



"There is need for growing more potatoes in West Virginia."

WHAT does the future hold in store for agriculture in West Virginia? It is not an easy question to answer or even predict the developments in ten or twenty years from now.

Many forces and influences are at work which will have a part in determining the course of development. The present nation-wide effort in county program planning will undoubtedly influence the future. It is too early to predict the probable effect of the new Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act.

The temporary phase of the program under this act for the first two years, until enabling state legislation provides for a more permanent program will encourage certain farm practices that will have a decided influence on future developments.

Shortage in Production

As to the possibilities for the future of agriculture in this state, more definite statements can be made. We know from surveys and studies that West Virginia does not produce as much of most of the basic agricultural commodities as are required for consumption in the state.

West Virginia is a deficit producing area with respect to wheat, vegetables, dairy products, chickens, pork, potatoes, lard, eggs and beef.

On the basis of national per capita consumption figures, West Virginia produces only enough wheat to feed 16 per cent of its population; vegetables for 26 per cent; dairy products for 40 per cent; chickens, 46 per cent; pork, 54 per cent; potatoes, 58 per cent; lard, 62 per cent; eggs, 81 per cent, and beef, 95 per cent.



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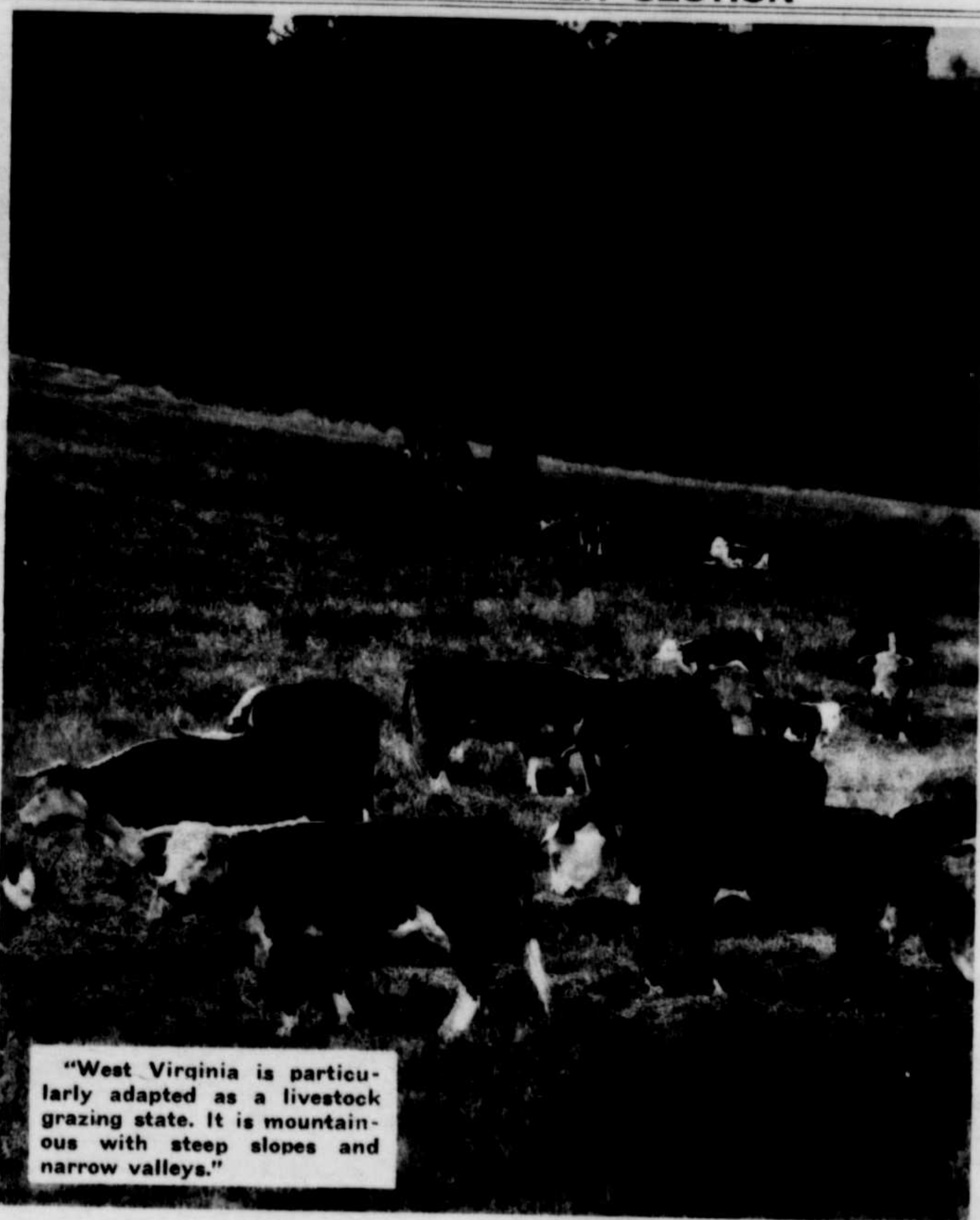
These figures do not mean West Virginia should produce only enough of these commodities to supply domestic needs. For some of these products the state will probably always have to depend on outside sources of supply. In the case of beef, mutton, apples, eggs, and dairy products nearness to markets in the large consuming centers and adaptability of the state to their production, there seems to be no good reason why this state should not share with others the privilege of supplying a part of the need for these products.

