

# Southland Still Has Room for Both Homes and Farms

BY TOM CAMERON

Does the sight of burgeoning real estate subdivisions and expanding industrialization cause you to wonder if this, the richest agricultural producing county in the United States, is usurping so much acreage for other purposes that our pre-eminence in crop output is endangered?

★

Relax. We're using more of the county's land for agriculture today than we were in 1930, when 262,793 acres were devoted to agriculture. Last year the total was 285,070 acres, or 22,277 acres more than 18 years ago.

It's true that the subdividers are encroaching on territory employed for many years in field and orchard production. Particularly is this true in San Fernando Valley, where many thousands of houses have been built in the last few years.

In 1943, San Fernando Valley, which district in County Agricultural Commission tables includes the Newhall and Saugus area, devoted 58,705 acres to agriculture. In 1947, the latest year for which complete figures are available, there were only 43,890 acres employed in agriculture—a loss of 14,855.

This loss to agriculture is more than offset, however, by development of new acreage in the Antelope Valley, where expansion of water supplies and some changes in types of crops grown have added importantly to the county's agricultural resources. In 1940 there were 79,435 acres in Antelope Valley used for agriculture. Last year the total was 96,570 acres, a gain of 15,135.

★

The lack of adequate water has hampered development of Antelope Valley into the biggest alfalfa-producing region in the West, because alfalfa, while the highest producer of all feed crops, also is the thirstiest, and demands tremendous quantities of water. County, State and Federal experts have been seeking to help growers of the area

test and develop other crops, which do not require so much water, to take the place of at least some of the alfalfa acreage. Among these innovations are melons, which are being grown with considerable success.

So there would appear to be plenty of land left on which to build houses for those individuals from other parts of the country who may have been a little slow to catch on to the benefits of residence here but who are now checking in at a great rate.

The only factor which might not only call a halt to this development but tend to turn many of our richly productive acres back into desert is lack of adequate water. Without abundant water from the Colorado River we are nothing; with it we are capable of still greater marvels of production and development.

PWS-0057-0001