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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, October 14, 1941

QUESTION BOX

Food aims for '42
How much food for Britain?
Remove fell from lamb cuts?
Dried vegetable soup?

Answers from
Officials and
scientists of the
U. S. Department
of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Once more the question-bag is open -- and the questions up for answer are many and miscellaneous.

The first letter is good evidence that housewives as well as farmers are interested in this country's job of producing food for defense. The letter says: "Our homemakers club is interested to know what foods this country aims to produce in larger quantities in 1942."

Here's a brief answer to that question in the words of the Secretary of Agriculture. He says: "We need more of practically all meats; we need more eggs, and -- especially -- we need more milk. We need more cheese, evaporated and dried milk to ship to the British, who have had to kill off many of their dairy cattle because of a shortage of feed. We want to provide these essential dairy products for our friends abroad without lowering the nutritional standards of our own people. We can do this only if we produce more milk.

"To make sure of an increased output of milk, we need more hay and pastures. We especially need more legume crops, some to be used as a substitute for nitrogen fertilizers which may be scarce next year.

"For good nutrition, we need to consume many more vegetables, especially the green and leafy vegetables. We need to eat more of certain fruits and more tomatoes. Our imports of fats and oils already have been reduced. We

must make up the difference with oil crops, such as soybeans and peanuts, and perhaps Castor beans. Those are commodities in which our needs are most pressing for 1942."

Besides this list of the foods to produce in larger quantities, the Secretary reports on the crops that the country may well cut down on. He says: "A few crops do not need to be increased; rather they should be reduced. Of cotton, we have stored a year's needs, and the 1941 crop will provide as much cotton as American mills will use this year. We have more wheat than we can store properly -- enough to last this country for two years if we didn't grow a bushel in '42. Huge quantities of stored tobacco have piled up because export markets were lost when war began. On these commodities, the 1942 goals call for decreases down to the lowest limits provided by law."

Another letter in the mailbag asks just how much food is pledged to Britain next year.

Again the answer comes from the Secretary of Agriculture. He says: "We are planning to send the British during 1942 dairy products that will require between 4 and a half and 5 billion pounds of milk; about a half billion dozen eggs; 18 million pounds of poultry meat -- mostly chicken; almost a billion and a half pounds of pork and lard. We have promised to send almost a million and a quarter tons of fruit; and more than two and a half million cases of canned vegetables. There are other commodities included in our food commitments, but those cover the principal items."

Now from national and international questions, let's come down to some plain everyday household queries. Here's one about buying a leg of lamb. A housewife says: "Whenever I buy a leg of lamb, the butcher asks

if I want the thin papery outer covering of the meat cut off. He says it gives the meat a strong taste. Will you tell me if this is true?"

That thin papery covering is called the fell. And meat cookery experts at the Department of Agriculture advise leaving it on a leg of lamb. They do not find that it affects the flavor of the meat. And they do find that leg of lamb keeps its shape and cooks in a shorter time with the fell on. But they say other cuts of lamb usually look better with the fell off. So let the butcher remove the fell from lamb shoulder or saddle cuts, or from lamb chops, but keep it on a leg of lamb.

By the way, you are welcome to the Department of Agriculture's leaflet of directions for cooking lamb. Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for Leaflet No. 28 called "Lamb As You Like It." It's free while the supply lasts.

Another housewife writes: "My grocery store is selling little bags of dried vegetable soup mixture. Will you tell me how this is made, and whether soup from this dried mixture would contain as much food value as canned soup?"

Chemists of the Department of Agriculture investigating the drying of different foods recently say vegetables for soup mixtures are dried separately and then mixed in the proper proportions after drying. Usually about half the mixture is dried potatoes. The rest may be dried carrots, parsnips, tomatoes, turnips, and cabbage with a little celery, onion, and spinach or parsley.

Nutrition scientists say the food value of dried or canned soup mixtures depends considerably on the vegetables it contains. But because drying destroys vitamin C, you can safely assume that a dried soup mixture wouldn't contain as much of this particular vitamin as a canned soup of the same vegetables in the same amounts.

That's all the questions for today. More on Thursday.

