

WAR FOOD PRODUCTION WORK IN IOWA IN WORLD WAR I - 1917-18

A-73

(Administered under the Direction of the  
Agricultural Extension Department of the Iowa State College)

Statement Prepared by R. K. Bliss, Director of Extension Service

War food production work in Iowa in 1917-18 was made possible through congressional legislation (H.R. 4188) appropriating funds "for the purpose of more effectually providing for the national security and defense and carrying on the war with Germany by gathering authoritative information concerning the food supply, by increasing production, by preventing waste of the food supply, etc. etc." The funds so appropriated were placed under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Prior to this, in 1914, Congress passed a law known as the "Smith-Lever Act" providing for cooperative extension work with the various states. Through an agreement between the Iowa State College and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, provision had been made for the expenditure of the Smith-Lever funds through the Agricultural Extension Department of the Iowa State College. The Secretary of Agriculture therefore expended the special war food production fund through the cooperative machinery already devised for the administration of Smith-Lever funds. During the war period all state, county, Farm Bureau membership, and other local funds were used for war food production purposes in accordance with the government plan. It was therefore possible to begin war food production work immediately upon the outbreak of the war with Germany.

Conference of Prominent Farmers at State House, April 3rd

In anticipation of an early declaration of war, Governor Harding called a conference of prominent farmers to meet at the Executive Chamber April 3rd, 1917, for the purpose of considering ways and means of increasing the food supply. After thoroughly discussing the agricultural needs of Iowa a motion was passed asking the Governor to appoint a committee made up of one man from each Congressional district with President Pearson of the Iowa State College as chairman, for the purpose of devising ways and means of increasing food production.

War Emergency Food Committee

In accordance with the resolution passed, Governor Harding appointed the following men to serve on a committee designated as the War Emergency Food Committee:

- R. A. Pearson, President, Iowa State College, Ames, Chairman  
(Later Assistant Secretary of Agriculture)
- J. F. Deems, Burlington, First Congressional District (Later State Food Administrator)
- J. O. Shaff, Dairy Farmer, Member of State Legislature, Camanche, Second District.
- Pedor Pedersen, Dairyman, Cedar Falls, Third District.
- D. H. Culver, Truck Grower, Clear Lake, Fourth District.
- George Burge, Farmer, Breeder of Shorthorn Cattle, Mt. Vernon, Fifth District.
- I. N. Taylor, Retired Farmer, State Lecturer of Grange, Oskaloosa, Sixth District.
- Henry Brady, Farmer and Shipper, Perry, Seventh District.
- W. B. Buck, Farmer, Mt. Ayr, Eighth District.



C. W. Hunt, Farmer and Breeder, Logan, Ninth District (Later Member of National Agricultural Advisory Board)

Chas. G. Cockerill, Banker and Farmer, Jefferson, Tenth District.

S. R. Haines, Farmer, Storm Lake, Eleventh District.

R. K. Bliss, Director of Agricultural Extension, Ames (appointed Secretary by the Committee).

This committee met a few days later in Des Moines and organized for active work. A program entitled "Iowa's War Duty" was prepared by the committee, published in pamphlet form by the Agricultural Extension Department and sent to every community in the state.

#### Program of War Emergency Food Committee

The following excerpts stating what Iowa agriculture needs in order to render the largest war service are taken from the program prepared by the War Emergency Food Committee:

(Letter from the Governor to the People of Iowa)

FELLOW CITIZENS:

The accompanying statement prepared by the War Emergency Food Committee of Iowa is deserving of your most careful consideration. I bespeak your cooperation in such ways as are within your power. We are rapidly coming to realize that the food shortage needs our greatest effort. There is something for everyone to do. Let it be said a year later that the people of Iowa realized the situation and came forward promptly and helpfully.

W. L. Harding, Governor

#### Excerpts from War Emergency Food Committee Program

"Iowa is called upon to furnish soldiers and to produce every pound of food possible. There can be no over-production of food this year. More is needed than can be grown." The committee called special attention to the following needs:

1. More farm labor.
2. More vegetable gardens.
3. More poultry.
4. More hogs.
5. Better seeds.
6. Less waste.
7. Crops adapted to soil.
8. More breeding animals.
9. Less losses from animal diseases.
10. Better distribution of food.

"All persons, old and young, in country, town and city, are asked to give a helping hand in carrying out one or more of the above activities. Discourage idleness. Encourage industry and thrift.

