

Oregon Agricultural College Extension Service

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Statements by Agricultural Authorities and Statistics Regarding the Food Shortage of the World

To be Presented by Meeting Leaders on Oregon
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Much has been written concerning the world-wide shortage of food-stuffs and the patriotic duty of the farmers of the United States. In order that you may appreciate and fully understand the gravity of the situation as it really is the following statements of gricultural authorities have been assembled for your consideration:

President Wilson in his Appeal to the American People, says in part: "I take the liberty, therefore, of addressing this word to the farmers of the country and to all who work on farms: The supreme need of our nation and of nations with which we are cooperating is an abundance of supplies, and especially of foodstuffs. Without abundant food, alike for the armies and the peoples now at war, the whole great enterprise upon which we have embarked will break down and fail.

"The supreme test of the nation has come. We must all speak, act, and serve together."

D. F. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture, has this to say: "Many millions of people across the seas, as well as our own people, must rely in large part upon the production of our fields and ranges. This situation will continue to exist even though hostilities should end unexpectedly soon, since European production cannot be restored immediately to its normal basis.

"In view of the world scarcity of food, there is hardly a possibility that the production of crops such as cereals, peas, beans, cowpeas, soy beans, and buckwheat, by the farmers of the United States can be too great this year, and there is abundant reason to expect generous price returns for all available surplus."

Herbert C. Hoover, Head of National Food Bureau, has made this observation: "The foremost duty of America toward her allies in this war is to see that they are supplied with food. France, England, and Italy in ordinary times depend largely upon Russia, Roumania, and

Bulgaria for a large portion of their breadstuffs. With the isolation of these areas they are thrown wholly upon the western hemisphere. The bumper western harvest of 1915 was able to carry the load without straining, but the more normal or in places short, harvest of 1916 coupled with the fact that our allies are today giving whole and able-bodied manhood to arms and the manufacture of munitions has brought the whole allied world face to face with a shortage of breadstuffs."

W. O. Thompson, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, says: "A food emergency now confronts us. For example, in the United States for 1915 we produced 10 bushels of wheat per capita; in 1916 we produced 6 bushels per capita; in 1916 we consumed for seed and ordinary consumption $6\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per capita. We exported $2\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per capita in 1916. World conditions are such now as to bring the wheat supply in reserve to a low level."

Editorial in *The Breeders' Gazette*, issue of April 12, 1917: "Never has such responsibility rested upon the growers of grain in the spring wheat sections (which include the Pacific Northwest). It is possible to fill the gap left by the untoward conditions in the winter wheat fields, but it will require a vigilance, an energy, and a mind hitherto never exacted from farmers by a condition of national peril.

"This is a war of food even more than of munitions. No man can wing his imagination as to its extent, its duration, or its end. Boasting should give way to earnestness and humbleness of spirit, and a grim determination on the part of the farmer, not to die for his country, but to live and produce that it may live.

"If patriotism fails to spur the husbandman the gross appeal of prices should quicken his every activity. Wheat has touched the record price since 1869 of \$2.28 per bushel; corn made the high water mark at Chicago, of \$1.45; hogs have passed \$16 and are likely headed for \$20; cattle have reached \$13.35, and lambs \$13.80. It is unthinkable, viewing the world's great shortage of foodstuffs that prices should recede below a highly remunerative level, even if a harvest 25 percent greater than the normal could be reaped. Lest any farmer fear that the reward of his increased production at greatly augmented cost should be a drop in prices below the level of an adequate reward, leading men of the nation, including packers and bankers, are advocating the fixing of minimum prices for crops this season, and \$1.50 a bushel for wheat is mentioned as such a minimum."

The *Prairie Farmer*, in an editorial March 10, 1917, makes this startling assertion: "Never before have as many people known what it is to go hungry. Starvation rules over Belgium, Poland, and Armenia, killing thousands and weakening entire races. The greater nations,—England, Germany, and France, are on rations, doled out with a stingy hand out of a dwindling supply. The hunger which menaces half the world has even invaded our own country.

