

Colorado
Farm
Defense Program

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LAND PLANNING

In 1918

“Food will win the war—every foot of available land in Colorado should be made to produce food.” The result: Dust bowls, erosion, too many cattle and sheep, too much wheat, speculation, mortgages, depression.

In 1942

“Food will win the war and write the Peace. But what foods are needed? Where and how should these foods be produced? Who should expand his operations to produce these food supplies?” The answer: To be determined by agricultural planning committees.

Extension Service
Colorado State College
Fort Collins
Colorado

COLORADO STATE COLLEGE

EXTENSION SERVICE

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FORT COLLINS

DECEMBER, 1941

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Colorado State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts and the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating. Distributed in Furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.

Land Planning

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"The United States was more liberally endowed with natural resources than any other country on earth, and hence we have become richer than any other nation, possess the highest standard of living, use more luxury goods than all other nations and transact one-half of the world's business.

"Early American settlers quickly evaluated the natural resources as inexhaustible and let the matter go at that. Ten generations of Americans have continued to regard their resources as so essentially limitless as to merit no attention. **But these resources are not limitless—a fact which bears considerable significance at this time.**"—Geo. T. Renner—The Social Frontier, April 1939.

No one has yet determined what portion of the natural resources rightfully belongs to a single generation. There has been very little organized planning for the most intelligent use of our natural resources, which has resulted in enormous wastage of our soil, timber, wild life, oil, and water resources.

There is no more "West" to go to, no new land of consequence for young farm families to settle upon and grow up with the country. In some regions limited acreages may be made more productive by construction of expensive irrigation works, thereby increasing the number of families which the land will support. Land planning, largely by individuals, in the past, has had one objective—to make dollars which are needed to support modern homes, our adopted standard of living, cultural opportunities, expensive farm equipment, luxuries, etc. In some areas farm families have discovered that the resources are not sufficient, the needed dollars could not be obtained under normal or sub-normal conditions by the number of families who settled on the land, and from the farming practices which they followed.

Now is the time for a very careful survey or inventory and study of the remaining natural resources in each community. **The new frontier for Colorado farm families is not westward—it is in the home community, on the old home farm.** What could be more interesting and patriotic than community and individual farm planning for the best use of land and water as farmers begin to heed the call for food for defense!

While planning for food needed to win the war, experienced farmers will remember that **the best way to prevent a depression after this war is to prepare for one.** Preparation for a possible depression includes the adoption of a sound farm or ranch plan, the building up of productivity of the land, paying off debts, and building up a cash reserve.

The fundamental objectives in land planning are:

1. A conserving land use.
2. An adequate income for the farm family.

Any lasting farm plan must provide these two things. A community which has been built upon farm and ranch plans that do not provide for protection, maintenance, and perhaps improvement of the soil and adequate incomes under normal prices and weather conditions, will be an unstable community.

Who should plan for the use of the land?

Farm and ranch folks who have lived in a community for 20, 30, or 40 years have had an opportunity to study the land and its ability to produce. Farmers and their wives who like to live in the community and who would like to see some of their youngsters locate and prosper at home ought to be interested enough to plan to leave the youngsters something besides a farm mortgage.

A land-planning committee of 15 farmers and ranchers who have lived in a community an average of 25 years each could supply a total of **375 years of farming experience** in the development of a sound agricultural plan for the area. This group of experienced farmers, with some younger progressive farm operators, and a few 4-H club and F. F. A. members, meeting together regularly, can make agricultural plans for the community and guide the development of programs to carry out these plans for the benefit of everyone living in the community.

Land planning procedure that has proved to be satisfactory in some communities—

1. **At a general community meeting** the question of land-use planning was discussed and a committee of interested farmers, ranchers, farm women, 4-H club, or F. F. A. members and others was appointed to make up a land-use planning committee.

2. **The committee met** at some convenient place and time to select a chairman, study the resources of the area, decide upon the work of the committee, and the organization of sub-committees as follows:

Sub-Committee 1—Outlined soil groups on a map, using local terms such as sand, dobe, gumbo, hard land etc., and indicated the ability of each soil to produce crops or grass by classifying the land into I, II, III, IV, etc., crop land, and I, II, III, etc., grazing land.

Sub-Committee 2—Mapped the present use of all land in the community, indicating farm land, grazing land, forests, seeped areas, national forests, public domain, and mountainous areas useful largely for recreational or scenic purposes.

Sub-Committee 3—Indicated on maps the problems or hazards to long-time, stable agriculture in the different areas of the community, and suggested a number of different farming plans which will most likely succeed during a long period of years in the different type-of-farming areas.

(Note—Work maps may be prepared by ruling plain wrapping paper to represent the township and section lines. A map is the simplest method of recording the decisions of the committee so that they may be reproduced.)

3. **At later committee meetings** which were held at members' homes or at meetings of the general community planning committee, Sub-Committee 1—Met at one table.

Sub-Committee 2—Met at another table.

Sub-Committee 3—Met at a third table. Work proceeded on the maps with the aid of farmers who had been given special invitations to come to the meeting to supply information concerning the land which they operate. Similar meetings were continued with perhaps occasional field inspection by committee members for accurate check upon soil boundaries or use.

4. **When the land maps were about completed** the work of each sub-committee (soils, present use, and problems, and farm plans) was reviewed and discussed by all members of the committee, and presented as a progress report in an open meeting of the general community agricultural planning committee. Corrections were made if necessary.

