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# Farm Opportunities

IN

**WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON**

**1945**



A Guide for Returning Veterans  
Providing Answers to the Questions:  
What Is an Economic Farming Unit?  
What Is a Part-time Farm?

REPORT OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY  
VETERANS AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Prepared in cooperation with the  
FEDERAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
of  
OREGON STATE COLLEGE

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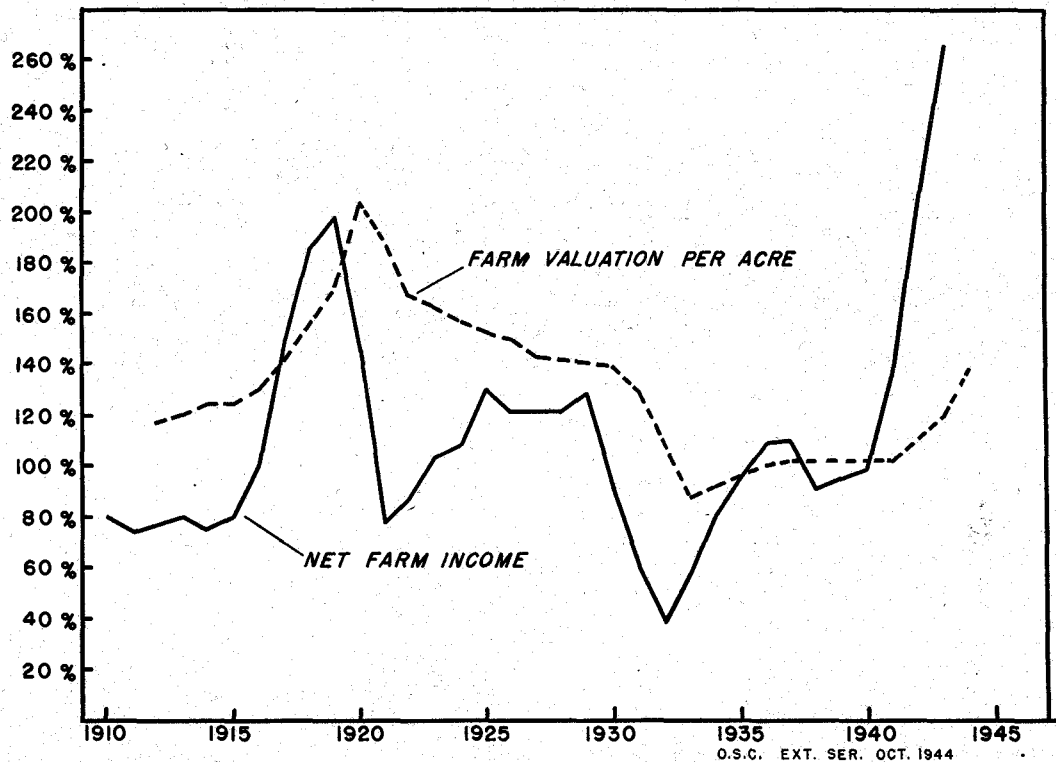
Oregon State System of Higher Education  
Federal Cooperative Extension Service  
Oregon State College  
Corvallis, Oregon

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# FARM REAL ESTATE AND NET FARM INCOME

Index Numbers of United States Averages  
(1935-1939 = 100 %)



# Report of Veterans Committee

## on Farm Opportunities in Washington County

THE Veterans Agricultural Advisory committee of Washington County, like those in other counties, has been formed to render practical aid to those returning veterans interested in farming for a livelihood or in operating a part-time farm in addition to regular urban employment. This bulletin is prepared for distribution as one means of rendering such aid.

County agricultural economic outlook committees and land use committees, composed of practical farmers and experienced farm leaders, have been studying the farming business in Washington County over the past 20 years. Periodic reports of these committees are available and have been drawn upon freely in preparing this bulletin. Those interested in more detailed information on any particular phase of Washington County agriculture may refer to the complete reports on file in the office of the county agricultural agent at Hillsboro.

