

cheap potash, as it will be produced close to the point of consumption and it will be produced by processes yielding other valuable products to share its manufacturing costs.

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**POTATO Seed Certification** Although it is less than a decade and a half ago that a seed-potato certification inspection service was first offered to Wisconsin potato growers, the interest in the improvement of seed potatoes in seed-producing sections has been so great that such service is now offered by approximately half of the States. Since the institution of this service there has been a gradual raising of the standards of the seed stock and a greater uniformity in the certification rules under which the field inspectors operate. The current notion so characteristically held a few years ago, that the source of seed was of relatively little importance, has been largely abandoned.

In a rather recent paper by Moore,<sup>16</sup> of Michigan, there is embodied one of the best summaries yet presented on the relative merits of certified versus uncertified seed potatoes. These data included 15 reports from eight Canadian Provinces in which an 88-bushel per acre increase was noted in favor of certified seed. In 21 Delaware tests there was an increase of 83 bushels, and 87 reports from Pennsylvania indicated an average gain of 41 bushels. From 144 tests in Connecticut there was a 53-bushel increase, and from 31 tests in Louisiana the gain was 41 bushels; 8 tests in South Carolina resulted in 31 bushels increase, and 279 tests in Maine gave an average increase of 83 bushels; 9,740 tests in Indiana showed 44 bushels increase; 220 reports from Kentucky showed an average gain of 42 bushels; 68 tests in New York resulted in an average increase of 76 bushels, and 268 tests in Ohio gave a 48-bushel increase; 65 tests in New Jersey gave an average increase of 45 bushels; Missouri's 46 reports showed 43 bushels increase and Illinois's 15 tests averaged 47 bushels gain; Nebraska made 64 tests, which averaged 141 bushels increase, and Oregon's 3 reports resulted in 150 bushels increase; 2 reports from Montana showed an average gain of 219 bushels, and in Michigan 314 reports indicated a 73-bushel increase. In 327 tests of Michigan-grown seed in other States there was an average increase of 50 bushels per acre. The average total results in Canada and the United States, based on 11,627 reports, show an actual increase from certified over uncertified seed of 46.4 bushels per acre.

#### Certified Seed Best

Assuming that the above data fairly reflect the actual average value of certified and uncertified seed, it is evident that as a rule the grower of potatoes, for either seed or table purposes, should use certified seed. The rather wide variations in the yield of certified and uncertified seed may be largely attributed to variations in the character of the uncertified seed used. The important thing to keep in mind, however, is that it pays to use certified seed potatoes. This is especially true with respect to the grower who is unable to make

<sup>16</sup> MOORE, H. C. EVIDENCE THAT CERTIFIED SEED IS IMPROVED SEED. Proc. Eleventh Ann. Meeting Potato Assoc. Am., p. 26-40, 1924.

a summer inspection of fields with a view to direct purchase of his own seed supply.

Every purchaser of certified seed potatoes should carefully inspect the seed-certification tags affixed to each sack. If these tags are not attached to the sacks or leave doubt as to their genuineness, the stock should be questioned. It is suggested that a sample certification tag be requested from each certification official some time in advance of purchase of seed stock from any given State. This would permit of becoming familiar with the genuine tag.

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## POTATO Supply — Effect on Markets

It is commonly believed that a small crop of potatoes is usually worth more to the United States producers than a large crop. If the large crop of 425,000,000 bushels harvested in 1924 was valued at the reported average farm price for the season (\$0.765), it would have been worth \$325,000,000; whereas the small crop of 323,000,000 bushels harvested in 1925, if valued at that season's average price of \$1.835, would have been worth \$593,000,000. Thus 100,000,000 bushels less in 1925 than in 1924 made the crop worth \$270,000,000 more. If producers had marketed as large a proportion of the large crop as they did of the small crop, the price would probably have been even lower than \$0.765, and the difference in value correspondingly greater.

The reason for this contrary behavior of crop values is to be found in the habits of people with respect to the consumption of potatoes. Even when potatoes are high in price they are relatively cheap compared with other foods which make up the average person's diet, and there is no other food which will quite take the place of potatoes. For these reasons many people will pay a relatively high price for potatoes in years of short crops rather than to forego the enjoyment of their usual rations of this standard vegetable.

In years of large crops the situation is different. Though people are unwilling to decrease their consumption of potatoes when prices are high, they are likewise unwilling to increase their consumption when prices are low. There is no good substitute for potatoes in years of high prices, but according to our present standard of living neither are potatoes a good substitute for other foods when prices are low. Consequently the quantity of potatoes consumed tends to remain relatively constant, regardless of the price, which means that producers can obtain higher prices when the crop is short, but can not dispose of a large crop except at very low prices.

During the period since 1908 there has apparently been a change in the reaction of consumers to low potato prices. The reasons for this apparent change are probably to be found in the increased prosperity of wage earners since the war, which has enabled them to afford a more varied diet, and to rely less on potatoes as a staple food. It has also enabled them to save money in other ways than by living on the cheapest foods, which heretofore has stimulated the consumption of potatoes when prices were low. Another factor may be the marked increase of supplies of other vegetables often at prices sufficiently low to encourage variety in the bulky part of the diet.