

This is in an area where independent growers this summer were left with 8 million bags of potatoes they were unable to sell at any price.

They look at Textron, a widely-diversified maker of products ranging from pencils to helicopters, which is deeply involved in broiler production.

The broiler situation brought so many complaints to the Department of Agriculture from farmers in the Southeast that the Government finally was forced to investigate to see what was going on. The investigation showed that giant corporations like Textron, in dog-eat-dog competition, are running all the independent broiler producers out of business.

But probably the most aggressive corporation farmer of all is the Gates Rubber Co., a widely-diversified Denver company that accumulated its wealth making tires and V-belts for machinery.

It's likely there are few Kansas farmers who haven't, at one time or another, put a Gates tire or a Gates belt on a tractor or a combine.

That kind of business built up with farmers doesn't make this corporate giant any more loyal to agriculture, however. Its answer has been to compete directly with farmer-customers with a 180,000-acre cattle ranch in Wyoming and 420,000-layer operation near Denver that makes it one of the Nation's leading egg producers.

Recently this company went even further. It announced it is going to Yuma County, Colo.—just across the line from Kansas—to set up the first of a series of big, irrigated factory-in-the-field operations. The announcement, to say the least, shook up Colorado farmers, who have no State laws protecting them from corporations moving into agriculture.

Gates Farms, Inc., the new subsidiary set up to run this new farming venture, says the 20-percent return on investment it hopes to make in Colorado will be used to buy land for corporation farming in neighboring States.

A farm reporter who visited the Yuma County area recently says farmers and businessmen are very upset by the Gates announcement. The company has options on about 70 farms in the area, which means the business establishments in the nearby small towns of Joes and Kirk may soon disappear.

I say this because recent figures show that, in a typical farm State, one smalltown businessman fails for every six farm families that have to leave a community. The ratio would be roughly the same in any Kansas area where a big corporate operation came in and forced large numbers of people off the land.

Gates also plans to sink a large number of deep wells to draw water to irrigate the entire Colorado operation.

The water under this High Plains area is the same pool that underlies a wide dryland area, including part of northwest Kansas. Conservationists say this water resource, though ample as used by farmers now, can be exhausted quickly by heavy pumping because it recharges very slowly from surface water coming from rains.

Farmers and ranchers on the fringe of the Gates area, aware of how precious this water is, are saying they will run short as the Gates irrigation pumps pull more and more water to the surface.

Eventually, some will run out, even for watering livestock.