

In the Field of Agriculture

FARM COMMISSION BACK FROM EUROPE

On its return from Europe, where it had been investigating agricultural conditions, the American commission on agricultural co-operation announced that it had obtained a wealth of information which it believes will enable it to prepare its report and submit the document before the end of the present year.

Thirty-six states of the union, as well as four provinces of Canada, are represented in the personnel of the commission which includes a federal commission of seven members appointed by the president. The movement represented is nationwide, intended to interest the rural population in betterment measures along financial, business and social lines.

The commissioners have prepared a letter outlining their work in Europe, to be sent to the governors of the states represented and to farmers' organizations and agricultural institutions throughout the country. Co-operation among farmers' credit systems and the organization of rural life in European countries have been the particular form of study. The letter says it found the prevailing rate of interest paid by farmers for short time loans from 4 to 5 1/2 per cent, on terms "generally better than available to American farmers."

"The personal credit organizations have the form of co-operative societies," the letter adds. "These short time credit societies furnish safe, cheap and elastic credit to their members by reason of their control by farmers and are organizations exclusively in the interest of farmers, who operate them at nominal cost and without seeking dividend profit to such societies. Land mortgage credit has been organized so as to place a collective security back of bonds issued by land mortgage societies in contrast with the system of marketing individual loans upon individual mortgages."

"The organizations for production and distribution of farm products follow co-operative lines. Farm products are sold by the producer at a relatively higher price and are bought by the consumer at a relatively lower price because the cost of distribution is considerably lowered by co-operative marketing."

"BUILD ROADS THAT WILL WEAR"

In these days of good roads agitation, much is heard concerning the fine roads of European countries, but George C. Diehl, chairman of the A. A. A. national good roads board, asserts that "American road builders must show the world, even France, how to build modern highways. I make this statement with positive-

ness, because even a hasty compilation of statistics will indicate how much greater the volume of traffic is on American main arteries of communication than on the most traveled European roads. When an American traffic census will have been completed the figures adduced will prove conclusively that the building of these most important roads must hereafter be attended with greater thoroughness, and for two reasons, to obtain economic maintenance and to meet adequately the increased use."

A comparison shows that France has one automobile to a trifle less than every five miles of road, while the United States has one automobile for a trifle more than every two miles of road. The state of New York has one automobile for every eighty-seven people, or one automobile to every three-quarters of a mile of road in the state. Mr. Diehl adds: "To be sure, France has most excellent roads. It has been building them for the last 150 years, and, with the constant repair that has been given the more important roads since the time of the first Napoleon, the foundations are deep and strong, and solid as the rock of ages. But the multiplying traffic is wearing out the surface of the French roads, just the same as it is the roads of heavy travel in this country. An official statement a year or two ago stated that the annual maintenance cost on French roads is three times as great as it was ten years ago."

"These facts ought to convince the people of this country of the absolute necessity of building main roads which will wear, even at a higher first cost. There is and can be no economy in constructing roads which will require constant and expensive repairs. The number of automobiles is constantly and rapidly growing. The usefulness of the motor truck is being further demonstrated every day. These factors of wear on roads emphasize the fact that roads must be built of materials and by methods which will stand the strain of an augmenting travel, not only today, but a decade hence."

ORIENTAL VEGETABLE POPULAR

The desirability of a vegetable that will at least partly take the potato's place is understood by all agriculturalists, and by many housekeepers. Farmers are always seeking some new variety of potato that is harder than the old ones—for unusually wet or dry seasons always affect the crop seriously, sometimes to the extent of a potato famine.

To meet this need, the United States agricultural department introduced into this country an oriental vegetable called the "dasheen." The dasheen is not a new vegetable, be-

cause it has been known and used in Japan and China for thousands of years, but in this country it is practically new, since it was introduced here not very long ago. Just how cheaply it may be grown is not known as yet, but the government experimenters hope to learn all about this within another season or so.

The dasheen makes an excellent substitute for the Irish potato. A particular soil is needed for its growth. It can not be grown to great advantage in sections where the summer seasons are short, as in Canada, but it is believed that it will succeed in most parts of the United States. The Trinidad variety of the dasheen has been made to yield 400 bushels to the acre. A rich, wet soil is needed, with plenty of potash. The potash can be added if the proper soil is otherwise secured.