In the pages that follow, condensed information is given on the general economic situation, minimum size of successful family farm units, the requirements for part-time farming, and considerations concerning the farm home. Recommendations made previously by county land use planning committees are still largely applicable, though some points have been brought up to date where necessary.

### I. ECONOMIC REPORT

Regarding the purchase price of a farm, we suggest that, in general, a buyer should have *not less than 50 per cent* of the purchase price, plus enough additional cash to equip the farm properly and carry the family living through at least one year. It is generally agreed that most farms should be evaluated according to the net return that may be expected from the land over a long term of years. The selection and purchase of a farm is generally one of the most important business transactions in a farmer's lifetime. Evaluating farm land is a hard job and, therefore, a prospective purchaser should obtain all available information before buying a farm. The chart on page 2 indicates the farm real estate and net farm income curve for the period from 1910 to 1944. It gives an indication of present trends in real estate prices and the relation between land prices and net farm income over a long period of years in the whole country. Present land prices in Oregon average the highest on record.

## II. MINIMUM SIZE OF FARMING UNIT

The examples given in this section are intended to point out the minimum size of farming units required over a long-time period, assuming that both the land and the operator are average. There may be rare exceptions where operators have succeeded on units smaller than those indicated or for a short period have shown exceptional success. The figures that have been set up are reasonable and represent an approximate minimum necessary to provide a gross cash income sufficient to pay all expenses such as depreciation, labor, taxes, and production costs, plus debt repayment and cost of servicing the mortgage, and enough net income to maintain an average family on a reasonable American standard of living.

### Suggested size for farms

The following are summarizations of the general farming area of Washington County.\* The committee's suggestions as to size of units are as follows:

#### VALLEY FARMS

1. **DAIRYING** (where dairying is to provide the primary source of cash income), 10 cows minimum. The operator should have not less than 40 acres of cropland and at least an additional 10 acres of either good crop or noncrop pasture land. Total minimum 50 acres.
2. **GRAIN AND SMALL-SEED FARMS** (on a farm where one or two cows are to be kept but where the income is to be derived primarily from small seeds and grain), recommended size 80 acres cropland minimum.
3. **NUTS.** These crops do not produce sufficient income for a family until, in the case of walnuts, the trees are 12 years old, or filberts, at least 8 years old, and should be planted only on suitable land. Minimum size unit: walnuts 40 acres, filberts 30 acres.

\* Data supplied by the O.S.C. Extension Service on the value of farm marketings from various products in Washington County are presented in chart form on pages 6-7. The chart shows that dairying ranks first and poultry second. The trend has been upward, particularly in forage seed and livestock. Truck crops, small fruits, tree fruits and nuts, and other horticultural products account for a substantial part of the value of farm marketings. More specifically and in approximate order the commodities marketed rank as follows: milk production; strawberries; chicken eggs; truck crops; cattle and calves; hogs; wheat; potatoes; Austrian winter pea seed; walnuts; greenhouse products; turkeys; hay; oats; farm forest products; filberts; prunes; chickens; nursery crops; hops; apples; black raspberries; hairy vetch seed; other vetch seed; pears; red clover seed; barley; youngberries and boysenberries; narcissus bulbs; sheep, lambs, and wool; cherries; peaches; red raspberries; farm raised fur and game; corn; holly; bulbous iris; grapes; cut flowers; alsike clover seed; Hungarian vetch seed; tame blackberries; apiary products; ladino clover seed; mohair; miscellaneous flower bulbs; loganberries; chewing fescue grass seed; vegetable seeds; fiber flax; flaxseed; gooseberries; gladiolus bulbs; ryegrass seed; lily bulbs; tulip bulbs.

