FOOD FOR WAR

LABOR - The County Agent has been made chairman of the Committee on Labor. Members of the Wood County Labor Committee include, Director of the U. S. Employment Service, Chairman of Wood County War Board, Chairman of Wood County Agricultural Committee, Welfare Director, and Director of Office of Civilian Defense.

On May 1st, Mr. Edward Vruwink was named Farm Labor Assistant for Wood county by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin. The work of Mr. Vruwink as labor assistant has been most valuable to the agricultural interests of the county.

The job of the labor assistant is to recruit labor wherever possible so as to supply the needs of farmers.

Wood county farmers entered the year with a decrease in man-power as compared to normal years. Wood county farmers were asked to produce more hogs, more eggs, more poultry, more milk and more cash crops than they have been asked to produce before. Farmers were asked to produce a huge increase in food products with a smaller supply of farm machinery and labor than in previous years.

Machinery has been rationed and the supply in most cases was not large enough to make up for the annual loss by wear and breakdowns.

The average farmer is nearly 50 years of age as shown by a survey of 210 farmers taken at random from each of the 21 townships.

Wood county farmers have no forty-hour week. They have been required to work as long as 16 hours per day during the harvest season without extra or overtime pay. Farm mothers and their children were also required to work long hours without compensation.
Ed Vruwink, labor ass't., presenting U. S. Corps Corps Certificate to Richard Gerzmehle, W. Grange bean field.

Ed Hill, District Conservationist, S.C.S. planting trees with mechanical planter on John Krutsch farm, Grand Rapids, September 1943.
All of the crops were harvested without any serious loss due entirely to the sincerity of purpose and integrity of the men and women on the farms. The labor situation in harvesting of cash crops, such as green beans and cranberries was most critical. Favorable weather permitted the cranberry harvest to be completed without loss to the crop. Some bean plots were damaged by frost toward the end of the season. The pea crop was reduced almost two-thirds due to extremely wet and cold weather in early spring.

Weather — The spring season of 1943 opened late with continued rains far in excess of the average rainfall. Frequency of rains handicapped hundreds of farmers and increased their labor problems. Many corn fields had to be replanted two and three times. Some farmers whose farms were not especially well drained were confronted with planting corn even in July. With the late planting of corn came the cutting of hay, cutting of grain and cultivating of corn all during the same week. Lack of warm weather in the early season seriously affected the growth of corn and grain.

Soils were water-logged so that the crops were unable to secure enough nitrogen. Many fields of corn and grain were yellow for a long period of time. More favorable weather occurred toward the harvest season and a fairly good crop of corn and grain was obtained. Weather conditions at harvest time were favorable for harvesting of corn.

The fortunes of Wood county farmers depend very largely on the weather. Many farmers are considering changing their rotations so as to include more of a grassland type of farming. Soils which are too poorly drained for corn production may be utilized to produce fall sown crops of wheat or rye.