"Short crops, increased consumption and waste by the nations at war have perilously reduced the margin that stands between the human race and starvation."

The *Country Gentleman*, April 21, 1917, says this of the farmer: "In facing such an unsettled future many farmers have been moved to retrenchment. They hesitate to take a chance, but patriotism demands that they so arrange their affairs that we may be guaranteed a surplus

of food. The provident, foresighted farmer occupies the most secure position today among all our people.

"The man behind the plow who can provide the surplus is a patriot of the first order."

Emergency Bulletin No. 1, University of Nebraska, tells us the following facts: "Six million men have already been killed in the European war. There are now 4,500,000 in prison camps and 15,000,000 have been wounded, of whom 1,500,000 have been permanently incapacitated. There are now 5,000,000 in hospitals, a portion of whom will not recover, and a portion will be incapacitated for life. There are now under arms at the front approximately 39,000,000 men. This makes in the neighborhood of 56,000,000 of the ablest bodied men in the world withdrawn largely from the ranks of producers, for most able-bodied men are in some sort of business of value to society. The equivalent of almost half the population of the United States, counting every man, woman, and child, is engaged in the war. No small portion of these were actually engaged in farm labor."

Without exception these authorities have warned us that the world is facing a food condition that is without parallel, and there is no exception to their appeal to the farmer of the United States that he produce as he has never produced before, calling his attention to the fact that there can be no such thing as an overproduction of the staple food stuffs. They must have information that leads them to sound such a warning and make such an appeal. Additional assurance that the farmer will be protected if he increases his production is found in the fact that the Secretary of Agriculture is now urging upon Congress the passage of a law which will place a minimum price upon foodstuffs grown by the farmer, and which will prevent the purchasing and storing of foodstuffs by manipulators for the purpose of exorbitant war profits.

Let us briefly review last year's world production of foodstuffs, taken from the greatest authority in the world: the International Institute of Agriculture Crop Bulletin:

The 1916 crop of wheat was 834,262,000 bushels short of the 1915 crop, and 309,396,000 bushels less than the 1914 crop.

The 1916 crop of oats was 436,574,000 bushels less than the 1915 crop.

The 1916 crop of corn was 468,953,000 bushels short of the 1915 crop.

The barley crop in 1916 was 91,792,000 bushels less than in 1915.

Thus you see that the yield of all the principal cereals was far below normal in 1916. The same condition is true in the United States. Without exception the 1916 cereal crops were below the 1915 yields. The following figures tell you just how many bushels the 1916 crops fell short of the 1915 crops in the United States:

Wheat	385,915,000
Oats	297,038,000
Barley	47,924,000
Buckwheat	3,216,000
Potatoes	74,284,000
Corn	411,552,000
Beans	1,475,000

So much for the comparative yields in 1916 and 1915. Now let us look at the prospects of this year's crops. The United States Consular

Reports since January 1, 1917, give us these facts concerning the wheat crop:

New Zealand—yield will be about 75 percent of that of the 1915-16 harvest.

South Africa—crop 20 percent below normal.

Australia—one million less acres sown than in 1915-16.

United States—winter wheat will be 52,000,000 bushels less than in 1916 and 243,000,000 bushels less than in 1915.

Argentina—300,000,000 bushels short.

Spain—plenty for own use but embargo placed upon exports.

Finally, give your attention to the fact that our exports of wheat for five years from 1909-10 to 1913-14 averaged only 61,738,000 bushels, while in 1916 we exported about 250,000,000 bushels—more than seven times as much. This statement is especially significant when we consider the great amount that has gone to the bottom of the sea as the result of the U-boat warfare.

Is it any wonder that Herbert C. Hoover has said that “the whole allied world is face to face with a shortage of breadstuffs”? Can you doubt that the farmer plays an important part in this great war, and that upon him, in a large measure, will rest defeat or victory for the United States and her allies?