

# THE Poultry and Egg SITUATION

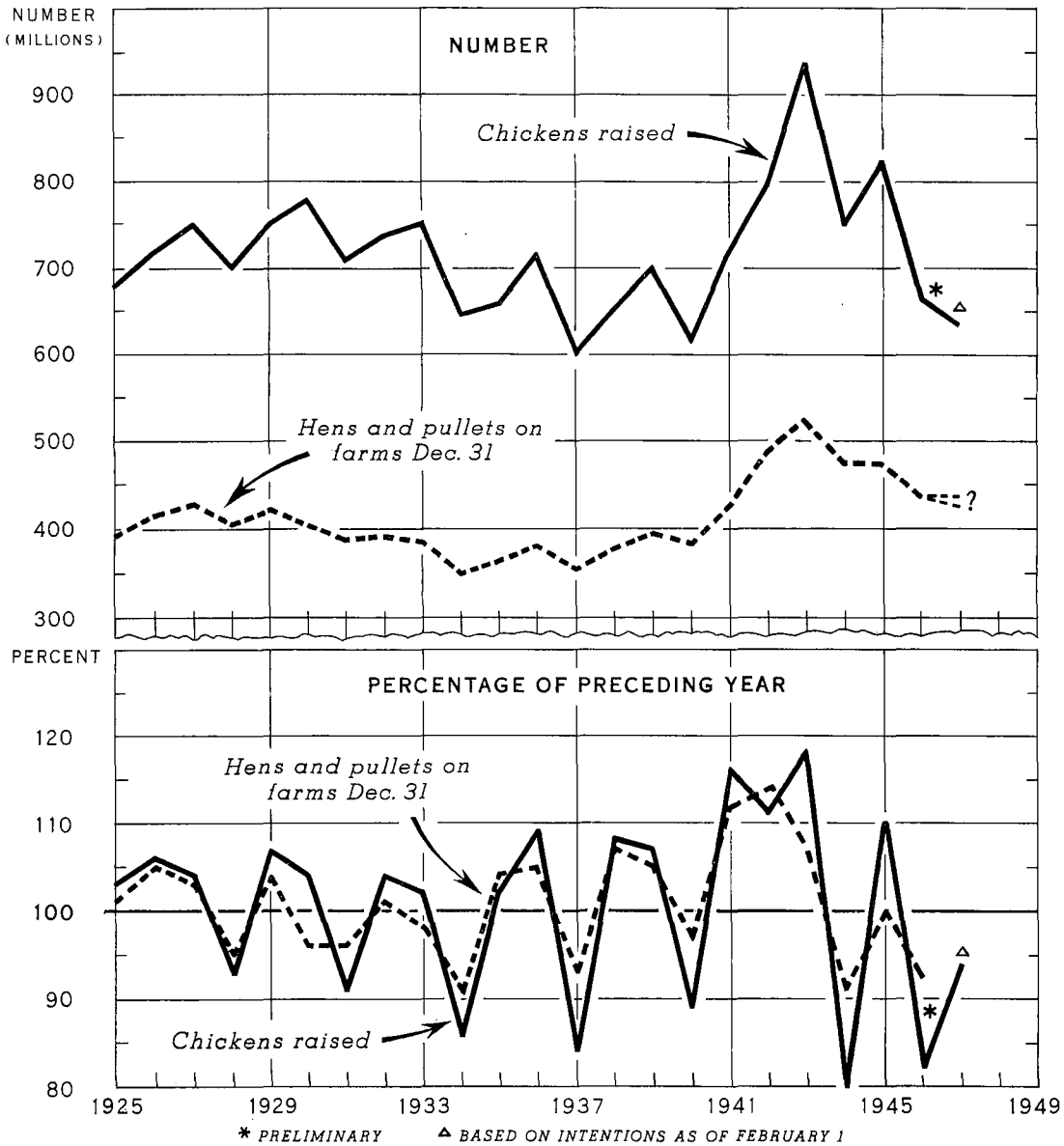
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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MARCH 1947

CHICKENS RAISED, AND HENS AND PULLETS ON FARMS  
DECEMBER 31, UNITED STATES, 1925-47



Farmers in early February intended to purchase 6 percent fewer baby chicks in 1947 than in 1946, which indicates a similar decrease in number of chickens raised this year. On the basis of present indications, January 1, 1948 numbers will not be greatly different from those on January 1, 1947.

