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# FARM FEATURES

**Orchard Mulching Is Good Practice**

It's timely right now to mulch orchards say horticulturists at Michigan State College.

In the mulch system, a coating of straw, hay or similar plant material is applied in sufficient quantity to cover the ground well, or to smother all weed growth. While not a new practice, mulching has given such good results that it may profitably be extended to many orchards which do not now employ it.

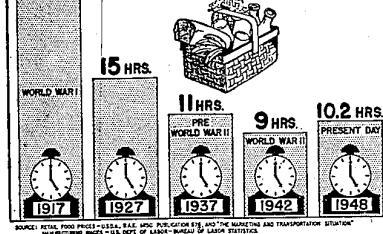
Tests have proven that almost no erosion takes place where complete mulching is practiced. Among other advantages, it improves soil structure and tilth; prevents compacting of the soil, allowing more rapid penetration of water; and keeps the soil from getting too hot in summer and too cold in winter.

Mulching also decreases the evaporation of soil moisture and allows water that would otherwise run off to enter the soil, the specialists relate. It reduces the loss of fruit that may drop at picking time.

Of special interest to growers is the higher yield which results from improvements brought about by mulching. These improvements increase fruit bud formation, leaf area and size of tree.

Additional information can be found in Michigan State College Circular Bulletin 139, entitled, "Soil Management Practices in the Orchard." It may be obtained from county extension offices or by writing to the Bulletin Office, Department of Public Relations, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan.

## Fewer Hours Work Buy More Food Today



Food prices today are high. But, for the average industrial worker in the United States, it takes fewer hours of labor today than it did before the war, to buy an average family's weekly food basket.

Dr. Eugene Cravens, Michigan State College research economist, says the so-called white collar workers and others with less flexible incomes have been less fortunate. Many of these people must spend income from more hours of work for food than before the war.

It took 27 hours of factory work in 1917 to buy the same amount of the same items of food that can be bought today with 10.2 hours of work. In 1927 it took 15 hours, in 1937 it took 11 hours, and in 1942 it took 9 hours. Cravens' survey shows. The average food basket is the

## Soft Corn Is Okay To Feed To Stock

Because the weather was ideal for the harvesting operation, much of Michigan's corn crop was crunched early this season. Reports are now coming in to Michigan State College that such corn is still dangerously high in moisture.

Cool temperatures and a lack of sunshine have not helped to dry the excess moisture from the corn. Many farmers are reporting that cobs of early harvested corn are apt to dry out properly and in some cases the corn is beginning to mold.

Graydon Blank, extension animal husbandry specialist at MSU, says corn that is high in moisture and even starting to mold, can be profitably fed to beef cattle, hogs and sheep. It will give greatest returns when fed during the early winter months.

In several trials conducted at the South Dakota experiment station, no harmful effects occurred from shifting beef steers from a full feed of hard shelled corn and barley to a full feed of soft, moldy corn. The shift was made in five days without the cattle going off feed or showing any bad effects. Lambs used in similar trials remained healthy on soft, moldy corn and made satisfactory gains.

Moldy corn has no cash value except as a feed for livestock. While harmful molds may be present, it is less likely that livestock losses would be as great as the complete loss from a corn crop left to rot. However, Blank warns, spotted or moldy grain of any kind should not be fed to horses.

Larger amounts of corn that is high in moisture must be fed if gains are to equal those from dry corn.

## Greater Potato Crop Goals Are Set For 1949

Michigan potato growers will probably spend the winter trying to figure out adjustments to meet new goals and partly reductions. Michigan's goal for commercial production was set at 67,000 acres recently when Department of Agriculture officials, extension specialists and Michigan State College, cited this information. The 1948 U. S. crop, which is among the five highest in history, was raised on the smallest total acreage seeded in nearly 70 years.

Improved varieties, better farming, use of sprays and dusts to control diseases and insects, and irrigation made possible higher total production from fewer acres. Consumption per capita has also decreased.

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**Farm Labor Outlook Remaining Unchanged**

The farm labor outlook for 1949 indicates there will be little change according to farm economists at Michigan State College. A high level of non-farm employment is expected to continue to draw workers from agriculture.

Labor saving machinery has helped to ease the labor problem on some farms. Near industrial centers, however, much available labor has been drawn away from farm work. A slump in this non-farm employment would probably result in a shift of labor to rural areas, they believe.

Farm wages are expected to continue near or above their present all time high level.

Michigan hens produced 1,320 million eggs from January to October in 1948. This is a slight decrease from the 1,380 million produced in the same period last year.

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