4. SMALL FRUIT AND BERRY FARM (cane berries or strawberries), minimum of 8 to 9 acres. Size of farm unit 20 acres cultivated land in order to allow for crop rotation and soil building practices.
5. POULTRY. A poultry unit to provide income for a family should comprise not less than 2,000 hens. Usually a minimum of not less than 5 acres.
6. TURKEYS. 3,500 birds. Turkeys, however, are frequently raised supplemental to other farm operations.

#### HILL FARMS

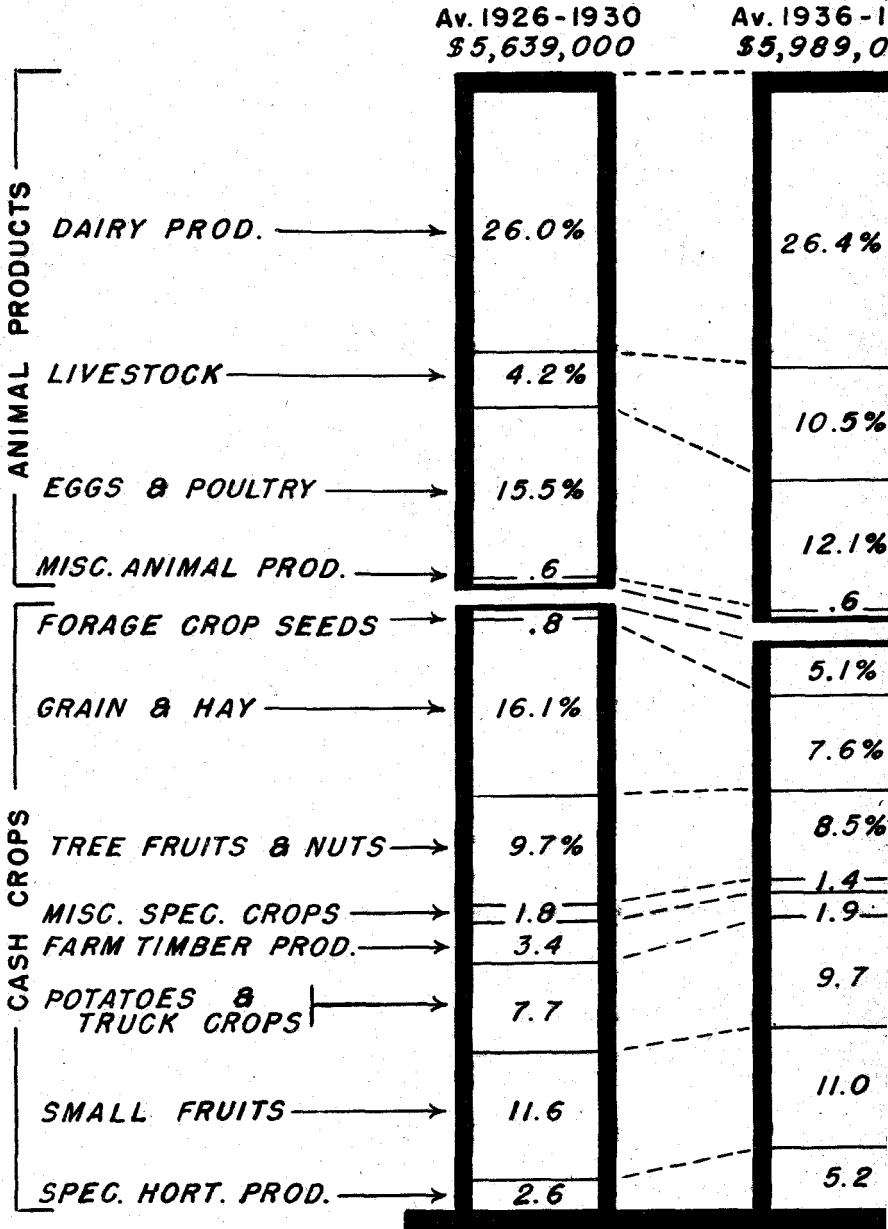
GENERAL FARMING, desirable cultivated acreage necessary to provide for a farm family growing such crops as berries, hay, potatoes, and livestock such as dairy cows, sheep, goats, minimum size of unit 40 acres cultivated land. Total acres necessary, 160. Minimum number of livestock, 10 cattle or 40 sheep.

