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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Office of Distribution
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FACT SHEET ON COTTON-IMPROVEMENT GROUPS

The Problem

Farmers cannot effectively improve and market their cotton without reliable information on the grade and staple length of each bale produced. The system of paying one price in local markets for all cotton, regardless of its quality, retards quality improvement. The growing surplus of low-grade cotton and the decreasing proportion of the higher grades, especially in the medium staple lengths, are evidence of the need for improvement in order to meet war and peace-time demands.

Objective

Farmers interested in improving their cotton, who are planting a single variety, may organize themselves into an improvement group and obtain free classification of each bale of cotton produced, as well as market information which will assist them in improving and marketing their cotton. Large lots of a single improved variety in a community will sell better than a mixture of varieties. High grades require less time for processing into yard, involve less waste, and tend to speed up both the quality and quantity of mill production.

Background

To encourage cotton quality improvement and to improve marketing conditions, Congress, on July 1, 1938, made funds available for free classification and market news services under the Smith-Doxey Act. In brief, this act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to furnish cotton farmers, who organize to improve their cotton, the following services upon written request:

1. Free classification of cotton produced by members of each organized group.
2. Timely information on the market supply, demand, location, condition, and market prices for cotton.

The Office of Distribution, War Food Administration, is charged with the responsibility for furnishing the services authorized by the Smith-Doxey Act. The classification service and market news are furnished free to members of organized groups, but these groups must comply with certain conditions and accept certain responsibilities in order to obtain these free services.

Standardization and classification of the grade and staple length of cotton have been well established for many years. Cotton mills in this country and abroad purchase the bulk of their needs in even-running lots classed according to generally accepted standards or according to private types. However, many cotton farmers in the United States have little or no reliable information about the grade and staple length of their cotton or as to the relative value of various grades and staples. The result is that farm prices, in many cases, do not accurately reflect differences in the spinning value of the various qualities of cotton. A situation of this kind needs correction because it discourages quality improvement and gives rise to price inequities between growers.

How to Qualify

1. Cotton growers must have an organization which has as one of its purposes the improvement of cotton. Organization should be on the basis of a whole community involving a number of growers, although under rare circumstances as few as two growers may form an organization.
2. The members must adopt a variety of cotton and plant some of that variety and make arrangements for sampling.
3. Each group must apply for free classification and market news services on forms which are furnished upon request. The county agent and ginner will usually know how to get the application blanks and how to prepare them.
4. Applications may be submitted any time after the cotton is planted and must be submitted according to the dead-line date for each particular State or area as specified:

The dead-line date is August 1 for all organized groups in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and all Texas counties lying entirely or for the most part east of the 100th meridian, and August 15 for all organized groups in the later-planting areas including Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and all Texas counties lying entirely or for the most part west of the 100th meridian.

5. Additional information may be obtained from regional and State classing offices of the Cotton and Fiber Branch, Office of Distribution, War Food Administration.

Free Cotton Classification

1. Groups make arrangements for having cotton samples mailed to the nearest Government classing office. The Government furnishes shipping bags and pays the postage.
2. Samples are classed by Government specialists according to the official standards of the United States and classification certificates (Form 1 Memoranda) are mailed to the grower, usually the same day samples are classed.
3. The certificate gives the official grade and staple of the sample submitted.

Market News Offered

Free market news furnished by the Office of Distribution to organized cotton improvement groups will enable growers to figure out what their cotton is worth by means of: Futures price schedules furnished several times daily by radio; list of current spot prices, showing the price differences for grades and staples in central markets; and market news posted at cotton gins and in other conspicuous places.

Timing of Campaign

Applications for the classification and market news services cannot be made until cotton is planted. In most of the belt, May is considered the best month to present an intensive educational and informational drive to see that all eligible groups of farmers will start the ball rolling by doing all the necessary organizational work, and by preparing and submitting their applications early. Emphasis should be renewed during July which is the month prior to the dead-line date for filing applications. Many groups in the past have failed to get the service because they did not get their applications in before the dead-line.

Factors to Stress

In order to show how organized cotton improvement groups will benefit growers and ginners the following factors may be stressed:

1. The service offered will help them to determine the quality of their cotton and place them in a favorable position to bargain for a fair price.
2. It will enable them to assemble uniform lots of cotton and thereby attract buyers to the local markets.
3. It will enable them ~~more~~ readily to sell their cotton or place it in the loan on the basis of the Smith-Doxey class.
4. It will encourage cotton growers to work together and determine what varieties of cotton are best adapted to their communities and to their own farms.
5. It will show farmers in different groups the relative staple length of various varieties.
6. It will show the effect of poor harvesting and ginning on quality and prices received for cotton.
7. It will encourage the growth of one-variety cotton communities.

