

EXPLAINS RULES FOR CERTIFYING SEED POTATOES

H. O. Werner, associate horticulturist of the University of Nebraska college of agriculture, and president of the Nebraska potato improvement association, has, in the following letter, answered the questions of several Box Butte county potato growers, whose brows were somewhat wrinkled over a statement published recently in the Kansas City Packer by the United States department of agriculture. The federal department officials made it plain that there were no federal grades

for seed potatoes, saying, among other things, that spuds might be good No. 1 U. S. grade, and yet be worthless for seed uses.

The Box Butte growers were puzzled over this statement, because the certified seed potatoes have been graded No. 1 and No. 2, and they have been under the impression that federal standards governed the grading. The statement by the government authorities caused some little consternation, for, in the light of present practices, it seemed to indicate that the federal bureau was attempting to cause trouble for the growers of certified seed. The Box Butte men decided that the thing to do was to put the problem up to Mr. Werner, who has been prominent in seed potato certification work in the state.

Mr. Werner's reply answers all the questions that have arisen in the minds of the Box Butte growers. He says:

"I can easily understand how there may be some confusion in the minds of the potato growers as a result of the clipping which you sent me, which you state comes from the Kansas City Packer. I am very glad to give the following information concerning this matter.

States Act Independently.

"All certification work done in the United States at the present time is done independently by the various states. The Federal Department of Agriculture has not issued any regulations or rules concerning the certification of seed potatoes. A number of the states, especially middle western and western states, that are producing seed potatoes have all agreed upon standards of certification which are very similar, in many cases identical.

"We agree with the clipping sent that 'potatoes may be good U. S. No. 1 grade and be absolutely worthless

for seed. No one can judge the quality of seed stock by an examination of the tubers.' The regulations covering the seed certification work in Nebraska requires that all certified seed when shipped be up to the standard of the Nebraska seed potato grade which at the present time is practically the same as the U. S. No. 1 grade, except that there are no size requirements in the seed potato grade. This is a special grade which has been established by the state secretary of agriculture to permit more small potatoes to go on the market as a good grade than would be permitted if the size requirements of Grade 1 had to be complied with.

"In most states the seed potato inspection and certification consists of two field inspections and one bin inspection. There is some need of an inspection after the bin inspection, as the potatoes are generally sold or shipped several months after the bin

inspection has been made. The inspection by the state car inspector at western Nebraska points is thus in reality a fourth inspection of the certified potatoes. This inspection report guarantees to the buyer that the potatoes are in good market conditions at the time they are shipped.

Federal Regulation Desirable.

"The United States department of agriculture is investigating the systems of certification in force in the various states and it is possible that at some future date it may assist in the certification work. It is very desirable that seed potato certification work should be on a federal basis to some extent. At the present time it is not always possible to properly regulate certified seed when it gets outside of the state in which it was produced.

"At this time I wish to emphasize that it is absolutely necessary to see a field of potatoes in order to determine

whether the potatoes produced in such a field are good seed potatoes or not. It is absolutely impossible to determine the presence of several diseases (which do considerable damage) at any time except during the growing season. Good type potatoes are not always the best seed potatoes. Sometimes type is influenced by local conditions and potatoes which may not be especially good from the standpoint of type may be from a very vigorous field that was free from diseases and consequently, they will prove to be very desirable seed potatoes. All these things are taken into consideration in the seed potato certification work.

"H. O. WERNER, Associate Horticulturist."

Talk about rules of civilized warfare is highly interesting, but "civilized warfare" continues to be a contradiction in terms.



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