The Poultry and Egg Situation at a Glance

Item	Unit	Month	Average 1936-45	1946	1947	Comments
<u>Eggs</u>						
Farm production .....	Mil. doz.	Jan.	255.4	357.7	380.7	Exceeded previous 1944 record.
Average number of layers on farms .....	Million	"	362.4	418.0	394.9	
Rate of lay per hen .....	Number	"	8.3	10.3	11.6	A record!
Apparent civilian per capita disappearance .....	"	Dec.	24.1	31.6	---	January 1947 consumption above previous year.
Frozen egg production .....	Mil. lb.	Jan.	---	9.7	9.3	
Dried egg production .....	" "	"	---	0.3	11.7	
Prices received by farmers .....	Ct. per doz.	"	27.0	41.1	41.3	Index of prices paid, including interest and taxes, 21 percent above last year. Hence, lower parity.
Prices received by farmers as a percentage of parity .....	Percent	"	88	106	86	
Retail price (BAE) .....	Ct. per doz.	Dec.	44.1	63.6	---	
Egg-feed ratio .....	Lb. feed	Jan.	12.9	13.8	11.9	Feed prices have increased more than egg prices since last year.
Stocks: 1/						
Shell .....	1,000 cases	"	304	272	294	Into-storage movement began late in February, about a month behind last year
Frozen .....	" "	"	1,793	2,979	2,150	
Dried .....	Mil. lb.	"	---	18	16	
Chicks hatched .....	Million	"	38.8	45.4	54.5	Eggs in incubators on February 1 below last year.
Potential layers on farms 1/ .....	"	"	2/431.8	450.5	413.8	Decrease during January about as large as last January.
Pullets not of laying age 1/ .....	"	"	2/ 34.4	35.3	23.4	
Prices paid by farmers for laying mash .....	Dol. per cwt.	"	2.66	3.69	4.34	
<u>Poultry</u>						
Prices received by farmers for chickens .....	Ct. per lb.	Jan.	16.2	23.5	25.6	Exceeds any previous January, but nearly 9 cents below October peak.
Prices received by farmers as a percentage of parity .....	Percent	"	107	116	104	
Retail price of chickens (BAE) .....	Ct. per lb.	Dec.	34.9	59.5	---	
Prices received by farmers for turkeys .....	" " "	Jan.	21.6	32.5	30.7	Declined almost 10 cents from October high.
Stocks: 1/						
Poultry, excluding turkeys .....	Mil. lb.	"	122.5	229.4	176.7	
Turkeys .....	" "	"	46.8	134.5	140.5	An all-time high!
Chicken-feed ratio .....	Lb. feed	"	8.5	7.9	7.4	Unfavorable compared with last year.
Turkey-feed ratio .....	" "	"	10.4	10.9	8.9	
Receipts of poultry at Central Western Primary Markets, per plant .....	1,000 lb.	"	9.7	12.1	8.0	

1/ End of month.  
2/ 1941-45 average.

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 T H E P O U L T R Y A N D E G G S I T U A T I O N  
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Approved by Outlook and Situation Board, February 27, 1947

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 : Special article in this issue: :  
 : Price Supports for Chickens and Turkeys :  
 : ----- :  
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SUMMARY

Farmers in early February intended to purchase 6 percent fewer baby chicks in 1947 than in 1946. If purchases are reduced to that extent, the size of the national laying flock on January 1, 1948 probably will be little different from January 1, 1947.

Turkey producers earlier in the year indicated a 16 percent reduction in output this year compared with last. Turkey prices declined sharply late in 1946 and by January 15, 1947, were 30.7 cents per pound, 99 percent of parity. To prevent turkey prices from declining below support levels (90 percent of parity) the Department of Agriculture on February 11 announced a purchase program that will be effective through June 30, 1947.

The government is purchasing dried and frozen eggs at support prices. Even at support levels, however, prices received by egg producers during the 1947 hatching season are moderately higher than in the same period of 1946. This is due to the fact that support levels are determined in part by the prices of the things that farmers buy. Prices paid by farmers will be higher this spring than last. Compared with feed prices, however, the returns of poultrymen for eggs are not as favorable as in 1946 because feed prices have increased more than egg prices.

Civilian demand for eggs is likely to continue exceptionally high, at least through the first half of 1947, because of high meat prices and a high level of consumer income. Per capita egg consumption during the 4 months, October 1946-January 1947, exceeded consumption during the same months of any previous year, and was about 7 percent above the corresponding 4-month period of 1945-46.

