

County Agent Reports

Farm News Briefed From The County Agent Radio Programs

By WALT JENDRZEJEWSKI

A three-day loss prevention short course scheduled for February 18-20 in Idaho is sponsored jointly by Oregon and Washington state colleges, the University of Idaho and the American Railway Development Association. It's the ninth annual short course in the Northwest on loss prevention.

Potato processing plants and storage facilities in the Twin Falls-Idaho Falls area are to be inspected as part of the short course.

Development of potato processing into frozen and dehydrated food products brought with it the practice of creaming out the very best quality portion of the crop for fresh market and diversion of smaller sizes and poorer shapes to processing use.

It has increased competition for the fresh market to the disadvantage of areas which are without processing facilities. It has also introduced contract farming for field run delivery to combination processor and fresh stock shipper contractors. And the processed products have complicated marketing by holding processed stock from last season's crop into the following fresh market season. It is agreed, generally, that frozen fries, patties, and puffs, and granules and other dehydrated products are competing with fresh stock for the housewife's dollar and for institution and restaurant trade. Convenience food products are becoming increasingly popular.

Part of last year's surplus crop now holds over to interfere with marketing of this year's fresh stock because the processed products are storable and can be held over into the following year's marketing season. It isn't as true any more that each year is a new deal price-wise for the potato grower.

If processing continues to increase, year to year price differences are likely to narrow and prices are likely to hold near average production cost with less possibility of high price years.

Many growers continue with potatoes because of high price possibilities. From their viewpoint processing is not a desirable development. Never the less, we do have processing and are likely to have more of it. It's resulting in increased potato production in Idaho and elsewhere.

The fresh market very likely will require better and quality, sized, washed, consumer packed. Increased marketing costs and a smaller percentage of the crop sold. Continued high per cent of cull out.

It is becoming more and more necessary to produce high yields of medium sized tubers of good type to realize profits from potato growing.

Many potato growers claim that the main trouble with the potato business is that too many are grown on land not suited to production of good quality and high yield.

Choice of land for potato production is becoming of more importance. The well leveled, well drained, lighter textured soils in which organic matter has been built up generally grow the best crops.

Heavy infestations of the soil born fungus verticillium wilt is a complicating factor. There is no readily apparent yardstick by which to determine soil infestation other than experience with previous potato crops. Heavy soil infestation with verticillium causes vines to die early, prevents tubers from attaining enough size, and reduces yield.

Every development we've had, including potato processing, ends up with keener competition—and points out rather clearly that a grower's best hope for survival is continually increased efficiency. In short, his hope for profit is dependent almost entirely on high yield per acre and high percentage of salable quality.

The livestock feed outlet for

small sizes hardly pays storage and handling costs. Cost of harvesting this cull-out must come from sale of the remaining percentage of the crop. No. 2's do not usually sell high enough to pay their own way. And when the No. 1's sold are only 55 to 60 per cent of the total field run yield as is the usual case it is a "sure enough" tough situation at the prices we've had the last four years.

So we observe development of potato processing and wonder how long the average grower can hang on without it. Growers with higher yields and higher salable percentages of course do better. Less efficient growers on less productive soil are living on savings, using up what should be an equipment depreciation reserve. Less efficient growers probably would be in the same fix even if we had processing here.

Just the same—processing based on the lower quality grade out—should put our area in a better competitive position with those areas that have it, even though the processing business as a whole may reduce fresh stock outlets materially as the years go by. Maybe even because of that.

So the tour of processing plants in the Twin Falls-Idaho Falls country February 18-20 as part of the loss prevention short course is of interest to us.

The potato price problem is bigger than just the question of processing. It is generally supposed that the basic cause of low prices is surplus production. But the last four crop years have been thought of as surplus years for late crop production. Actually, supplies came out just about right at the end of the season because growers diverted poorer quality by marketing agreement regulations and the percentage so diverted throughout the season balanced supply with demand quite well.

