

LILY BULBS ARE \$600,000 CURRY COUNTY INDUSTRY

Curry County Economic Survey Report Of Specialty Crop Committee

K. B. Lee, Brookings
Roy Springer, Harbor
B. E. Dahlstrom, Brookings
Fred Gustafson, Brookings
C. P. Watt, Brookings

R. I. Oliver, Harbor
Howard Cantrall, Harbor
Joe Knutsen, Harbor
K. W. Priest, County Extension
Agent, Secretary

At the present time, Curry County's agricultural income, from the production of lily bulbs exceeds \$600,000.00.

Since the close of World War II the trend has been from many small growers to a few, larger, more efficient operations in this agricultural industry. This trend has been greatly influenced by increased production costs, caused by higher wage rates, taxes and land values.

LAND USE

The committee felt that all the available land in the southern end of Curry County suitable for lily bulb production was now being used. Further expansion in acreage would have to be made on unsuitable land. Anyone trying to get into the bulb industry in this area should take this into consideration. The committee felt that it would be unwise to encourage any further expansion of the bulb industry due to the limited amount of adaptable land and available water that would be necessary for irrigation. This committee feels that the bulb industry at the present is quite well stabilized and this stability should be maintained.

SIZE OF UNIT: An economical sized unit at the present time is 16 acres. Four acres of which should be planted to bulbs each year. A three year rotation should be followed. Bulbs should follow a sod crop. Planting should yield 25,000 commercial bulbs per acre. Two and one-half acres usually yields 50,000 commercial bulbs, and furnishes planting stock.

MECHANIZATION: The bulb industry is pretty well mechanized. As many operations as possible

are now being done by machines. The Farm Implement Companies are doing considerable amount of research to perfect better machines and they are being tried by the growers as fast as they come along. This trend is expected to continue in the future.

Some of the committee members felt that perhaps the college should conduct some research in this area on grading. Much of the grading made available through private research is too big and expensive for growers in this area. The machines are not economically practical for the size enterprise the growers to operate.

Mechanization is necessary in speeding up the handling operations as well as reducing costs. Grading is the one place where this mechanization is lacking.

WEED CONTROL: The committee would like to see more work done with selective type weed spray. They recognize that much work has already been done by the college and private industry, but they would like to see this work increased and continued. Demonstrations and trial plots should be established in the county and the results should be more conclusive than just killing the weeds. This committee would like to have the college maintain trial plots continuously, testing new chemicals as fast as they come along and not only check for weed control, but effect on soil organisms and long time effect on the lily bulb production. It is felt that many growers are using these new chemicals based on research conducted on different type soils and under different climatic conditions than those that exist in this concentrated production area.



Along with this same thinking it was recommended that a county agent trained in Horticulture be stationed in this area and work more closely with the bulb growers and trials being conducted in the area. Some discussion took place regarding the costs for establishing an Extension office in the area and it was felt by the committee that perhaps it wouldn't be necessary to station an agent in the area permanently, but from the Gold Beach office an agent could be available in this area a certain number of days each week. (Suggested three days) this the committee felt that the County Agent would be more beneficial to them under this system.

ROTATION: Rotation is an absolute necessity to good bulb growing. However, at the present time conflicting recommendations are being made by the college pertaining to the crops to use. This is all very confusing to the grower. One department recommends a legume crop and another says that legumes are conducive to nematode trouble. The committee would like to have representatives of the college coordinate and carry out this experimental work in this area on the soils that are growing the bulbs.

FERTILIZER: The committee feels that nearly every bulb grower in Curry County uses a different fertilizer. It advises that work conducted by Dr. Stevens some years ago be reinstated. Need some work done on leaf analysis, and amounts of fertilizers to apply and time of application. Need work on application on fertilizers through an irrigation system.

IRRIGATION: The committee would like to see an educational program carried out by the Extension Service that would make people in this area aware of the fact that the water supply for irrigation in this area is limited and that every effort possible should be taken to conserve the water table level. SCS is supposed to make a survey to determine the present level. The committee would like to see this accomplished. The committee also recommends that the college make periodic water analysis to determine chemical content and any

changes that might occur. It was felt that as the water level dropped some growers might start pumping salt water via their irrigation systems onto their bulbs.

