

Agricultural Brevities

Vegetables

With 13 states cooperating, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has established a vegetable breeding laboratory near Charleston, S. C. Dr. E. C. Auchter, principal horticulturist and assistant chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry states: "The purpose of the laboratory is to breed high quality disease-resistant vegetables adapted especially to the southern states."

Dr. B. L. Wade, of the U. S. D. A., is in charge of the laboratory. Materials produced there will be tested in all co-operating states.

Vegetable varieties from this and other countries will be used in breeding work. To select plants, expeditions are now en route to India, to Persia, to Turkey.

States cooperating are Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and the Carolinas.

Weather

During March and April, weather in the United States provided spectacular contrasts on the eastern seaboard. Precipitation was far above normal while in the Southwest and West there was far too little moisture.

Floods took their toll of lives and property in the East and choking dust storms occurred in the West. Some dust from the West was blown as far East as Boston.

Trees

Forest products are tenth in the Big Ten of farm crops. They are ranked in value by cotton, wheat, truck crops, tobacco, fruits and nuts, cotton, corn and hay. They outrank 35 other major farm crops. Figures released by the Department of Agriculture, show that farm woodlands pay their owners \$63,000,000 a year. In Southern states, forest products rank from third to seventh among importance of farm crops.

It is estimated that farm woodlands provide an average of 2,500,000 farmers with both supplemental cash incomes, fuel wood, and building materials.

In April, the National Conservation Commission approved the purchase of more than a quarter-million acres of land for national forests. The aggregate cost of these lands was \$893,476. Most of the new acquisitions were in the East. The bulk of the Appalachian purchases were in Virginia. Purchases were made in South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida and West Virginia.

Rainstormer

A rainstorm machine known as a "rainstormer," is being used by the Forest Service, U. S. D. A., in studies of the relationship of plant cover to run-off and erosion on mountain watersheds as a result of heavy rains. The rainstormer permits studies to be made with-



If the directions contained in the above chart prepared by the Soil Conservation Service are followed when plowing, land terraces can be maintained easily after plowing.

out having to wait for rainstorms.

Test plots of ground are marked out on slopes and provided with the necessary equipment to measure rainfall, the erosion and the surface run-off of water. Then a portable gasoline-fire pump is set in a nearby creek and water conducted to a specially built sprinkler system employing hundreds of small spray nozzles. The artificial rainstorm thus produced provides a perfect imitation of the genuine cloudburst of any desired duration or intensity.

Studies to date, provide that fruit damages can be reduced by adequate vegetative cover protecting watersheds. The kind and density of the vegetation is more important in influencing the run-off and erosion than its steepness of slope or intensity of rainfall.

Cotton Roads

To promote the use of cotton in road building, the AAA has announced the detailed specifications and conditions of purchase for cotton mats and cotton fabric for road use. The program authorizes the purchase of roughly 80,000 cotton mats and sufficient fabric for a total of 1,000 miles of road. This would require in excess of 10,000,000 square yards of fabric.

Amounts actually purchased will depend upon requests made by the states. All requests are expected to be on file early in May.

China

Raw cotton stocks in China are unusually small for this time of year, according to the Department of Agriculture Representative, in Shanghai. It is anticipated that mills in China will substantially increase their imports. However, the reduced purchasing power of consumers may force a reduction in consumption to off-set shortage and stocks.

Recent studies in China indicate that 75 per cent of the yarn manufactured

and sold in China is sold to consumers in the interior of the country who weave their own cloth on hand-looms.

The establishment of a tobacco monopoly in China was inaugurated late in March, when the government in Kwantung, assumed complete control of leaf tobacco. The monopoly is confined to the handling of leaf for the manufacture of cut tobacco. All farmers in the province are required to sell their leaf to the monopoly at a fixed price and all stocks of leaf in the hands of dealers was taken over.

Brazil

An increase of 48 per cent over last year's crop is contained in the first official estimate of the 1935-36 cotton crop in Southern Brazil. The prediction now is 904,000 bales of 478 pounds each, as compared with 610,000 bales last year.

France

A subsidy on the exportation of lard is being made by the French government to stimulate hog production in that country.

Forest Fires

Airplanes and radio are becoming important instruments in fighting forest fires according to Roy Hedley, Chief of the Division of Fire Control, of the Forest Service.

"Perhaps the most important effort," according to Mr. Hedley, "is toward aerial fire control, which is opening up an entirely new field of forest fire combat, and will require many inquiries and experiments to develop a workable system. We plan to find out how far we can go in using planes in direct combat of fires. Several Forest Service officers have already done pioneer work in this field. We expect to try dropping water or chemicals direct on small fires to retard their progress until ground crews can reach the scene."

"But," Mr. Hedley said, "merely dropping chemical solutions on fires cannot solve the problem. The subject as a whole is complex. We are testing the relative values of various chemicals as fire retardants. Some of the so-called 'frothy mixtures' are promising and are better than water. If it ever becomes practical to carry water and drop it on fires from the air, it would probably be still better to drop an equal quantity of the best 'frothy mixture.' As yet, the conventional type of airplane is not adaptable for this work."

The fire forces also plan to experiment with dropping bombs on small fires to retard progress of the flames until

ground forces can reach them. Bombs would retard small fires by throwing dirt over them.

"So far, however," Mr. Hedley continued, "we have found aircraft most valuable for transporting supplies and equipment quickly. In one region we had remarkable success in the dropping of supplies to ground crews, in packages designed to prevent damage. Such work is a great help in fighting forest fires deep in the 'back country'."

Striking progress is evident in the development of radio. A new type of ultra-short wave radio set is extremely light in weight and can be used on airplanes of almost any size or type.

Cattle

More accurate figures for estimating the weight of dairy cows and calves from heart-girth measurements are announced by the Bureau of Dairy Industry of the U. S. D. A. This method has long been used in Denmark. But the measurements used on Danish cattle frequently over-estimate the weight of American dairy cattle. A difference in conformation has been discovered as the cause.

New measurements begin with calves with a heart-girth of only 26 inches, which will weigh about 80 pounds, and progress by half inches to cows with a girth of 92 inches and weight of 1,975 pounds.

Estimating weight of livestock by heart-girth was common in colonial days. Livestock buyers carried a girth chain instead of a tape measure estimating weight on the basis of links rather than inches.

Argentina

The first official estimate of the 1935-36 Argentine corn crop is 380,000,000 bushels compared with the record crop of 451,943,000 bushels last year, according to the U. S. D. A. Representative at Buenos Aires. A much larger crop originally was expected because of increased acreage. However, drought, high temperatures, and strong winds during January and February ruined the corn crop in some regions and greatly reduced yields in others.

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