Slaughter of farm chickens will be about one-tenth less this year than last if farmers' intentions to purchase baby chicks are carried out. Commercial broiler output may be at least as large as in 1946. Cold storage stocks of chickens are one-fourth lower. Civilian supplies of chicken meat will be smaller than last year

(For release March 6, A. M. )

## OUTLOOK

BACKGROUND.- Farmers' intentions to purchase baby chicks and turkey poults, have been reported early each year since 1938. Numbers raised, however, often have varied from the intentions because of developments during the hatching season. Most important among these developments have been changes in the price of eggs and poultry meat, price and availability of feed, and in demand prospects.

In early 1947 poultrymen planned to purchase 6 percent fewer baby chicks and 16 percent fewer turkey poults, than in 1946. However, in 1946 largely because of the feed shortage, actual numbers of both chickens and turkeys raised were 4 percent less than intentions. Comparisons of intentions with performance are as follows:

Table 1.- Intentions to purchase baby chicks and turkey poults and numbers raised, 1938-1947

Year	(Percentage of previous year)		(Percentage of previous year)	
	Intended purchases of chicks 1/	Number of chickens raised	Intended purchases of poults 2/	Number of turkeys raised
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
1938	108	108	106	103
1939	108	107	127	125
1940	96	89	105	102
1941	109	116	97	97
1942	112	111	108	100
1943	116	118	112	100
1944	83	80	102	110
1945	96	110	110	124
1946	86	82	95	91
1947	94		84	

1/ Based upon reports of Crop Correspondents as of February 1.

2/ Based upon reports of Crop Correspondents as of February 1 for 1938 through 1942; as of January 1 since 1942.

Number of Layers on Farms January 1, 1948 May be Nearly the same as on January 1, 1947

Farmers reported intentions to buy fewer chicks probably will be carried out. Among the more important reasons for this reduction are: (1) a lower egg-feed price ratio during the 1947 hatching season than in 1946; (2) little change in the demand situation from that apparent in early February when intentions were reported. If fewer chicks are purchased, past experience indicates that the number of hens and pullets on farms at the beginning of 1948 will be about the same as, or slightly less than, in 1947. Every year since 1933, when decreases in the number of chickens raised occurred, there were relatively smaller decreases in hens and pullets on farms at the year's end.

Table 2.- Chickens raised and hens and pullets on farms, United States, December 31, 1925-46 (Data for cover chart)

Year	Chickens raised and pullets on farms Dec. 31				Chickens raised and pullets on farms Dec. 31				
	Millions	Millions	Percent	Percent	Millions	Millions	Percent	Percent	
1925	679	394	103	101	1936	715	380	109	105
1926	718	415	106	105	1937	601	353	84	93
1927	750	427	104	103	1938	651	376	108	107
1928	700	404	93	95	1939	697	393	107	105
1929	751	420	107	104	1940	617	381	89	97
1930	777	402	104	96	1941	717	426	116	112
1931	709	386	91	96	1942	795	489	111	114
1932	736	391	104	101	1943	934	524	118	107
1933	750	385	102	98	1944	750	474	80	91
1934	644	350	86	91	1945	821	474	110	100
1935	658	363	102	104	1946	677	436	82	92
					1947	636		94	

1/ Preliminary.  
2/ Based on farmers' intentions.

Egg prices during 1947 are expected to continue at or near support levels (90 percent of parity). The Department has announced a price support program for February through April providing for the purchase of frozen eggs and is also buying dried eggs for exports. Processors who sell to the USDA must certify that they have paid producers' prices averaging not less than 33 cents a dozen. This is likely to reflect a U. S. average farm price of at least 35 cents per dozen during the flush production season about 10 percent above last year. Price support levels are higher this spring than last because of the sharp increases that have taken place in the prices of commodities farmers buy.

Although egg prices are higher during the 1947 hatching season, the egg-feed price ratio probably will average about 5 percent below 1946. Currently, the average price paid by farmers for poultry ration is 16 percent above that of a year ago, and there probably will be little change in feed prices during the flush production season.

In the past, a lower egg-feed ratio usually resulted in a decrease in the number of chickens raised. In 1946, however, the number of chickens raised was limited partly by smaller feed supplies. Larger feed supplies this year may partly offset the effects of the lower egg-feed price ratio. The January 1, 1947 supply of feed grain per animal unit was a record, 16 percent above the previous year.

