Production by Dairies in La. Tops 1,000,000,000 Pounds

First Time in History—Dave Pearce

(Particular to The Times-Picayune) BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana dairy production has reached the one billion pound mark for 1965, the first time in history the state's dairy farmers have reached this goal, according to Commissioner of Agriculture Dave L. Pearce.

Dairying has come from a short supply to rank fourth in the total agricultural economy of Louisiana. In 1965, the value of milk marketed by Louisiana farmers is estimated to be over $57.5 million and with veal calf and cull cow sales added, the total farm income from dairying will be over $67.5 million.

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Pearce points out it can be safely assumed that by the time this milk has reached the consumer, it will have generated $125 to $130 million into Louisiana's economy.

Dairying is also important to Louisiana's economy because it directly employs over 7,500 persons. A recent survey shows the processing and distribution of dairy products alone employs 4,000 persons with an annual payroll of over $20 million.

Louisiana's all time high was produced by the smallest number of milk cows on farms since statistical information has been available. There were 3.9 per cent fewer milk cows in Louisiana in 1965 than in 1964.

However, milk production per cow has been increasing at a substantial rate. It has been estimated production per cow on commercial dairy farms will be approximately 6,000 pounds in 1965.

The most phenomenal change in the milk industry in Louisiana in the last decade has been the decline in the number of dairy farmers. In 1954, Louisiana had an average of 4,962 and 10 years later, one out of three of those who were in business in 1954 had exited from milk production. In 1965, there were 2,900 producers shipping milk to the Louisiana market.

To offset the decline in milk producers, there has been an increase in the production of milk by individual dairy farmers. In 1954, the average dairy farmer shipped approximately 325 pounds daily. Ten years later, in 1965, this increased to over 1,000 pounds of milk each day.

Pearce says Louisiana is following a national trend toward greater production from a smaller number of cows. This increase in production can be attributed to five factors: fewer but larger producers, better feeding and management practices, culling of poor cows, improved breeding and favorable milk prices.