The area of more or less hill type soil, including shoestring valleys beginning at the Multnomah County boundary on the east and running west to the Coast Range, has been intensively surveyed and classified in regard to size of unit by local people after studying the problem over a period of time. It is particularly pointed out by our committee that the cost of clearing the land in this area is \$125 per acre or more if the clearing is to be done rapidly. When the clearing work is done by the operator and his family using largely hand labor, the work of three generations is usually necessary to clear a sufficient land unit to support a family. The area of land suited to agriculture in this section is limited to 25 per cent and usually less in most farms in this section even if the land were cleared.

Major problems of these areas are:

1. Fire prevention and control.
2. Land clearing cost.
3. Difficulty in getting good stands of grass for pasture.
4. Difficulty in growing legume crops—2 or 3 tons lime requirement per acre.
5. Obtaining a farm with sufficient area of cultivatable land in a compact enough farm unit for efficient operation.
6. The high cost of building roads and schools in proportion to the assessed valuation.
7. Lack of electricity and water.

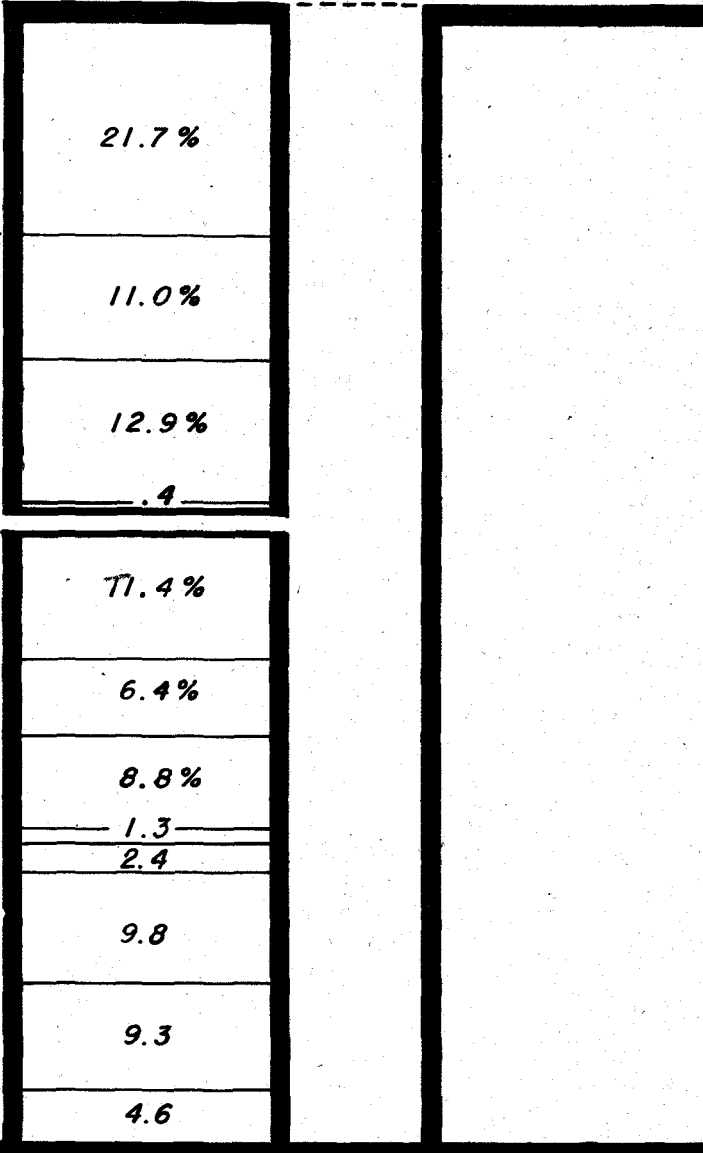
# WASHINGTON COUNTY



# ARM MARKETINGS

YEAR 1942  
\$10,369,000

Av. 1946-1950  
\$



### Recommendation for newcomers and beginners

It is recommended that newcomers to Oregon, or those inexperienced in farming, who wish to purchase a farm, should rent or work for an established farmer for a period of at least one year before investing their funds in agricultural land. By following this practice, buyers should be more able to obtain farms suited to the type of farming they wish to follow. This practice should prevent losses that frequently occur when buyers are not able to judge and appraise correctly the productive capacity of a farm before it is purchased.

Very little land is available for additional farms in Washington County except:

1. Where such land is found on larger farms that may be subdivided.
2. In replacing people who are now operating farms and who wish to retire or cut down on their activity.

### III. PART-TIME FARMING

Successful part-time farming or the maintaining of a healthy family living standard on a part-time farm is dependent on there being sufficient industry in the area to provide employment. In the period before the war the number of people on part-time farms exceeded the requirements of industry and we believe that increase of part-time farming should take place only as industry develops in sufficient volume to provide regular employment. Generally, the following acreages could help serve as a guide in determining the acreage required for a part-time farm. Approximate acreage of good land required to produce feed and livestock:

1. 25 laying hens and 40 young chickens require  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres for range and grain.
2. 1 cow requires 2 acres of pasture and 3 acres for hay and grain, a total of 5 acres.
