Louisiana Shares 'In Large Way' In 100-Year USDA Progress Story

A great deal has been said during the past few months about the tremendous agricultural progress that has been made in this country during the past 100 years since the establishment of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Land Grant College System.

But how has Louisiana shared in this story of progress?

W. D. Curtis, agricultural economist with the LSU Agricultural Extension Service, says Louisiana has shared in this progress "in a large way."

Records are not available for Louisiana on farm goods produced in 1862, but the earliest figures compared to the latest show much progress has been made.

For instance, in 1866 Louisiana harvested 1,020,000 acres of cotton, averaging 57 pounds of lint per acre for a total of 560,000 bales.

The state's cotton farmers produced almost four times this much in 1961 on fewer acres.

Louisiana has always been one of the leading rice producing states in the nation. In 1866, Louisiana farmers harvested 170,000 acres of rice with an average yield of 12.5 hundredweights (cwt) per acre and a total production of 2,142,000 cwt. The 1961 crop produced 13,511,000 cwt, with an average yield of 29.5 cwt on 438,000 acres.

The state's 1866 corn crop was 290,000 acres harvested, averaging 11 bushels per acre for a total of 2,850,000 bushels. The 1961 yield of 37 bushels per acre meant 9,879,000 bushels from 267,000 acres. This is about four times more corn with only a small increase in acreage.

The soybean industry is relatively new in Louisiana. From 8,000 acres grown for beans, and eight bushels per acre in 1924, it grew to 197,000 acres and 24 bushels per acre in 1961.

One of the state's best success stories has been in cattle. In 1867 Louisiana had 450,000 head of cattle, valued at $10.50 each for a total of $4,746,000. At the beginning of 1962 there were 1,818,000 head, averaging $107 each for a total of $194,526,000.

Louisiana ranked 19th in broiler production in 1961. This represented 24,959,000 birds as compared to the production of 300,000 birds in 1935. Egg production increased from 98 eggs per hen per year in 1925 to 187 in 1961.

The number of tractors in Louisiana farms increased from 4,016 in 1930 to 55,808 in 1951. Records are not available for the number of farms in the 19th century. But how has Louisiana shared in this progress?

An increase of more than 3.5 times the total cash receipts from crops and livestock and livestock products has occurred in less than four decades, Curtis points out. This is easily seen by comparing the totals of $121,448,000 in 1924 with $463,437,000 in 1961. Eighteen per cent of the cash receipts were from livestock in 1924, compared with 38 per cent in 1961.

"These results were secured by the extensive use by farm families of research education offered them through the Land Grant colleges and the U. S. Department of Agriculture," Curtis said.

Key people in this were local county and home demonstration agents and others in the Cooperative Extension Service. These agents represented the U.S.D.A., the Land Grant University of Louisiana and their parish government, Curtis said.