5. **The Recommended Future Land-Use Map**—The community land-use committee as a whole, and later, a working sub-committee of five, was ready to make the recommended future land-use map after a careful study of the maps already completed in the community. It was found that the recommended future land-use map would be more accurate and useful if the group could temporarily disregard the farm families and their obstacles to adjustments in the use of land and consider only those uses which would be best for the land for a long time.

6. **Suggestions for the preparation of future land-use maps** have been made by community committees in various parts of the State under various conditions, as follows:—

1. Under irrigation it is assumed that most of the land is suitable for general or specialized farming. Therefore the outlining of areas of No. I, II, III, IV, V, VI farming land or classification of land in accord with its ability to produce will be sufficient. An interpretation and a study of soil surveys of the area will be helpful

in making the land classifications. Such a study may eliminate the need of making the soils map and the present land-use map. The land-classification map, together with recommended crops and farming set-ups for each land classification, will form the basis for a long-time program.

2. In non-irrigated farming areas the future-use map may indicate those areas suitable for livestock farming and those areas suitable for general and perhaps cash-crop or specialized farming. The long-time program is based on this map, together with the farming or ranching plans which will most likely make an adequate income for a farm family in each land-use area.

3. In livestock or range areas, land-planning committees may wish to make only one map—the **present-use map**—which outlines the cultivated land and the range land in the community. This same map may become a **recommended future land-use map** by indicating the recommended carrying capacity in cow months on each section of range land and by showing the portions of cultivated land that should be returned to grass or trees. Areas of grassland which may be suitable for the production of planted feed or hay crops could be indicated. This future-use map, together with a number of safe-ranching plans, becomes the basis for the long-time agricultural program in the area.

7. **Preparation of County Land Maps**—The community soils, present-use, problem, and recommended future-use maps should be assembled by a county land-use committee. This county committee should include members of the community committees who have worked on the maps in each community. The county committee carefully studies all of the community maps, brings together all of the technical information available which will help to make the county maps more accurate, clears differences of opinion along boundaries of communities and forwards those county maps which the committee wishes to have made to the Extension Service at Fort Collins, Colorado.

In the meantime the county land-use-planning committee may assemble all of the safe-farming and ranching plans which have been submitted by each community committee. These plans should be reviewed in conference with specialists of the Extension Service, credit agencies, technicians of the Soil Conservation Service, Farm Security Supervisors, A.A.A., Forest Service, Division of Grazing, or others who may contribute to the soundness of the plans. A number of safe-farming and ranching plans suitable for typical farm families in the county should be adapted to each recommended land-use area.

8. **Program**—We now have some nicely colored maps and some farming and ranching plans. What shall we do with them?

The recommended future land-use map and the safe-farming and ranching plans become the "blue print" or long-time agricultural policy for the county. If farmers and ranchers will adopt the recommended land uses, the land will be conserved. If farmers and ranchmen with faulty plans adjust their farming or ranching operations toward one of the recommended plans, an adequate income will be the result.

A study of the farm families or a human inventory and a study of the present farm and ranch plan of every operator in the community will indicate the difficulties which farm families may have in making adjustments in the farming unit or the farm plan. A study of these obstacles or hindrances to adjustments in land use and improved farm or ranch plans will quickly suggest programs for individual and group action by planning committees in an attempt to overcome the obstacles. The following are some of the obstacles which may be encountered and programs of activity which may be carried out by agricultural planning committees to help overcome the difficulties:

Obstacles

1. Average age of farm operators above 50 years. Young people have left the farm during the last 20 years. More are leaving for defense industrial jobs and military service, resulting in loss of younger enthusiastic leadership.
2. Equity in farms and ranches owned by others. In the U. S. the annual rent and interest payments on farms amounts to three and one-half billion dollars. A rented or mortgaged farm makes it a two-family farm.

Program

1. Young farmers planning groups and training classes or short courses.
 2. Assist trained young farmers to establish themselves.
 3. 4-H Clubs, Smith-Hughes agriculture in schools.
 4. Recreational activities for young folks.
 5. Home and community improvements.
 6. Study plans for retirement of aged farmers.
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1. Provide improved credit facilities, farm and home financing at reasonable interest rates and principal payments.
 2. Farm-management plans leading to ownership of farms or ranches.
 3. Reduction in land speculation.
 4. Reduction in speculative enterprises.

3. Tenancy. It is difficult for a tenant to carry on an effective rotation and livestock type of farming under short-term, uncertain leases.

4. Small farm and ranch units. Does the small unit require a better manager and a better plan than the larger unit?

5. Farm income is not enough to finance changes in land use or plans. How many farm families will the resources support in a reasonable standard of living and permit the maintenance of soil productivity?

6. Land is taxed into misuse. The high tax forces overgrazing, the plowing of sod, or intensive crop production when the land should be idle for weed control or growing soil improving crops.

1. Longer term leases and management plans which will encourage the tenant to maintain productivity of the land.
2. Farm - management programs with owners and tenant to develop a better relationship.

1. Encourage public and private lending agencies to finance the establishment of family - size units where possible.
2. Provide for improved farming plans and the reorganization of enterprises.
3. Provide part-time employment through local industrial or processing plants or public works programs.

1. Farm-management schools and farm-credit facilities.
2. Crops, weed control, soils, livestock information which will lead to more efficient production.
3. Financing improved farm plans.
4. Develop improved marketing facilities.
5. Adapt Federal and State aid programs.

1. Tax adjustments in line with recommended land use.
2. Highway pattern and school district reorganization in line with needs.
3. Other studies aimed at reduction of public expenditures from land taxes.