"Organizations to give assistance in connection with farm labor and to otherwise promote food production and food conservation are needed in every section of the state. They should be started immediately in each county not now organized for this purpose. Suggestions based upon organizations in twenty-seven



counties where county agents are employed will be sent to anyone applying to the Agricultural Extension Department at Ames.

"A bureau of information should be established in connection with the office of the county agent in each of the twenty-seven counties having these agents and such bureau should be established in connection with organizations in other counties as rapidly as they are formed. This bureau should cooperate with local offices at different points in the county and all should give special attention to the problem of finding additional farm labor.

"Officers of organizations are urged to take up the question of food production with all their members. Editors are asked to appeal to their subscribers, teachers to their pupils, presidents of labor unions, clubs, societies, and commercial bodies, Y.M.C.A. secretaries and G.A.R. commanders to their membership to have gardens this year for raising food for their own use next winter.

"Younger Boys and Girls of Iowa--Here is a wonderful opportunity for you to serve your state and country. Your ambition might well be to feed Iowa so that the Iowa farm crops may be used to help feed our nation and our allies.

"Older Boys--You are needed on the farms. You will be performing a patriotic duty in doing farm work this year. The nation needs food as well as munitions.

"Bankers, Manufacturers, and Business Men--Many of your employees have had farm training. Will you assist and encourage them to offer their services to the farmers during the busiest periods of the season?

"Mayors of Cities, City Officials, and Secretaries of Commercial Clubs--You can list unused land and secure permission for its use and see that it is made available to those who would have gardens.

"Farmers--The heaviest burden is upon you. Use your facilities to the utmost for the sake of your country. Get in touch with the county or local organization and make known your needs for extra help. Report your needs as to seed and your surplus seed which might be needed in other sections of the state.

"Call on the Agricultural Extension Department of Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, for plan of organization and circulars of information."

The War Emergency Food Committee performed a much needed service during the early days of the war by focusing the attention of the people of the state upon the need of increased food production and in helping to organize for effective work. Individual members of the committee gave invaluable assistance in perfecting emergency county organizations. The advice and council of the committee was of great value in carrying forward the war food production plans of the Government. The members of the committee served without salary or expenses.

#### County Organization

The imperative need of immediately organizing unorganized counties was so great in order to accomplish the objects sought that a plan for temporary organization was worked out as follows:



(Excerpts from)

A Plan for Mobilizing Iowa Food Producers

(10,000 copies of this plan were distributed in April, 1917)

"What is Your Community Doing? Do you Have a Plan?"

"Organization wins in food production just the same as in wars. Here is a suggestive plan of organization. Read it! Act upon it! Do it now! It is your opportunity to do something for your country.

A Proposed Plan for Organization

\*Name of Organization

War Emergency Food Association of

(Name of county or community)

Purpose

- To help meet the shortage of farm labor,
- To increase the food supply,
- To prevent waste of food,
- To promote economy and thrift.

How to Organize

A temporary committee should be formed to call a county mass meeting. As soon as a definite time is decided on, the temporary committee should see personally, write or telephone the following persons and urge them especially to be present at this meeting: . . . . .

Officers and Committeemen Needed

President

Secretary

Vice-president

Treasurer

County committee made up of one person from each township.

Finances

The necessary finances for the purpose of carrying out the plans of this association should be raised through popular subscription, voluntary membership fees, and by appropriation if available.

Local Leaders

School superintendents, teachers of agriculture or home economics, or others who have time during the summer may be secured for leadership.

\*A separate organization is not needed in counties having a farm improvement association and employing a county agent. (Use your temporary farm bureau organization if you have one.)



Program of Work

The War Emergency Food committee and the Agricultural Extension Department recommend the following program for the purpose of immediately increasing production: . . . . .

I. More Farm Labor. Farm labor bureaus should be established in every community under the direction of the county association.

1. Boys under military age should be enlisted to work on farms. (Enlistment blanks furnished by Agricultural Extension Department).
2. Arrangements should be made with commercial clubs, merchants, manufacturers and others to release help for short periods to work on farms during rush seasons.
3. People who have retired will be glad to help so far as they are physically able, and should be enlisted in the food campaign.
4. A sentiment against idleness should be developed through the newspapers, churches, schools, commercial clubs and all other organizations. In this emergency it is unpatriotic for any able-bodied citizen to be unemployed.

II. Increasing Production.

1. More vegetable gardens, especially in towns and cities.
2. More poultry.
3. More hogs.
4. Better seed and cultivation.
5. Crops adapted to soil, catch crops, etc.
6. Careful selection and care of all seed for next year's planting.
7. Careful saving and application of all farm manures.