Civilian Consumption of Eggs to Continue High

Per capita egg consumption in the last quarter of 1946 was at least 90 eggs, and exceeded any previous fourth quarter. A record rate continued in January. According to early estimates, per capita consumption in January was about 3 percent above January 1945 and 1946, the previous highs.

This record rate of consumption is due in part to: (1) a high level of consumer income and limited supplies of some durable goods. Disposable income during the past few months has been at an annual rate of 150 billion dollars, the highest on record. (2) the relationship between red meat prices and egg prices has been favorable for a high level of egg consumption. The prices of red meats have increased more rapidly than prices of eggs in recent months.

Table 3.- Ratio of the prices of a pound of meats to those of a dozen eggs at retail, selected periods 1/

Year	October			November			December		
	Beef- egg	Pork- egg	Lamb- egg	Beef- egg	Pork- egg	Lamb- egg	Beef- egg	Pork- egg	Lamb- egg
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Av. 1925-29	62	56	69	55	48	61	56	48	62
Av. 1935-39	86	74	77	81	67	73	86	69	78
1944	58	48	61	55	46	59	54	45	58
1945	56	46	60	54	45	58	53	45	57
1946	74	64	71	87	82	84	37	79	83

1/ Computed by dividing retail prices of a pound of meat by a dozen eggs. Based on data published in USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 576

The above two factors are likely to continue to favor a high level of egg consumption, at least through the first half of the year. Hence, domestic consumption during the first half of 1947 probably will be at least as large as in 1946 when about 195 eggs per person were consumed.

In the second half of the year, however, consumption may decline more than seasonally and be below 1946 because of anticipated decreases in consumer incomes and larger supplies of meat accompanied by lower meat prices.

USDA Purchases of Dried and Frozen Eggs.

The rate of egg production early in the year exceeded that of any previous year. Although civilian demand for eggs was exceptionally high during January and February, supplies exceeded domestic demand at support prices. As a result, the USDA entered into price support operations.

During January and February, dried eggs were purchased for export commitments. As of February 13, the USDA had firm orders for 33 million pounds from the British Food Mission. By February 28, most of these eggs had been procured. The prices paid f.o.b. plant for dried whole eggs packed in barrels for January delivery was \$1.26 and for February and March delivery \$1.20 per pound.

The USDA also announced a frozen egg purchase program early in February for the purpose of supporting prices in areas where driers are not located. By February 28, 12 million pounds had been purchased. Prices ranged up to 31.5 cents per pound, f.o.b. plant.

Table 4.-Purchases through February 28, 1947 of dried whole egg by Production and Marketing Administration, by months of delivery

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
	:Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.	Mil.
	:lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.
1941	:					0.7	1.2	2.6	2.6	5.7	8.7	13.9	35.6
1942	: 11.4	12.9	13.1	13.4	18.3	17.5	18.5	19.2	19.2	22.0	25.3	15.8	206.6
1943	: 7.2	20.1	12.6	21.4	17.2	10.9	10.6	19.9	16.1	16.4	20.1	28.1	209.6
1944	: 26.4	27.0	18.3	27.7	27.0	26.1	24.8	31.5	24.2	20.4	12.8	7.6	273.8
1945	: 6.2	5.0	9.8	10.6	3.5	0.6	0.1	0.3	---	---	---	---	36.1
1946	: ---	4.2	15.0	16.8	12.2	13.7	11.3	10.5	5.8	2.0	2.6	3.5	97.6
1947	: 7.9	10.5	6.0										

Smaller Farm Chicken Slaughter Expected  
in 1947 Than in 1946

Slaughter of chickens from farm flocks in 1947 will be about one-tenth less than in 1946, if the number of chickens raised this year is moderately below last year. Most of the reduction would occur during the latter part of the year. Since commercial cold-storage holdings also are moderately below last year's record, total civilian supplies of chicken will be lower in 1947 than in 1946.

The slaughter of chickens from farm flocks in 1946 is tentatively estimated at 2250 million pounds (dressed weight). About one-tenth of this quantity, was supplied by reducing January 1 inventories of chickens on farms by 55 million. This large reduction in inventory probably will not occur during 1947.