3. 3 pigs for 6 months require 1 acre for pasture and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of grain, a total of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres.

The land required for other farming operations will depend on what the operator plans to raise. Fruits and vegetables for home use require between  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 1 acre of good land. A small flock of chickens may be kept on this plot if you do not plan to raise your own feed.

Generally 1 acre of good land would be sufficient for a family on a part-time farm. This would provide space enough for a garden and would permit the keeping of 25 laying hens, 40 chickens and



from 1 to 3 pigs for meat (all feed to be purchased). Keeping a cow would require an additional acre for pasture (all other feed to be purchased).

### Disadvantages of part-time farming

1. Farming is confining. It requires the presence of someone on the farm every day and, in order to be successful, requires hard physical labor, frequently under unfavorable conditions.
2. The cost of production will be higher, as the price of the land in the first place will likely be higher than equal agricultural land further from town. You will be unable to take advantage of labor-saving machines and usually will have to depend on custom operators for heavy work such as plowing. The purchase price of a small tractor usually is practically as much as for large ones used in full sized farm operations.
3. There are many disappointments and hazards—such as loss of employment, crop disease, insects, drouth, and sickness or loss of livestock.
4. It is more difficult to change jobs if a part-time farm ties you down. The farm may be an additional burden if you lose your job. The opportunities for selling a part-time farm tend to rise and fall with the opportunities for nonfarm employment in the same area. *Producing enough to eat is not enough for security.*

### Advantages of part-time farming

1. Part-time farming provides opportunity for profitable use of spare time.
2. Many people like farm life and farm work and derive pleasure and recreation from it.
3. Living on a farm usually provides a wholesome and healthful environment in which to rear children, though there may be some social handicap.
4. Part-time farming gives a measure of security if you lose your job provided you own the place free of debt and your farming operations furnish enough income to meet your fixed expenses and minimum living cost.

It should be pointed out that part-time farming is a way of life and therefore a cooperative venture for your entire family.

Questions that may well be considered by the members of the family before you decide to become part-time farmers are:

1. Do you really want to live on a farm?
2. Part-time farming will change your way of life. Are you willing to make the change?
3. Can you adapt yourself to the routine of farm life?

If you understand these requirements of part-time farming and are willing to accept the advantages and disadvantages involved, you will probably be happy and successful in it. If not, better give up the idea.