III. Saving.

1. Less waste of foods - saving within the home.
2. General campaign of thrift and economy.
3. Better distribution of food.
4. Saving good breeding animals.
5. Less loss from animal diseases.
6. War on destructive insects, rats, mice and pests.
7. Feed roughage, heretofore wasted, to livestock.

Every unorganized county (counties without farm bureaus) formed an emergency organization on some such plan as that furnished. This made possible the carrying out of a comprehensive food conservation campaign later in the summer and prepared the way for the rapid extension of the county farm bureau organizations the following fall.

Organization of County Farm Bureaus

When war was declared 27 counties had organized farm bureaus and employed county agents. In less than a year every county in the state had organized a farm bureau and one county, Pottawattamie, had organized two, making 100 in all. Every county but one had permanently employed a county agent and that one was receiving help temporarily.



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The rapid organization of farm bureaus was due to appropriations made by Congress for war purposes, which became available to the Agricultural Extension Department about the middle of August, 1917. However, prior to this time and in anticipation of receiving federal aid, the Agricultural Extension Department had been directing its energies toward a thorough-going organization of the state and had prepared the comprehensive plan of organization already described.

The men memberships in farm bureaus on July 1st, 1918, totaled 33,187 or an average of 332 to each county. The membership fee in 83 counties was \$5.00 per year; in 9 counties \$2.50 per year; in 3 counties \$2.00 per year; and in each of 5 other counties it was \$1.00, \$3.00, \$3.50, \$4.00, and \$10.00 respectively. Many counties appropriated county funds for the support of farm bureaus.

Each farm bureau elected for its officers a president, vice-president, treasurer and one director for each township or an average of 16 to the county. In addition to this there was a cooperator selected by each county farm bureau and approved by the Agricultural Extension Department for each four square miles of land, making approximately 140 for each county or about 14,000 for the state. The Governor of the state officially appointed these cooperators to represent the state and federal government in all matters relating to war food production. It was this thorough-going organization that made it possible to meet effectively very difficult agricultural problems.

Farm bureau organizations also include women's work. On July 1st, 1917, one farm bureau employed a home demonstration agent. On July 1st, 1918, 41 farm bureaus had employed permanent home demonstration agents, and 55 additional farm bureaus had employed home demonstration agents temporarily for the summer. Three cities working in close cooperation with farm bureaus had employed home demonstration agents making 99 home demonstration agents in all. The local funds for the support of this work came principally from women's memberships in the farm bureau organization. On July 1st, 1918, there were 4,840 women members who paid an average of a little more than \$2.00 per member. This does not include the wives of farm bureau members because the annual farm bureau fee admits to membership both the farmer and his wife.

Another line of work undertaken by the farm bureaus during the year was the employment of permanent County Boys' and Girls' Club work leaders. The local funds for this work were handled through the farm bureau organization and were contributed principally by schools and local memberships of Boys' and Girls' Clubs.

On July 1st, 1918, there were employed all told by county farm bureaus, cooperating with the Agricultural Extension Department, 100 county agents, 41 county home demonstration agents, 3 county club leaders and 55 temporary county home demonstration agents, making a total of 199. Three cities working in close cooperation with farm bureaus employed home demonstration agents. All of these workers received part of their salaries from federal funds, some received all from federal funds and part received salaries from state funds. The local expense including travel, printing, office, stenographic, etc., were almost wholly paid by the farm bureaus. The farm bureaus also paid part of the salaries of most of the county agents. At various times additional helpers were employed and paid by the farm bureaus in order to meet unusual conditions such as the seed corn situation in 1917-18.

The foregoing thorough-going method of organization enabled the federal government through the Agricultural Extension Department to reach the farmers of the state. It also enabled the farmers of the state to successfully meet the most serious seed corn situation in the history of the state, to control the ravages