Indications are that commercial broiler output in 1947 will be about as large as, or larger, than last year. Prices of broilers have been higher than last year, even though they declined in recent months, and in relation to feed costs are more favorable for production this year than in 1946. Hence, commercial broiler output may be somewhat larger during the next few months, than in the corresponding period of 1946.

Chicken Prices Declining

Prices received by farmers for chickens have declined sharply from the record peaks reached in mid-October. However, prices are expected to increase somewhat in the next few months because of seasonally smaller supplies of chickens and red meats, particularly pork. In addition, continuation of a high level of consumer income would tend to maintain prices.

In the latter part of 1947, however, chicken prices probably will decline moderately. Consumer income may be declining and supplies of red meats will be large late in the year.

The average price for chickens received by farmers in mid-January was 25.6 cents per pound, almost 9 cents below the record in mid-October. However, the January average farm price was a record high for that month.

Off-Season Turkey Consumption to be Very Large

Cold-storage holdings of turkeys on February 1 were at a record of 140 million pounds, 6 million pounds above February 1, 1946, and four times the 1935-39 average. This is equivalent to nearly one-fourth of the total quantity of turkey meat marketed in 1946. But the number of turkeys on farms January 1, 1947 was 6.6 million head, 1.9 million below the previous January 1. Because of the reductions in numbers the quantity of turkey meat available for consumption during the off-season (February 1 through September 1) will be slightly smaller than last year's record, but considerably larger than any other year.

If farmers' plans to reduce purchases of poults by 16 percent are carried out, the quantity of turkey meat per person during 1947 will be about one-half pound below 1946. Per capita consumption last year is tentatively estimated at 4.2 pounds per person compared with 2.6 pounds in the late 1930's.

Turkey prices have declined sharply from the record high reached in mid-October. The average price received by farmers in mid-January was 30.6 cents per pound, a decrease of about 25 percent from the October high. In terms of parity, farmers were receiving 99 percent.

Department of Agriculture Requests Reduction  
In Egg Production

The farm goal program for 1947, announced on January 16, calls for a decrease of 10 percent in egg production, but little change in the number of chickens and turkeys raised compared with 1946. Comparisons of 1947 poultry products goals and 1946 production are as follows:

Item	Unit	1946 production 1/	1947 goal	Percentage 1947 goal is of 1946
Farm egg production	Mil. doz.	4,655	4,200	90
Chickens raised	Mil. head	677	677	100
Turkeys raised	Mil. head	41	40.6	99

1/ Preliminary



Canadian Egg Goals call for Increased  
Egg Production in 1947

The poultry and egg goals recommended by the Canadian Agricultural Supplies Board calls for an increase in egg production of about 10 percent, and no change in production of poultry meat. Canadian egg production for 1946, is estimated at 345 million dozen. Poultry meat output was about 350 million pounds.

The Canadian egg goal is based on domestic consumption of 288.5 million dozen, which would leave 90 million dozen for export to Britain. During 1946, shipments to Great Britain totaled about 60 million dozen, 23 million dozen short of the contract.

The 1947 contract for poultry meat for the British Ministry of Food calls for exports of 12.5 million pounds of Canadian poultry.

Price Supports for Chickens and Turkeys\*

The Steagall amendment of 1941 directs government price supports for various farm commodities. The present commitment will end December 31, 1948, as a result of the President's proclamation ending hostilities on the last day of 1946.

During most of the war the prices farmers received for chickens and turkeys were well above parity. To keep turkey prices from falling below 90 percent of parity, the Department announced a new price support program on February 11. (See table 6.) Only turkeys processed after February 11 and those held in cold storage which are producer-owned are eligible for supports.

Farm chickens and eggs were included in the first price support program announced by the Secretary of Agriculture on April 3, 1941. This announcement stated that chicken prices were to be supported at 15 cents per pound, Chicago basis, with normal differentials for season, grade, weight and location for the period through June 30, 1943. On August 29, 1941, chickens were officially proclaimed a "Steagall" commodity, which meant that they were to be supported at a minimum of 85 percent of parity. Chickens also were included in the revised goal announcement of January 16, 1942, which reaffirmed that prices were to be supported at not less than 85 percent of parity, and extended the period through June 30, 1943.

The Stabilization Act of 1942, approved October 2, 1942, raised support levels on "Steagall" commodities from 85 percent to 90 percent of parity.

