Analysis By Farmer Not Always Right

DAVIS — The farmer who wouldn't think of diagnosing his own bodily ailments too often tries to guess his own soil troubles, and to apply his own cures as well.

And as might be expected, says Milton Fireman, extension soils and water specialist at the University of California's Davis campus, the patient is sometimes slow in recovering.

"Test, don't guess," says Fireman, "particularly if the suspected problem arises from saline or alkali soil conditions, or from poor-quality irrigation water." The grower should seek competent assistance" to diagnose such problems, and to judge their intensity and the probable cost of improvement, Fireman says.

"These conditions lower the productivity and value of more than 30 per cent of California's eight million irrigated acres, and of extensive areas of non-irrigated crop and pasture land besides," Fireman says.

Salinity can be dealt with by reducing the salt accumulations through adequate drainage and leaching, or by growing salt-tolerant crops and adopting soil management practices that minimize salt damage.

Alkali soils, Fireman says, generally require displacement of the absorbed sodium (alkali) with a chemical, followed by leaching to remove the displaced alkali from the root zone, into the drainage water. The bad effects of poor-quality irrigation water — water high in salts, soluble sodium or toxic elements such as boron — can be minimized by proper soil management and by growing crops tolerant of the harmful constituent, Fireman says.

Locally, problem soils are tested in the Tulelake Farm Advisers office.

Laying Hen Population Shows Drop

The number of laying hens in Oregon dropped for the second straight year, reports Stephen C. Marks, extension agricultural economist at Oregon State College. However, larger supplies of both eggs and fryers in the state and over the nation are selling at prices well below a year ago.

In contrast to the local situation, the number of hens and pullets on the nation's farms at the start of 1959 showed a moderate increase after dropping to a 23-year low in 1957, Marks said as he studied reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The number of layers on the job early this month was up 3 per cent over a year ago.

Rate at which hens are laying eggs, measured in terms of average number of eggs produced each day by 100 layers, was nearly 10 per cent larger than a year ago. Marks also found. This sharp increase is partly due to more favorable weather conditions in the eastern parts of the nation which suffered an extreme cold wave a year ago, he explained.

In the West, USDA reports indicate an increase in rate of lay of only 2 per cent, Marks said.

First 1959 reports from Oregon hatcherymen seem to indicate a continued decrease in Oregon's laying flocks. The state's hatch of egg-type chicks for the first two months of this year was down 23 per cent below a year earlier. A smaller hatch is also in prospect for March, based on the number of eggs now in incubators, Marks said.

The U.S. hatch for the first two months of 1959 was practically the same as a year earlier.

Oregon High On National Scale As Farming State

It should come as no surprise to Oregonians but guests within the state this year may be interested to learn how Oregon ranks among the "top 10" in United States agricultural production, especially since the state accounts for more than 36 agricultural high points. The figures here are on 1958 production.

Among her 11 "firsts," Oregon tops all 48, 49, or 50 states, in these fields: filberts, 6,800 tons; cherries (sweet), 25,000 tons; snap beans for processing, 88,000 tons; mint for oil, 978,000 pounds; and eight first in seed crops, the state department of agriculture reports.

Included in seed crops: Austrian winter peas, 17,000 harvested acres; common vetch, 14,000; common ryegrass, 72,000; perennial ryegrass, 36,000; chewings fescue, 21,000; red fescue, 7,500; bentgrass, 24,000; Merion bluegrass, 5,500 acres.

Oregon ranks second in pear production with 5,300,000 bushels; second in walnuts, with 6,500 tons; and second in strawberries, with 66,600,000 pounds. The state is third in beets for canning, with 16,900 tons; and third in broccoli, with 143,000 hundredweight.

Hop production in Oregon rates a fourth on the national scale, 5,400,000 pounds; peas (dry), fourth, 98,000,000; green peas for processing, fourth, 54,600 tons; cherries (sour), fourth, 3,500 tons; potatoes (late summer), fourth 2,750,000 cwt.; onions, fourth, 1,960,000 cwt.; apples, fifth, 2,400,000 bu.; cranberries, fifth, 1,288,000 cwt.

In vegetables for fresh market, Oregon places seventh in national rank in carrots, with 504,000 cwt. Oregon is also seventh in spring wheat, 2,695,000 bushels; seventh in barley 19,890,000 bushels; and seventh in grain hay, 906,000 tons.

MORE PROCESSORS OF FOOD

MINNEAPOLIS (UPI) — Farmers will be outnumbered within three or four years by the workers who process and distribute our food, according to a study by the Northwestern National Life Insurance Co. It showed that there are about six million full-time farmers in the U.S., a decrease of two million in the past decade. There are about 5,250,000 full-time food workers, an increase of half a million in the same period.

STRANGE BEDFELLOW

BUFFALO, N.Y. (UPI) — The Buffalo Chamber of Commerce has signed up a new member and assigned him to serve on its business development committee. He is Thomas Anton, secretary-treasurer of Local 34, Food Store Employes (AFL-CIO), the first union official to join the organization.

HOW'S THAT?

PORTLAND, Ore. (UPI)—Foresters and loggers in Oregon chew snuff, but they don't call it snuff. They call it snooze. Some claim it is spelled snus, others like snoos, and a few individualists prefer snuska.