Likewise, there seems to be no good reason why West Virginia should not more nearly produce potatoes and vegetables needed for home consumption.

Land Studies Indicate Way

During the past year the West Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station has participated in a nation-wide study of land use and types of farming with a view to formulating a national plan for agriculture to promote soil conservation and result in lower production costs.

As a result, our suggestions for replanning West Virginia agriculture do not involve any major changes in types of farming. We believe the systems that have been developed in the differ-



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What of the Future?

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ent areas are in the main sound systems for the future, but may need some modifications to yield the maximum economic return, maintain the fertility of the soil and conserve it against loss by erosion.

An effort has been made to determine the land that can be maintained in cultivated crops and pasture in a long-time system of farming on a state, area, and county basis—and the probable income that might be realized through changes in practices consistent with the best use of the land.

Livestock State

West Virginia is particularly adapted as a livestock-grazing state. It is mountainous with steep slopes and narrow valleys. There are 2,000,000 acres that have a slope varying from almost flat up to 12 per cent, while on 3,000,000 acres the slope ranges from 12 to 25 per cent. A total of 6,000,000 acres slope from 25 to 40 per cent, and 4,000,000 acres have a slope of more than 40 per cent.

These physical characteristics of the land define the types of farming that can be conducted successfully upon it. It has been demonstrated that land with more than a 40 per cent slope cannot be maintained except in forest; land sloping 25 to 40 per cent cannot be maintained in farm land except in pasture.

Land that does not slope to exceed 25 per cent is potential crop land, but not all of such land is suitable for crop production because of poor type or condition of erosion. Nor can all potential pasture land be used for advantage to pasture because of erosion.

There are in West Virginia 1,500,000 acres suitable for crop production; 4,000,000 acres pasture, and 10,000,000 acres forests. There is need for reducing 400,000 acres of crop land and 500,000 acres of pasture land, with an increase of 900,000 acres in forest land.

Would Provide Increases Retirement of poor land from farm-



"The use of lime and fertilizer will produce more feed per acre on land suitable for cropping."

the results of hillside farming. They are a liability to the state as farm lands and a millstone reducing to poverty the people who try to obtain a living by cultivating them.

It seems wise to base suggestions for the future on a continuation of the livestock-grazing system as the chief type of farming for the state. It is sound economy to make full use of pasture land and to base livestock numbers on the capacity of grazing lands and the amounts of roughages that can be produced. We believe it is good economy to buy the grain and concentrates needed by livestock in excess of what can be produced on the crop land.

Land Retirement Not Easy

Through increased use of lime and fertilizer and growing more legumes it seems feasible to retire 900,000 acres of land seriously damaged by erosion, and increase the production of cattle, hogs, sheep, and poultry. It seems desirable to increase the acreage of potatoes, vegetables, barley, and alfalfa, and reduce the acreage of other crops. The total production of all major crops except wheat and oats would be increased by growing larger yields per acre. Such shifts would provide more adequate supplies of food for home and local consumption.

Land retirement in West Virginia, as elsewhere in the Southern Appalachians is a difficult problem, because the poorest land, generally, has the densest population. Lack of employment in industrial centers has driven people to the land, usually to the poorer land. There has been a gain of 22,000 farms in West Virginia within the past five years.

Because the task of making shifts in land use is a difficult one, is no reason for delay in tackling it. It will only become more difficult as time goes on. There is every reason against further delaying the effort to correct the situation.

Many of these poorer acres have already been eliminated by erosion and

"Many acres have already been eliminated by erosion, hillside farming, over-cropping and over-grazing. They need to be reforested."



"West Virginia should produce more of the vegetables needed for consumption within the state."



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