#### IV. THE FARM HOME

The primary factor in determining the choice of a farm is the soil itself, but the most satisfactory farm living will be found in areas that have good roads, transportation services, electricity, telephones, good schools, churches, and health services.

The foregoing services should be carefully considered when the choice of a farm home is made. We recommend that consideration be given also to the following features:

1. The farm house should be livable, fairly modern and convenient or be in such a condition that inexpensive repairs or remodeling could make it so.
2. The farm water supply should be sufficient for farm and home use. It is unhandy and expensive to haul water. In most cases your prospective neighbors can tell you whether or not you will have difficulty in obtaining good water.
3. It is advisable to have rich soil for garden space near the house. The amount of ground required for the average farm garden is from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre.
4. We suggest that a few fruit trees be grown near the house. In order to have satisfactory production, pruning and spraying will be necessary.
5. Unless some phase of farming brings in a definite monthly income, a farmer and his wife may find it difficult to follow a budget, but they should realize that careful judgment should be exercised in making farm and home expenditures. Successful farm living is acquired over a period of years through long-time planning, labor, and economy.

## V. SUMMARY

In summarizing the recommendations, particular attention of the prospective farmer is called to the following:

1. Farming is a specialized occupation that requires experience and knowledge of locality, soil, and markets. The spirit that prompts people to establish themselves on the land is common and such development is inevitable but the following caution is pointed out: unless there has been some farm experience or training, the prospective purchaser could well lease a farm or work for another successful farmer for a year or so in order to become better acquainted with the farming business.
2. Our committee cautions returning service men in regard to the importance of not investing their savings and the money that will be made available to them through loans, on agricultural enterprises without being thoroughly familiar with the land and its price in proportion to productivity and location.
3. We urge that returning veterans who are without farm experience take advantage of the schooling offered under the G. I. Bill or that they accept farm employment until they have had an opportunity to become more familiar with the agriculture of the community.
4. We do not wish to discourage the veterans who are thoroughly interested in entering the field of agriculture and who have had sufficient experience or knowledge. We feel there is no lack of opportunity for industrious and capable men in the field of agriculture in Washington County, but we wish to point out that land values change and *present farmland prices generally have increased to a point beyond what the farms generally can be expected to produce in return.*

The following bulletins are available at the office of the County Agricultural Agent or at Oregon State College, Corvallis, and give additional information and data regarding economic farm units in Oregon:

- Extension Bulletin 635 Buying a Farm in Western Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 407 Land Settlement in the Willamette Valley
- Station Bulletin 340 Part-time Farming in Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 351 Cost and Efficiency in the Filbert Enterprise in Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 364 Cost and Efficiency in Producing Hops in Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 392 Cost and Grazing Values of Willamette Valley and Southern Oregon Farm Pastures.
- Station Bulletin 315 Costs and Practices in Establishing Walnut Orchards in Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 396 Cost and Efficiency in Producing Walnuts in Western Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 409 Cost of Operating Power Equipment on Oregon Farms.
- Station Bulletin 415 Cost and Efficiency in Producing Hairy Vetch and Austrian Winter Field Peas in Western Oregon.
- Station Bulletin 422 Man Labor Requirements for Cane Fruits and Tomatoes in the Willamette Valley, Oregon.

#### Farm Home Bulletins:

- Extension Bulletin 614 The Farm and Home Vegetable Garden.
- Extension Bulletin 616 Planning Your Family's Food Supply.
- Extension Bulletin 642 Home Food Preservation.
- Extension Bulletin 623 Food Preservation by Freezing.
- Extension Circular 416 Repair of Household Equipment.
- Mimeograph H. E. 1064 Refinishing Furniture.
- Extension Bulletin 643 Renovating Innerspring Cushions.
- Extension Bulletin 504 Farm Kitchen Planning
- Mimeograph H. E. 1547 Financial Management
  - Farm Family Account Book—20¢
  - Oregon Cash Farm Record Book—25¢
  - Oregon Farm Account Book—25¢