Map Showing State Organization of Farm Bureaus  
One For Each County

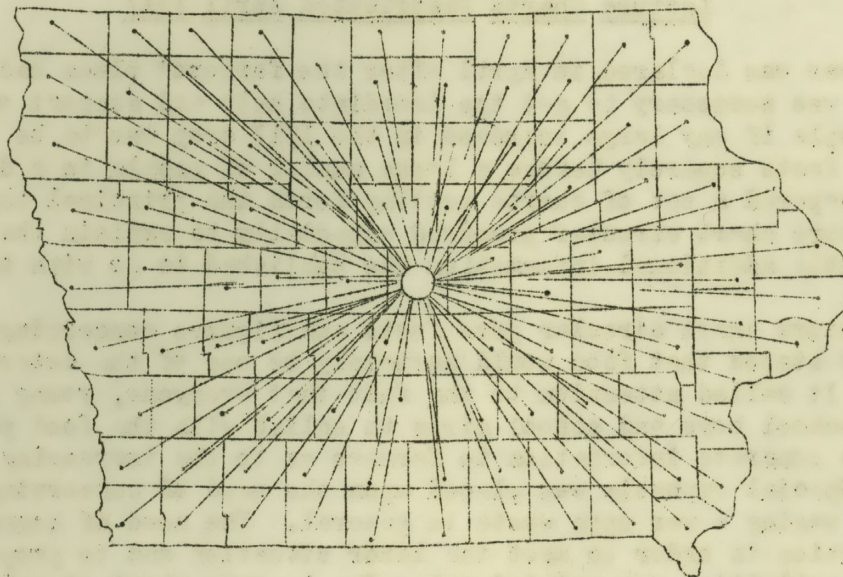


Fig. 12. With a farm bureau in every county, an effective war food production organization centering in the Agricultural Extension Department completely covered the state.

Diagram Showing County Organization

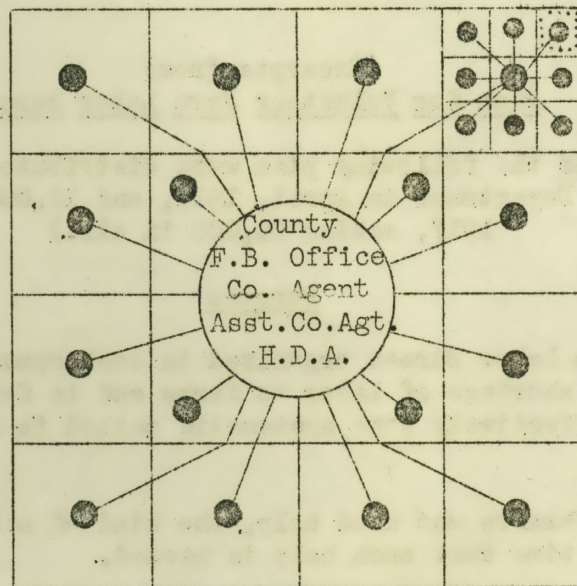


Fig. 13. Plat of a representative county illustrating how each county farm bureau with a director in each township formed the county organization. In upper right hand corner is a township showing farm bureau cooperators in each four square miles reporting to township director or to county agent. The above war food producers organization covered the entire state. The same method of organization was carried out in connection with the women's work in all permanently organized counties.



of cholera and to carry through the great production campaigns requested by the federal government with the resultant enormous increase in food.

Lecture Charts Distributed April 1917

Since war was declared in April after the farmers' plans had been practically completed it was necessary to get the immediate help and support of a large number of people if any large increase in the 1917 crop was to be made. In order to place the facts squarely before a large number of people in a definite way the Department prepared a set of charts setting forth the principal things to be done. A lecture chart circular prepared especially to explain the charts and furnishing valuable additional information was published to go with the charts.

The lecture chart circular gave facts and figures concerning the world food situation and stated that food would certainly be one of the determining factors in the war. It called attention to the fact that everyone, young and old, could help, urged school boys and school girls to enlist with the food producers and gave definite concrete information to farmers as to the increasing of crops and livestock. Special emphasis was placed upon the need of conserving food and clothing and waging a war upon waste in general. The need of organization and collective action in order to meet the labor situation and to properly direct agricultural activities was pointed out. The lecture chart circular was, in fact, a hand book of reasons why the people of Iowa should make a great effort to increase the available supply of food both by increased production and by conservation.

One hundred fifty sets of charts were distributed among teachers, ministers, lawyers, farmers, women's club members and others. Thousands of lecture chart circulars were sent to prominent people throughout the state. This material was largely used and undoubtedly did a great deal toward directing and moulding public opinion as to the need of immediate action in order to bring about an increase of food in 1917.

(Excerpts from)  
Plan for Volunteer Farm Labor Bureaus

(10,000 copies of the following plan were distributed by the Agricultural Extension Department in April, 1917, and 10,000 more in June, 1917, making 20,000 in all.)

Purpose

A Volunteer Farm Labor Bureau organized in each community is recommended as an aid in meeting the shortage of labor on farms and in farm homes. In order to handle this problem effectively some systematic method is necessary, it should have three objects:

1. To find all farmers who need help, the kind of help required by each one, and the time that such help is needed.
2. To locate all who can help on farms and to ascertain the kind of work for which each person is best adapted.
3. To furnish all farm help that is available, particularly in rush seasons.