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Speech on forestry in South Carolina for NFA public speaking contest

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FORESTRY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. President, fellow members of NFA. officials and friends.

My subject, The Importance of Forestry in South Carolina.

In our headlong search for new industries for the State, we dare not forget that the living plant is one of the oldest, yet most up-to-date manufacturing establishment which benefits mankind.

With that mysterious ingredient we know as chlorophyll, the living plant from the sunlight, gases from the air, water and nutrients from the soil combine themselves to make its own food. These plants provide food and fiber for man, conserve soil and water while producing food and shelter for wildlife. While this process is going on, the plant takes in carbon dioxide, the waste product of breathing creatures and return oxygen to the air for our breathing process. So the plant gives us oxygen for continued life and provide food, clothing and shelter to make that life possible as well as more comfortable, satisfying and enjoyable.

Our forest in South Carolina cover more than 12 million acres, constitute the State's largest crop acreage and furnish the raw material for our State's largest industry. The Forest Product Industry - There are more than 1000 manufacturing plants which use wood as their raw material. More than 30,000 people have year round employment in forestry and forest product

industries. These wages and salaries buy food, clothing, shelter and luxuries for over 100,000 of our people.

In recent years, we have seen the new Bowater Paper Plant constructed at Catawba in York County. A new Continental Can Company Pulp Mill at Augusta, Georgia has been in operation for several years and has increased markets for wood from South Carolina. Still another mill is in the process of being constructed in the Florence area, and the Meade Corporation has stated a desire to construct a Paper Mill in Abbeville County.

The vocational agricultural teacher, working as he does with New Farmers of America and local farmers, has contributed greatly to this teaching. The records of New Farmers show that they have been cooperating with State Forest Agents in providing instruction in the development of our forest. As good and as valuable as our timber production has been in the past, or is at the present, we are still limping along at less than half of our production capacity. A recent survey that was made in South Carolina revealed that although timber volumes were up, ~~size~~ and quality of timber were on the decrease. Hardwood volumes increased by 16%, but large hardwood suitable for saw timber and veneer were down 16%. Softwood had barely kept pace with losses to cutting, fire, insects and diseases.

We, as New Farmers, consider this in the light of the fact that most owners of large tracts of forest land are planting trees on idle acres, protecting their timber land from fire, eliminating cull trees from the stand and harvesting their timber wisely. With a knowledge of this fact, we understand where the problem of timber production lies. There are more than 100,000 individual forest land owners who own relatively small tracts. These land owners control 77% of the total forest area in the State. They supply 30% of the softwood that is cut and own four-fifth of the forest land that is in need of better forest practices.

More than 3,000,000 acres of forest land already supports a good stand of valuable trees, but these trees are being crowded out by worthless weed trees. Timber stand improvement work is needed on these stands. Wild fire continue to plaque the woodland of our State. Forest insects and diseases are taking tremendous toll; much timber is being sold with the owner having any idea of the future production. New Farmers of America, your forest laboratories that have been developed by you will serve as an educational instrument to the farmers of South Carolina that care for our forest.

This brings us to the point that, the major job to be done in the field of forestry is that of education. We must deal not only with trees but with people, and particular with the people who

own the trees. Population growth demands that we, as New Farmers of America, speed up our education and knowledge of forestry. In the future, if it should be the fundamental objective of vocational agriculture to train for a job, why not forestry? Education will be our business; this is one of the key reasons why public interest in and knowledge of forestry has grown as it has in the last 33 years. Many of the present land owners in our State are former vocational agricultural students.

As we train for our task, we are not forgetting what has been done in the past but we are looking for new methods of producing wood for our industries. The problems are great, but the potentials are even greater. Fellow New Farmers, let us accept the challenge and work together to realize this great potential.