Although these diversion efforts may very well have prevented disastrous price breaks the fact is that prices remained relatively low.

Perhaps that's the way it must be. Because strong prices draw additional land and capital into potato production. High prices generally bring low prices soon after. You can't ignore the effect price has on production. We've learned how to mass-produce potatoes. We have the equipment for mass production. Many growers could grow more acreage than they do.

Some see organization patterned after labor unions as the answer to price problems. But even this, if successful in raising price materially, very likely would bring increases in production and greater need to divert higher percentages. So the tendency for price to range near average cost of production is still there.

To prevent surplus production—Some advocate a quota system such as the wheat growers have, without the supports, but with stiff penalties for excess sales. In other words, a sort of monopoly for those presently in the business, and a whip to hold marketing and production within reasonable limits.

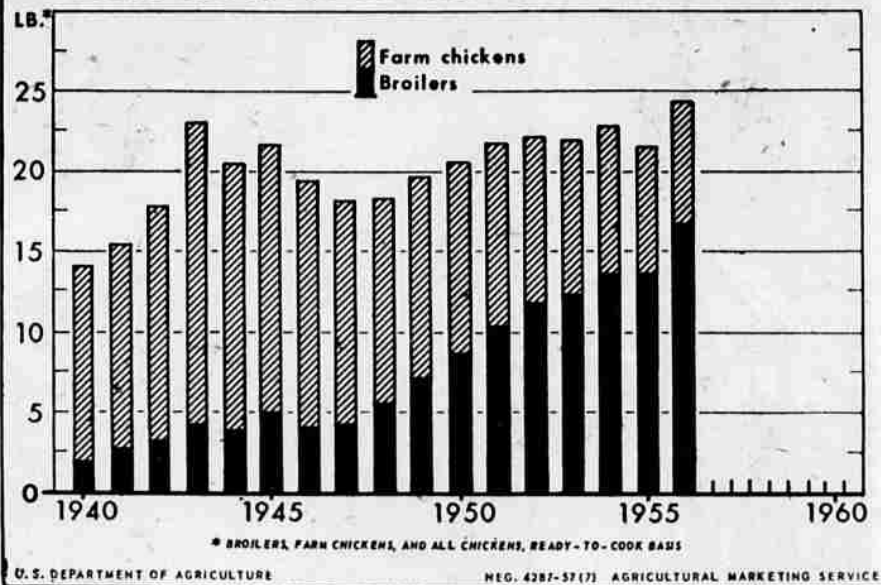
The more you think about it, the clearer it seems that a potato grower's best hope of success is efficient production. High yield and best possible quality.

And I suspect the same thing applies to most other business as well as to agricultural enterprises. I'm thinking of taking a look at the Idaho processing plants during the Loss Prevention short course February 18-20. Is anyone else interested in the trip?

FLOWERS OF TEXAS

Texas boasts about 5,000 different species of wild flowers, some of which grow there exclusively. Native flora ranges from rugged cacti to delicate orchids.

CONSUMPTION OF CHICKENS PER PERSON



CHICKEN FRYERS OR BROILERS have come into their own in recent years as a frequently recurring dish on the average American table. In 1940 the per capita consumption of broilers was about two pounds. In 1956 this figure exceeded 16 pounds. This rapid increase was partly due to a decline in the production of farm chickens.

Farmers Vote Against Government Aid Plans

"Farm Journal," nation's largest farm publication, will say in its February issue that the majority of its readers who participated in a nation wide poll want less government help than they are getting.

Of those who returned ballots, published in the magazine's December issue, almost exactly half—50.1 per cent—wanted the government to "get clear out of farming."

Another 11 per cent voted for "less government help than now." Only 27 per cent voted for more government help. The remaining 12 per cent said they were satisfied with farm programs as they now stand.

Regional variations were well defined, and on the whole predictable. Eastern farmers, who are traditionally conservative and who grow few crops that are government-controlled, cast the greatest percentage of votes against federal programs—63 per cent.

