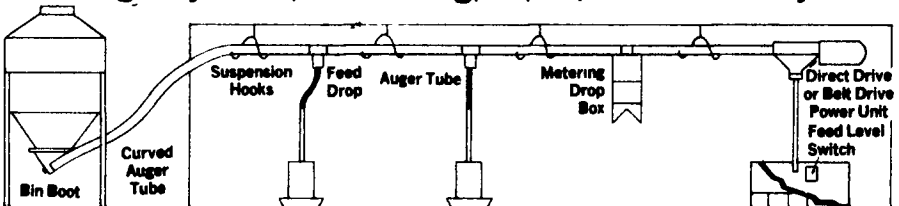


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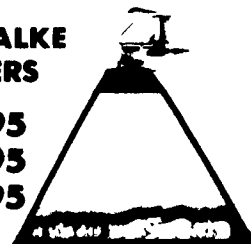
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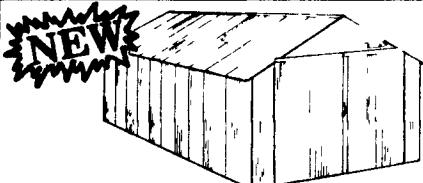
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