

EDITORIAL

STABLE FARM PRICES, A BASIC NEED OF OUR RURAL ECONOMY

ONE of the basic needs of the rural districts is stability of farm prices. By this we mean existence of a range of prices for farm products that will enable the farmer to obtain from his farming work, an adequate income to make possible the attainment of a comfortable and respectable standard of living, the maintenance of soil fertility, the payment of government taxes and a reasonable interest on invested capital on land, work animals, implements and farm buildings. This is very essential if in this age of business when efficiency and success are gauged by profit, we are to keep our farmers on the job producing food. An unstable state of farm prices characterized by fluctuation in the market particularly during the harvest season when the farmers are in bad need of cash might lead our business-minded farmers to premise their food production activity on the security of profit, and might not plant in the face of uncertainty. This would be tragic—but shall we expect our farmer to keep on planting if uncertainty in prices is ahead of him?

We bring this thought bearing in mind the rice industry. There is an insistent public opinion that to insure a regular supply of rice for Manila and rice deficient provinces—the NARIC should be revived. With the NARIC, the question of what should be the government price for palay and rice will naturally arise.

We are advancing the suggestion that in fairness to the farmers, and in the interest of stable prices for farm products, the government in determining the price for palay should take into consideration the cost of production and the prices of essential commodities that farmers buy during the current crop year. The present crop to be harvested beginning this November was planted in May, June, and July. The greatest part of the expenses in the production of the present crop was incurred during the months of April, May, June and July. This crop will be sold in December, January, February, March, April and May when, in accordance with present trend in prices, we may reach the pre-war level.

It must also be remembered that for three years since the outbreak of World War II the farmers had been the greatest sufferers. The farms were ravaged by war operations, work animals and livestock were exterminated, farm buildings and implements were destroyed: crops were commandeered or stolen—the farms and farmers truly need to be rehabilitated. Shall these items not be considered in fixing the government price for palay?

As this issue goes to press, rice growers must have already on hand authentic data as to the cost of production of this coming crop. This information from actual farm operation records should be useful to the government in determining the reasonable price of palay. The price of three pesos for one cavan of palay paid by the PCAU authorities to palay procured last April and May was outrageously out of proportion to production cost. It was arbitrary and unfortunately, detrimental to the farmers' welfare. We hope the rice growers will be given a better deal this coming harvest.

Our Rural Problems And Our Journal

WE take our first bow to the public, conscious of our responsibility to the most important problem of the country, namely Agricultural Rehabilitation. It is our purpose to devote our resources and facilities in cooperation with all concerned to attain the objectives of Agricultural Rehabilitation within the shortest possible time. It is a happy sign that the farmers are getting organized, that they may cooperate effectively in the national task for after all this concerns their welfare. It is essential that there be a clear and full understanding of the scope of rehabilitation and we venture to indicate here in an outline form the fundamental problems confronting the rural districts today.

1. Establishment of peace and order in the rural districts so that the farmers in the remotest barrio may enjoy absolute security of life and property in the pursuit of their calling.

2. Extension of war relief for rehabilitation of farmers.

3. Extension of credit at low interest for reconstruction of farms, purchase of equipments, work animals and seeds.

4. Establishment of stable farm prices.

5. Development of adequate facilities of transportation, warehousing and distribution.

6. Procurement and distribution of breeding stock of the best strain of hogs, poultry, and work animals to speedily build up the needed animal population.

7. Improvements of socio-economic conditions and educational opportunities in the rural districts to make the barrios and poblaciones equally attractive for living as the city.

8. Increased production per hectare, through the use of high yielding strains, intensive cropping and efficient farm practices.

9. Encouragement of improved nutrition for the masses so that the nation will have bigger farmers, more vigorous farmers and longer living farmers.

While many of these needs will have to be worked out by the Government, the farmers should assume the major responsibility of initiating the work of improvements and organizing their own resources to meet the urgent need of early rehabilitation.