In the Central States, where wheat and corn, both subject to price supports, are major crops, the vote against the government dropped to 43 per cent and the vote for still more government help rose to 35 per cent.

Southern farmers, whose cotton, rice, and peanuts are all subject to supports, turned in the major surprise. Fifty-three per cent of their ballots were cast against government help.

Those who voted for some government aid—either about the same as now or more—were asked on the ballot to say which of four types of aid they preferred.

The current program of price supports and controls proved the favorite, capturing 43 per cent of this portion of the vote. Production payments (direct payments from the government to farmers) plus acreage controls ran neck and neck with votes in favor of the government making payments to take land completely out of farming.

A two-price plan (higher prices on what can be consumed at home, lower prices on what can be exported) finished in last place, being supported mainly by Western wheat growers and Southern cotton farmers.

In a third vote, farmers who favored support prices with controls voted strongly (68 per cent) for higher supports than at present, even at the expense of still more rigid acreage controls. Only 8 per cent favored more acres

and lower supports. The remaining 24 per cent would settle for supports and acreage as at present.

Farm Journal explains that its poll was voluntary, and made only among its own subscribers. It points out, however, that because of the magazine's large circulation (3,500,000) and the nationwide distribution of that circulation, statistical consultants "believe the results give 'a pretty good indication of farmer thinking.'"

In an editorial in the same issue Carroll P. Streeter declares that farmers are "disillusioned" with government programs to aid them and suggests that lasting solutions will be found only as farmers organize themselves to regulate their own production to improve their marketing through strict grading to meet consumer demands; and to promote increased use of their products by consumers.



By RUTH KING

This is the time of year when passing a magazine stand is a worse ordeal than pulling a wisdom tooth. Roses and tree peonies, ever-bearing strawberries and jumbo watermelons on the covers of garden periodicals tease the four-bit pieces right out of the old handbag.

It is the time of year when gardeners languish at the picture windows after scrutinizing every seed catalogue that has arrived in the winter mails... the time of year when "those who know" wonder about the warm winter and the chance of unseasonably early shoots meeting late frosts headon.

It's the time of year when here on the news desk, tantalizing news of 1958 garden and plant discoveries by the hybridizers keep us a'twitter and the temptation to order a dozen new varieties of plants adapted only to a Louisiana climate must be sternly buried among other "I wish I could's."

It's the time of year when gardeners (some gardeners) go to

THE COVER

The cover picture for this week's Herald and News Magazine Section of Klamath Basin Living was taken by staff photographer Don Kettler. The subject is Miss Melissa Walker who will be 3 in April. A 4 x 5 Crown Graphic camera equipped with an f 4.7 Ek-tar lens was used set at f 32 and a 400th of a second with two extension flashes.

ONLY SLIGHTLY OFF

A knotted string was used as a measuring instrument in the building of the Great Pyramid of Egypt, yet it measured so accurately that modern instruments show only one-half inch error along the 755-foot side.

WILD RICE HARVEST

Most of the annual crop of wild rice still is handharvested by Indians in the lake regions of Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Ontario.

Over the GARDEN GATE

the storeroom in the barn or to the shop where the garden hose is coiled and the trowels, cleaned of earth last fall are stored, just to "get the feel" of coming spring. It's funny how just gazing at an oiled and ready lawnmower can make waiting for those first blades of bluegrass a bit easier, unless you're the man behind the mower.

It's time for the garden clubbers in the Klamath district to be thinking about those essays on the study and cultural results of club flowers to be sent to Mrs. Noah Nyhart, district horticulturist, who in turn will submit them for the district meeting in Alturas in April. Prizes on these, remember! These two-year studies are bringing out some interesting information.

It's the time of year when February is due with its 28 days, when March winds will be forgotten in April and then it will be spring... perhaps cold, perhaps frosty, perhaps there will be snow on little new leaves, but aren't we lucky, those of us in the Klamath country?... no worrying about tornadoes, nor floods, So... happy waiting!