

was started in Arvin dependent upon community irrigation wells. At this time many of the homesteaders sold their holdings to these settlers for about \$10 an acre. This was the beginning of the development of intensive farming in the community, and many of the small farms today have come down from this early period. During these early days the settlers suffered the hardships of the pioneer. The route to the nearest railroad was the dust-covered buggy tracks running across the desert. In 1912, according to one woman who is still in the community, she was the only farm wife in the area, and while there was electricity for pumping irrigation water, there was none for household use. During the second decade of the century more land was developed. It was during this period that the largest single holding was developed, as well as many other units now in operation. Land values rose from the \$10 per acre which the original homesteaders received from their sales to about \$100 an acre, which is said to have been the average price during the First World War.

Cattle were the first agricultural commodity produced in the area, but diversified farming came in with the development of small ranches in the period 1910-15. Walnuts and hops were produced quite early. It is generally claimed that it took three "generations" of farmers to make a farm; that is, that the investments of two failures were required before a man could make money by farming. Two classes of crops have in the course of time proved themselves profitable under the relatively high water cost—field crops and fruit produced to meet the early-season market. The land and climate is ideally suited to the cultivation of cotton under irrigation, and the early growing season makes it possible for fruits to mature for the earliest market and thereby bring premium prices. Grapes are harvested as early as July and plums frequently in May. According to one pioneer farmer it was cotton that saved the Arvin area. Cotton was first cultivated in the 1920's and is still an important crop. The earliest data available on cotton in the community indicate that there were 7,756 acres in the Arvin-Weedpatch-Lamont area in 1931 and 9,306 in 1932.³ The Agricultural Adjustment Agency data for 1940 indicate 6,533 acres in cotton in the Arvin community alone (15 percent of all cropland reported). While the total acreage in cotton has remained fairly constant since the early 1930's, it is now far less important proportionately than formerly.

The average farm in Arvin is quite large, though, as already indicated, not the largest in the San Joaquin Valley. The reasons for this lie both in history and environment and are compounded of the following factors: Nature and cost of water development, the historical timing of the development around Arvin, the fact of DiGiorgio developing land within that community, and the type of crops grown in the area.

As stated above, Arvin lies in a desert which, though occasionally flooded by melting snows and spring rains, has no stable surface-water supply. The underground water table was such that it could not be developed until a certain level of pump efficiency was reached. Thus it was that though the area had been homesteaded, and one of California's oldest and largest cattle ranches was developed in the neighborhood, the region was unsettled at the beginning of the twentieth

³ Data compiled by Kern County Agricultural Commissioner obtained from the files of the farm advisor, Kern County. See also later discussions.