

**National Potato Letter**

**March Spud Planting Figures Near Average; Shipments Up Sharply**

**Supply**  
March potato planting intentions indicate an acreage almost the same as last year—2,162,000 acres against 2,146,000. The total increase amounts to only 0.7 per cent. By areas, the picture is somewhat different. In the 18 late surplus states, it looks like an increase of 3 per cent, with up to 4 and 8 per cent in the East and West offsetting a decline of 2 per cent in the central area. In the 11 other late states, a reduction of 6 per cent is in prospect, mostly in central territory.

The intermediate states indicate a reduction of 3 per cent, with only Maryland indicating signs of an increase on a statewide basis. However, commercial plantings may rise at the expense of the non-commercial acreage. A decrease of 1 per cent is anticipated in the early acreage in spite of California's 18 per cent jump.

It is important to observe that this pattern of acreage ups and downs points strongly to continuation of the trend toward a shift from low-yielding to high-yielding areas. This will continue to nudge the average yield upward toward the 200-bushel mark and make possible progressively larger production on progressively fewer acres. This means there is no way to hold production in line with needs on the basis of acreage alone.

BAE reports that if yields in each state are at the 1943-47 average, total production would be 337 million bushels. If our guessing is good, a crop of that size is about what the country would buy at the average fantastically high support prices. Unless perfectly distributed, any larger production would produce another surplus, and weather is so variable that anything like perfect distribution of production seldom happens.

Also yields have been up sharply in recent years. A new high was reached in 1946, and 1947 barely missed the same figure even under relatively unfavorable conditions. Therefore, yields are more likely to approach the 1947 level than the 1943-47 average. If this happens, the crop would be about 396 million bushels, or between 20 and 40 million more than domestic needs, depending chiefly on whether the bulge is uniform or spotty. We think we are in what professional statisticians might call a "new universe" in that some of the old concepts are out the window and we must learn to contend with a new order of things.

A quick slant at the early crop: Winter spuds in Dade county now at peak, will continue moving into early April. Texas is about set to begin.

Early Spring, about on time but damaged somewhat by planting in Florida and cold in Texas. Late Spring, generally is late and damaged to an undetermined extent by water and frost in the Gulf area and South Carolina. In California there seems to have been good recovery from the frost damage, and harvesting will begin about April 1 on a carload basis and should reach significant volume by April 10. Summer, is planting a little behind schedule, especially in the East.

**Movement**  
Shipments last week went up sharply. Total was 6944 cars up 1265 cars from the preceding week. But government cars were down by 64 cars, as the commercial movement raised by 1329. Maine hit a daily average of 506 cars while the Red River valley came close to doubling its previous week's total. Nebraska increased by 90 cars, while Florida moved up from 204 to 281 cars even with a rising market.

**Miscellany**  
We think two groups are due for a fooling. One is the few in Maine who may think DoA can be "finagled" into overbuying and creating a hot cleanup market. The going-over they got last year after the spring bare spot boomed prices is not forgotten. The other is the terminal market group who may think they can panic the folks in the country with yarns aimed at discrediting DoA price support intentions. . . . We learn that the stories about DoA being out of price support money "ain't so". They are about out of special funds for absorbing losses from European exports, but as we get it, price support funds are more than ample. . . . Colorado's San Luis valley is to have a new experimental farm, aimed at wide improvements in production practices and seed. . . . DoA potato purchases now total 27.8 million bushels. . . . DoA is recommending adoption of the proposed Marketing Agreement program in Virginia and North Carolina. Referendum to see if an order will be issued is the next step. . . . DoA announces introduction of "Kennebec," a new blight-resistant variety, also resistant to some viruses. Large, white, shallow-eyed, averaged 675 bushels per acre and hit 700 in Maine tests. Result of 15 years of breeding. Was form-

erly labeled "B 70-5" and is a product of the DoA station at Beltsville, Md. . . . Every person interested in agriculture should study S. 2318, Senator Aiken's new long-range agricultural bill introduced March 15. Hearings should begin soon. It's long, but it's important because it covers the waterfront, from parity formula through price support to reorganization of DoA. . . . Traveling hearing of house agriculture committee resumes its interrupted Western swing as of now. Denver, Salt Lake City, Spokane, and Fresno all will be visited this week and next Monday. . . . DoA's sub-floor sales stunt seems to have fizzled, at least at the start. Few shipments and no damage to Western prices, as so many predicted. But it could happen yet.

**Spud Seed Treatment OK**  
Potato seed treatment with mercuric chloride or organic mercury (Semesan Bel) is effective against seed borne rhizoctonia and scab and also aids in controlling wilt, blackleg and dry rot. A 1 1/2 to 2 hour soak in mercuric chloride solution is considered most effective. This treatment cannot be used on cut seed.

**Spud Feeding Of Livestock Studied**  
Flexibility in the use of surplus and cull potatoes in feeding livestock is one aim of a program combining research and educational activities promoted by the U. S. department of agriculture under the research and marketing act of 1946. The program is designed to hold steady the demand for potatoes by keeping off the market the small and poor quality potatoes which housewives do not want. It also aims to provide a ready outlet for surplus potatoes when growing conditions are favorable and the crop is large. Further, it aims to convert into meat or milk any potatoes not needed for food.