It was not until the 1943 price support program was announced on November 27, 1942, that turkeys became a "Steagall" commodity. This announcement provided that turkeys and chickens (excluding broilers or chickens weighing less than 3 pounds live weight) were to be supported at a minimum of 90 percent of parity. No specific support prices were announced for chickens and turkeys until early 1946 because prices of both were well above parity until that time. In March of 1946 the USDA announced specific purchase prices for both dressed chickens and turkeys. Tables 5 and 6 summarize price support announcements made by the U.S.D.A. for chickens and turkeys, respectively.

\* For a discussion of the egg price support programs, see April-May-June 1946 issue of The Poultry and Egg Situation.

Table 5.- Specific USDA chicken price support announcements

Date and reference number of announcement	Effective dates	Minimum price	Market area, point or market to which support applies
Apr. 3, 1941; 1992-41	:Apr. 3, 1941 : through :June 30, 1943	:15 cents per pound assuming con- :tinuation of existing price : relationships and taking sea- : sonal variation into account.	:Chicago, Ill.
Sept. 8, 1941; 529-42	:Through 1942	:85 percent of parity.	:U. S. average price :received by farmers.
Jan. 16, 1942; 1522-42	:Jan. 1, 1942 : through :June 30, 1943	:Chickens (excluding broilers) at : 85 percent of parity.	:U. S. average price :received by farmers.
Nov. 30, 1942; 1029-43	:Jan. 1, 1943- :June 30, 1944	:Chickens (excluding broilers or : chickens weighing less than 3 : lbs. live weight) at 90 percent : of parity.	:U. S. average price :received by farmers.
Jan. 26, 1944; 1935-44	:Through :Dec. 31, 1944	:Chickens (excluding broilers or : chickens weighing less than 3 : lbs. live weight) at 90 percent : of parity.	:U. S. average price :received by farmers.
Nov. 20, 1944; 3607-44	:Through :Dec. 31, 1945	:Chickens (excluding broilers or : chickens weighing less than 3- : 1/2 lbs. live weight) at 90 : percent of parity.	:U. S. average price :received by farmers.
Mar. 6, 1946; 488-46	:March 8, 1946	:Spells out purchase prices for : dressed chickens, except those : weighing 3-1/2 lbs. or less, so : as to reflect not less than 90 : percent of parity. Producers' : average support prices per lb. : live weight by zones are:  : <u>Zone 1</u> <u>Zone 2</u> <u>Zone 3</u> <u>Zone 4</u>  : 18.50 19.00 19.50 20.00	:Zone 1- North Dak., :South Dak., Neb., :Kans., Okla., Tex., :Minn., Ia., Mo., Ark. :and La. :Zone 2 - Mont., Wyo., :Colo., New Mex., Wis., :Ill., Ind., Ky., :Miss., Tenn., Ala. :Zone 3 - Idaho, Nev., :Utah., Ariz., Mich., :Ohio., Va., W. Va., :Md., Del., N. C., S.C. :Ga., Fla., and D. C. :Zone 4 - Wash., Ore., :Cal., Me., N.H., Vt., :Mass., R.I., Conn., :N.Y., N.J., and Pa.

Table 6.- Specific USDA turkey price support announcements

Date and reference number of announcement	Effective dates	Minimum price	Market area, point or market to which support applies																									
Nov. 30, 1942: 1029-43	:Jan. 1, 1943-:June 30, 1944:	:90 percent of parity.	:U. S. average price received by farmers.																									
Jan. 26, 1944:	:Through :Dec. 31, 1944:	:90 percent of parity.	:U. S. average price received by farmers.																									
Nov. 20, 1944: 3607-44	:Through :Dec. 31, 1945:	:90 percent of parity	:U. S. average price received by farmers.																									
March 22, 1946: 617-46	:Mar. 22, 1946 (until further notice):	:Spells out purchase prices for dressed turkeys so as to reflect 90 percent of parity. Producer support prices per pound live weight by zones are:	:Zone 1- Idaho, Mont., Nev., Utah, Wyo., Colo., Ariz., N. Mex., Okla., Tex., Ark., and La.																									
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Feb. 11, 1947: 296-47	:Feb. 11, 1947: June 30, 1947:	:Spells out purchase prices for dressed turkeys so as to reflect 90 percent of parity. Announced producer prices per pound of live turkey by zones are:	:Zone 3- Wis., Mich., Ill., Ind., Ohio, Ky., Tenn., W. Va., Va., Md., Del., and N. Car.																									
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