

# Union County 'Cashes In' Raising Small Seed Crops

By Mr. Schaad

In delving through the records in the Union county agent's office, we find that the production of legume and forage seeds has been carried on in a small way in Union county for twenty years or longer.

In 1915, county agent Paul Spillman first introduced such hardy varieties of alfalfa as Grimm, Baltic and Cossack for forage crops. By 1920 about 3000 pounds of alfalfa seed was imported to the county annually for hay crop plantings. In 1918, E. D. Jasper of Alicel began growing seed of the Grimm, Baltic and Cossack varieties, and C. W. Bond of Island City began growing seed the following year. By 1925 seven growers were producing seed of the above mentioned varieties and also the Utah common. One year later Union county became an exporter of Grimm alfalfa seed, shipping around 15,000 pounds from the county. This was also the year that alfalfa seed certification was begun by the O. S. C. farm crops specialist in Union county, the only important alfalfa seed producing section in Oregon. Alfalfa seed certification was conducted on a county-wide basis in 1929 and 50 acres passed field inspection.

In 1930, spring cultivation of alfalfa grown for seed in attempt to secure a larger yield was tried on a 25-acre field by Gilbert Courtwright, results of this particular trial had no effect on seed yield. C. C. Conrad who has been pasturing his alfalfa in the spring for the past three years, 1927-29, reports slightly over 200 pounds of seed per acre. The yield reported each year has been larger than that of other growers. Such yields increased interest in seed production.

Ladak alfalfa was introduced in plot trials in comparison with Grimm, the standard variety, in 1930.

In 1931, B. D. Hug, Elgin, now vice-president of the Oregon Seed Growers League, and director of the Blue Mountain Seed Growers Association, planted the first large field planting of 25 acres of Ladak alfalfa seed in rows, three feet apart. In the first year of harvest this field produced 1250 pounds of clean seed. The following year J. B. Weaver, Union, planted a total of 42 acres of Grimm, and Ladak alfalfa in rows.

Increased yields of alfalfa from wide rows were immediately apparent and the resultant yields were marketed at a profitable price. Crested wheatgrass was then planted in rows for seed on the advice of H. G. Avery, county agent. Thus, 1933 marks the beginning of grass seed production in Union county when six farmers followed the county agent's advice and planted 43 acres for seed. Gross returns from seed production averaged slightly over \$50 per acre for Ladak in 1934 and over \$60 per acre for crested wheatgrass. Alfalfa seed yields ranged from 100 to 300 pounds and

## DIVERTED ACRES TURNED TO PROFIT



Acres taken from wheat production under the Agricultural Conservation Program is being turned to profit as in the instance pictured above, by the raising of small seed crops. A minimum of manpower is seen to be required.

crested wheat from 100 to over 500 pounds in 1935.

By this time winter hardiness of Ladak has been demonstrated. Dealers in 1932, 1933 and 1934 provided a ready market for seed. Market outlets became a problem in the fall of 1935, when local production of seeds became larger than dealers were willing to purchase and offers dropped to below 60% of the amount paid for the previous year's crop. Under the direction of H. G. Avery, county agent, the Blue Mountain Seed Growers Association was organized in December, 1935, to promote the sales and advertise seed

as well as to sponsor increased acreage. Buyers were attracted and the association was incorporated as a cooperative marketing association in March, 1936.

The county agent has acted as secretary of the organization and assisted its development since organized. Association sales were slightly under \$10,000 in 1936, but had grown to more than \$57,000 in 1937. Acreage in Union county on recommendation of the county agent and county economic conference, reached 3740 acres in 1938. Membership in the marketing association spread to neighboring counties until in 1940 it

numbered 209. Crested wheatgrass acreage amounted to 400 acres by 1939.

Sweet clover seed production began in 1929 on the farms of Gilbert Courtwright near Holt Lake, and B. D. Hug, Elgin, in trials conducted under the direction of the county agent.

Varieties of seed grown in the county at the present time include 850 acres of common alfalfa, 250 acres of Grimm alfalfa, 600 acres of Ladak alfalfa, 300 acres of Orestan alfalfa, 100 acres of crested wheatgrass, 50 acres of sweet clover, 100 acres of red clover, 50 acres of Alsike clover, 2911 acres of Austrian peas, 36 acres of timothy, 50 acres of orchard grass, 127 acres of tall fescue, 250 acres of Chewings fescue, 55 acres of winter bluegrass, 8 acres of big bluegrass, 20 acres of rough stock meadow bluegrass, 13 acres of creeping red fescue, 320 acres of garden peas, 10 acres of Canadian field peas, 10 acres of purple vetch, with a substantial increase in new plantings in 1941 of many grasses and legumes, especially Austrian winter peas with an indicated 16,530 acres for 1942 harvest.

In recent years the development of the small seed business fostered by the Extension Service has received considerable attention. The activity of the Blue Mountain Seed Growers Association provides a market for seed produced and encourages additional plantings. Union county land use committee has recommend-

ed transfer of crop acreage to seed production purposes in 1938, 1939 and 1940. At a meeting it was pointed out that land producing seed, if in alfalfa, would have produced 12,000 tons of hay. At that time a neighboring county had 25,000 tons of surplus alfalfa hay which was offered as low as \$4.00 per ton. Union county seed crops were sold at profitable prices.

The total value of the small seed crops sold from Union county in 1940 amounted to \$121,544.50. This same acreage in wheat at an average of 35 bushels per acre would mean a total of 176,785 bushels, or if sold at 60 cents per bushel, a total gross sale of \$106,071.00 over a two-year period.

### BEEKEEPERS CONFUSED

In order to clear up an apparent misunderstanding on the part of beekeepers in connection with recent modifications of the vetch seed quarantines in California, the plant division of the Oregon department of agriculture has this to say:

The California officials recently allowed use of methyl bromide as one of its approved methods of treatment of vetch seed before shipment into that state. However, the methyl bromide is to be used only as a fumigant inside a fumigation chamber and not as a spray.

This will relieve some beekeepers who were afraid the dosage was to be sprayed on the vetch seed, thereby possibly killing bees.

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