

EDITORIAL

Soil Conservation--And Profitable Farming

There is now a widespread talk about soil conservation. Before the war, the government started giving aid toward soil conservation by appropriating liberal sums of money for the organization of soil survey activities. Then it started propagating information on soil fertility conservation through green manuring and fertilizer application. To prevent soil erosion it started soil conservation through the help of terracing. The fundamental basis of soil conservation has been laid down since liberation. Serious attention has been given by the government to soil conservation and the soil conservation office has been one of the government offices that was early organized. Its offices are now active in the field helping farmers to undertake soil conservation through terracing and planting legumes.

This is a very fundamental service if the present generation is to save soil for posterity.

But to make soil conservation program attractive to farmers there is still a major adjustment necessary in the system of production. The cost of terracing and planting legumes must be paid for by the farming system to be established on terraced land. From time immemorial the rice farmers have practiced terracing to a degree not even approached in quality and extent by any soil conservation project in any country. The Banaue terraces of the Igorots are world renown as great engineering feats. But this is only a small project compared to rice terraces all over the Philippines. The rice terraces of Rizal, Bulacan, Batangas, Bataan, Zambales, Tarlac, and Pampanga are equally admirable as engineering achievements. But because the system of farming practiced on them is, invariably palay planting, the farmers have not attained a standard of living comparable with dairy farmers of other lands.

Merely terracing the land and planting legumes will not make terracing pay nor improve our farming enterprises. What is necessary is to develop a scheme of farming which will make the terraced lands render great income to the farmers. We point to a farming system with a combination of fruit trees, dairy cattle, hogs, and poultry for the rolling lands and a limited palay in the flat lands. The farming system that utilizes the cow that gives the manure, that fertilizes the soil, that makes the grass grow, that feeds the cow, complimented with the terracing of land and the rotation of crops is the most effective method of soil conservation and maintaining soil fertility.

Soil conservation projects deserve every help and encouragement but the development of a system of lucrative farming on lands under soil conservation is an imperative necessity. The government should play its leadership in this direction in a practical way by showing the farmers what is the proper system and how to establish it on their farms. The time to assert this leadership is now.

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