

2-402501

THE

BATTLE FOR THE HARVEST

Rain threatens the nation's harvest. Two weeks of the wettest August in memory cost farmers twenty million pounds. This represents their loss on grain crops alone - for of the estimated 7 million bumper yield, at least 700,000 tons have been destroyed. The farmer's loss of wheat is our loss of bread.

This was to be Britain's greatest harvest for 15 years. To reach a record output, farming has taken on a New Look. To investigate farming's new methods and new ideas the cameras spend a harvest day at Chichester with Farmer Robert Mason. His is a mixed farm of 700 acres. To Mr. Mason, and the nation, a good harvest will mean more milk, more eggs - for farmers can now keep one fifth of their crop for feeding livestock. The Government target for Agriculture is an additional output of 100 million pounds worth of food yearly. It is hoped to reach this high standard by 1952. Farmer Mason gives a clue to what is needed:-

SOUND

With labour short, Mr. Mason practices what he preaches. He began with a sickle, today he owns five tractors. But machinery is difficult to obtain and workers impossible to replace. And to add to his difficulties, there is always the uncertainty of the British weather. Part answer to the problem lies with the new combine harvester, which is able to cut the wheat, thresh it and bag it, all in one process. There are now 6,400 machines like this throughout Britain. Their output totals more than one million tons of grain - more than one seventh of our estimated harvest.

To the farm worker too, the new deal in agriculture has brought better times. He now gets a guaranteed wage of £4. 10. 0. a week - at harvest time he can earn £10. 0. 0. 63-year-old Walter Hudson remembers what things were like in the old days.

During the weather disaster of the past few weeks, grain drying plants have proved their worth. The only farmers who can afford to smile are those like Robert Mason, who have installed this equipment. Those without maintain that the Government should build dryers in every district for general use.

With the evergrowing demand for food, agriculture has at last become a key industry. And to the men and women who work the land goes a new standing in the nation's economy.