This committee recommends that work be conducted in this area to determine minimum amounts of water needed to properly irrigate the bulbs. After the minimum rates are established, the Extension Service should do everything possible to influence growers to stay within the recommended amounts of water. This would help to conserve the water supply.

Work being done by the college to determine the time for irrigating, the amount of water to use and length of time to run system should be continued. Growers should be informed regarding water rights legislation, and should be encouraged to apply for water rights as soon as possible.

DISEASE CONTROL: The committee recommends that work be conducted by the research workers on field tests as well as greenhouse tests, but they feel it would be more beneficial to the industry if these diseases could be isolated in the field and control measures taken prior to harvest time. The committee would like to call attention to work that has been done in Connecticut and reported on in the Connecticut Floral Association, Bulletin No. 254 dated December 1955. The committee recommends that if research workers are not acquainted with this work they become acquainted with it.

The greatest problem confronting the bulb growers is that of root rot. They would like to know the cause of this and a control for it.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: The committee considers that a certification program would be helpful and may be necessary in the future. However, at the present time the trade does not require it and until the trade is better informed and willing to pay a premium for bulbs the committee feels that it would not pay a grower to produce bulbs for certification. It would also be difficult to obtain isolation in this area due to the limited land that is available.

NEW VARIETIES: This committee feels that the Croft strain will probably run out one of these days. Therefore, it would be advisable to have a variety established that would replace the Croft. They realize that the breeding work is very slow, but they want the college to continue their work.

HANDLING AND STORAGE: Many mistakes are being made in handling and storing bulbs. These mistakes reduce the quality of the bulbs. An educational program conducted by the Extension Service would help this situation. The fault not only lies with the growers but with the persons handling the bulbs in the marketing chain. The truckers,

as fruits, and vegetables seeds and lawn and pasture seeds. They would also like to have a crop that could be produced on available land in this area not suited to bulb growing.

The committee recommends that the news letter formerly issued by the Oregon State Department of Agriculture on Horticulture topics be re-activated. They suggest that the Extension Service, Experiment Station, organizations and the Oregon State Department of Agriculture cooperate to issue a quarterly news letter which would carry abstracts on the work being done on specialty crops.

The committee recommends the development of a specialty crop short course to be held on the Oregon State College campus, yearly.

Immediate action was urged that the Pacific Bulb Growers contact Congressmen and Representatives urging the provision of additional funds for a more increased and intensified insect control experimental program on lily bulbs under the specific supervision of Dr. Charles Doucette, USDA, Entomologist, Sumner, Washington.

The committee recommends that the secretary contact the Dean of Agricultural Engineering Department for the development of root pruning equipment for lily bulbs. It was further recommended that the development of such root pruning equipment be the result of the combined thinking of the County Agent in Gold Beach, Oregon State College Botany Department and the Agricultural Engineering Department.

The final recommendation regarding the use of experimental plots in the Brookings-Harbor area was made as follows:

The Committee recommends that OSC obtain, through the cooperation of the County Extension Service, the Pacific Bulb

Growers Association and local bulb growers, a plot of ground one to two acres in extent for experimental purposes in the Brookings-Harbor area. This plot would be obtained on a lease basis for a period not less than three years. The experimental plots would be used for the following purposes: 1. Development of a community mother block. 2. Nematode control. 3. Study of rotation crops. 4. Study to develop alternative crops. 5. Development of new lily varieties. 6. Weed control. 7. Insect control.

It is agreed, by those present, that the maintenance of such plots would rest mainly with the local extension office.

Plan Population, Auto Increase

According to the computations of the Universal C.I.T. Credit Corporation there will be an increase of more than 523,000 cars registered in Oregon during the next ten years. This outfit figures there will be 16,000 more families living in the state in 1965 than there are now in '56.

The survey, according to G. R. McElhany of Seattle, vice-president, points convincingly to a higher level of prosperity in the future. Passenger cars registered in Oregon should be 1,127,000 or an increase of 85 percent over the 604,000 now registered. McElhany adds. As for families, he foresees a gain of 31 percent, raising the total to more than 710,000 as compared to about 544,000 now.

Modernization of highways, and streets, including relief of city congestion and provision for more parking facilities, are vital considerations in view of the expected increase in auto registrations, the vice-president said.

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