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**Agriculture Department Announces Plans For Spud Support During 1948 Term**

By C. A. HENDERSON  
County Agent

The U. S. department of agriculture has announced its plan for supporting potato prices for 1948 under the Steagall amendment. A schedule of supports for the early and intermediate potatoes has been issued. The intermediate potatoes are supported in August at prices ranging from \$2.65 to \$2.75. Supports on late potatoes have not yet been announced.

Indications are clear that the department will continue to support potato prices at 90 per cent of parity up to December 31, 1948. This is the end of the two-year supporting period following termination of hostilities, as provided for by the amendment. The department has no alternative in this regard except to carry out the existing law.

At the present time a long-range agricultural policy is being considered and it is possible that this program, if put into law, may carry out the support program January 1, 1949, on, at the expiration of the Steagall amendment. Bills have been prepared to this effect following hearings throughout the nation, some of them providing for some type of support to December 31, 1953. These, however, are only recommendations.

Basic conditions of eligibility in 1948 are similar to those for 1947 with one important addition. These conditions include: (1) Compliance with the 1948 individual farm potato acreage goals; (2) a new provision denying eligibility to growers who at any time during the season sell (except for officially certified seed potatoes); (a) ungraded or field-run potatoes except to the department of agriculture or to deal-

ers under contract with the department; (2) potatoes of U. S. No. 1 grade or quality, size B, or U. S. No. 2 grade or quality, regardless of size, except to the department or contracting dealers, or, with the prior approval of the department, to processors, livestock feeders, or for export; or (c) cull potatoes (those below U. S. No. 1 grade or quality, size B, or U. S. No. 2 grade or quality, 1 1/2 inches minimum diameter) except to contracting dealers, or with the prior approval of the department, to processors, livestock feeders, or for export; and (3) payment of a service fee in connection with establishment of eligibility. In addition, growers may be required to enter into written agreements with the department, covering the three foregoing requirements and other matters such as limiting by appropriate time periods the quantity of potatoes offered to the department.

All potatoes produced by eligible growers will be eligible for price support except:

1. Potatoes failing to meet at least the quality requirements of U. S. No. 2 grade or quality, 1 1/2 inches minimum diameter or of U. S. No. 1 grade or quality, size B.
2. Potatoes damaged or affected by disease, insects, frost, or other injury to an extent rendering them unfit for normal consumption or unable to withstand normal shipment or storage, regardless of whether they meet U. S. grade requirements.
3. Potatoes harvested from land infested at harvest time with golden nematode or from land officially designated by a state or federal agency at or before planting time as unfit for potato production because of disease or insect infestation.
4. Potatoes whose distribution is

restricted or limited by state or federal quarantine regulations; and 5. Potatoes found objectionable because of odor, flavor, internal discoloration or other invisible damage, whether or not this damage is apparent at time of shipment or subject to determination by customary shipping point inspection procedure. This means that potatoes found objectionable for these reasons will be rejected to the vendor when and where the condition is discovered and that the purchase price of the entire lot will be reclaimed from the vendor, together with such transportation, storage and related costs as have been incurred.

Detailed operating procedures for carrying out these price support activities are being developed by the department and will be put into effect as needed. Since the loan program is principally of interest to the late crop growers, its details will be announced early enough in the summer to allow ample time for setting up the necessary administrative machinery. A schedule of support prices for late potatoes will be announced about July 1, the parity base for supporting this portion of the crop. It will be designed to reflect 90 per cent of parity, adjusted seasonally for the July-December period.

**Soil Conservation Meeting Held**  
The week of March 24, the state soil conservation committee met in Portland. The committee executive secretary, Howard E. Cushman of Corvallis, said at the close of the meeting that business discussed included proposals for two new Oregon soil conservation districts.

The state committee accepted a petition proposing the formation of a district in the Midland-Henley section of Klamath county. The second petition proposes a conservation district in the Silver Creek falls area of eastern Marion county. This petition was also accepted. The committee ordered public hearings scheduled in both sections on dates suitable to local people.

**SAIGON**

**Gases Used In Killing Off Weeds**

By HAROLD SCHIEFERSTEIN  
Supervisor Klamath County Weed Control

Soil fumigants are liquid gases which, when injected into the ground at regular intervals, permeate the soil and kill the underground parts of the plants. They are well adapted to killing perennial weeds which have intensive root systems, and though quite expensive and tedious to apply, have given excellent results in Klamath county.

Carbon bisulphide has given better results here than have prochlor, though other areas report good results with prochlor. Moisture is an important factor in getting results with soil fumigants, which probably explains why better results are obtained with winter and early spring applications in Klamath county.

Carbon bisulphide does not have any ill effect on the soil and is especially well adapted to use on crop land or places where other chemicals are not desired because of their sterilizing effect. Special equipment is needed to apply carbon bisulphide and prochlor, which is available at the county agent's office and personnel will gladly explain how to use the applicators. Chemicals which can be applied dry to all types of vegetation are

chiefly sodium chlorate, ammonium sulfamate, and compounds of chlorate and borax. Killing action occurs by the movement of the chemical into the soil and being absorbed by the plant roots. Water is the only means whereby these materials are taken into the soil, and must be provided by precipitation or through supplemental irrigation. Application can be made by hand or with small spreaders.

The sterilizing effect of these materials will vary, according to the amount used, type of soil, precipitation and other factors. They are well adapted for use where ground is not objectionable or is desirable and are fairly reasonable in cost. Sodium chlorate used in the dry form is not quite as hazardous from the standpoint of fire as are the sprays. Sulfamate and borax compounds are relatively safe in this respect.

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