The leaf is something like the leaves of marshy or water plants, being elephant-ear shape. The vegetable is a bulb or tuber and is planted much like the potato. It is harvested, however, with less labor, as the plants grow close together and one dasheen or tuber is at the end of each stalk. Then it is allowed to dry on top of the ground if possible. If there is too much rain it has to be dried elsewhere. It will keep six months, sometimes longer, if kept dry. The dasheen is excellent cooked in as many ways as the potato may be served, perhaps in more. It can be boiled or baked, fried, mashed, made into croquets, and also used as stuffing for fowl and meat. It is said to contain more nutriment than the potato, with the added advantage that it does not taste like the potato, but has something of the flavor of boiled chestnuts.

WOMAN INVENTS CORN HARVESTER

An Iowa woman has supplemented a lifetime on the farm by inventing a corn harvester and baler which recent field tests have demonstrated to be practical. A patent has been secured and the "missing link" in farm machinery, as the inventor modestly refers to her mechanism, seems to have been welded, since corn picking is the only item of farm labor that is now done by hand, says the Technical World.

The new machine is constructed so that it strips both ears and blades, leaving the bare stalks standing in the field. The stripping is done by means of two endless belts or chains having steel pegs inserted in plates and are timed the same. There are two of these gatherers, so that two rows of corn can be stripped together.

After the corn and blades are taken from the stalks, they are conveyed by the gatherers to the top of the machine and emptied into a hopper which rolls. When the rolls are in operation, the husks and blades are taken through into a baler below, where they are pressed into bales, being automatically tied by a set of needles and knotters. After the husks are taken off, the ears of corn pass off the rolls into an elevator which conveys them to a wagon driven alongside the machine.

The harvester and baler is propelled by a forty-horse-power gas engine, power being transmitted to a differential which gives each drive wheel an independent pull, and is so constructed that the machine can be moved without moving the machinery. Practical field tests are said to

have shown that the machine will cover from fifteen to twenty acres a day, picking and husking every ear of corn thereon and baling the bales for winter feed.

CAUSE OF FORAGE POISONING

According to the Alabama experiment station, improperly cured hay is frequently the cause of forage poisoning and heaves. Silage is given rather a bad name as a feed for horses and mules. "It is probable," says C. A. Cary, "that most of the evil effects of silage are due to spoiled silage. When the feeders of horses and mules are careful to use only the fresh uncovered silage that is below the surface I think it has been found that silage can be used to some advantage, especially in fattening horses and mules for market. I do not believe that it will take the place of well cured hay for work horses. I am of the opinion that the experience of the English is to be considered as an outgrowth of many practical tests. They keep hay for several years in many cases before it is fed, so that it will have passed the stage of the sweats and the effects of molds and other germs that act during the process of curing hay and live for some time after the hay is cured."

FLORISTS HEAT SOILS

Few people are aware of the fact that florists make a practice of sterilizing the soil used for filling window boxes and flower pots. This is not done to kill the germs, but to destroy all vegetable and animal life in the soil, so that weeds will not be springing up along with the flowers, and for the destruction of worm and insect pests. Great care must be exercised, however, not to heat the soil too much, or it will be made useless, as some of the elements will be destroyed by the excessive heat.

The sterilizing plant consist of a large bin, with steam pipes running through it about four feet apart. Along these pipes are holes every few inches. The soil, which is sod, plowed up and left to decay for a year, is dumped in. Then the steam is turned on for half an hour. At the end of that time the process is completed.

CULLING THE FLOCK

It is a well understood fact among poultrymen that any chicken that is not paying for its food in growth or in egg production is a source of loss. Many farmers practice no intelligent culling of their chickens, but allow old hens together with runty pullets and scrub cockerels to consume the food and occupy the room that should be used for the workers of the flock. A smaller number of the best chickens will pay more profit than a house crowded full of everything.

Culling can be started this month, if not attended to earlier. First market all hens two years old or more. With these send all yearling hens that appear fat and lazy. By the time the young pullets are ready to be moved into quarters the latter part of this month, these hens should be reduced to about one-half the original number. Sometimes during September a final culling of the flock should be made. Those that have not yet begun to molt should be sold, as they will not be laying before the warm days of the following February.

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that pullets are more profitable than older hens, but as yearling hens are considered better breeders and better sitters it is well to keep

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