

The Drought and Its Food Shortage

Meteorology—Agriculture

NO DANGER of actual food shortage is foreseen in the extreme drought affecting the crops in wide areas of the United States, latest information obtained at the U. S. Department of Agriculture indicates.

Luckily the major portion of the wheat crop was harvested before the effects of the continued heat had begun to tell and this means, at least, an abundance of flour for bread.

The possibility of a potato shortage still looms but is not yet serious. Meat, on the other hand, promises to be cheap. In fact, the fear is that it may be disastrously so for the farmer as pasture lands are suffering and the prospects for a normal crop lessen with each additional dry day.

A few more days of drought will mean that thousands of farmers will be forced to kill their stock this winter because they will not have enough feed to last them through until the next crop. Such a forced marketing of stock would have the effect of lowering meat prices and involve serious losses to stock raisers throughout the country. Supplies of wheat already harvested and the additional spring crop that will be garnered from the northern states, if the drought there is not too prolonged, should partially compensate for the corn crop shortage, however.

With the stock raising industry the worst hit by the drought, a milk shortage might be expected but thus far the carry-over supply of dairy products has sufficed though prices have begun to climb. Luckily the dairy communities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and northern Iowa have not been among the worst hit, although this season of the year is normally one of reduced milk production.

Where It Is Hottest

Regions bordering around the Ohio-Mississippi river system from Pittsburgh to the Gulf and Montana and adjacent portions of North Dakota are those worst hit by the heat

wave and three-quarters of the average crop yield is the best that can be hoped for from these sections. There is still the possibility of crops above the average from New York, the New England States, and North and South Carolina, while portions of Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska may still be above par. But surrounding the area of extreme drought on the borders of the Ohio

While the U. S. Parches—

Japan and China are having many typhoons;

Europe's wheat crop is threatened by drought;

The sea is being flooded with rains.

and Mississippi, there is a large section which will yield slightly less than average crops, probably about four-fifths the normal yield.

Picture Not So Black

The picture painted for the whole country is not so black, then, as might be expected though certainly it does not look bright for many communities.

This reckoning is based only on the present crop indications, however, without a calculation of the dire chances involved in continued and widespread drought. If there is no relief from the heat, the present picture is too optimistic.

America is not alone in suffering abnormal weather conditions, according to information reaching the U. S. Weather Bureau. In central, south and western Europe drought has threatened the wheat crop, which

has been especially hit in Italy. The condition in France is also bad, in Germany it is not so bad, while in England the crops have not yet been affected. Rain has come in England, so that the conditions there will probably be relieved.

In Japan and along the coast of China it has been very wet in recent weeks, with many typhoons. In South America, where the seasons are reversed and it is now the middle of winter, the weather has been unusually cold. Reports from Australia, also now in winter, indicate that the Australian wheat crop is unusually good.

With such abnormal conditions in the United States they are to be expected elsewhere, though not of the same kind, said Prof. C. L. Mitchell, of the Weather Bureau.

Conditions Balance

"When it is excessively dry here, it will be excessively wet elsewhere, and when we have unusually hot weather other parts of the world will be unusually cold," he said. "In other words, the average over the world stays pretty much the same. Lately there have been a good many rains at sea, and a rain at sea is really a most useless thing!"

There have also been rains lately in the region east of Hudson Bay. In fact, he said, this is the center of the main disturbance of eastern North America, and other disturbed regions, or low pressure areas, have been merely satellites of this large low in Labrador. This condition permits the warm air from the Gulf of Mexico to pass unhindered in a northeasterly direction across the country. A large low over the Middle West with a high to the north of it would produce the conditions needed for rain, he said, as there is moisture in the atmosphere, and it is only necessary to precipitate it. But there are no artificial means of making it happen. Just what has caused this distribution of pressure areas Mr. Mitchell could not say.

Only the drought and hot spell of 1901 can compare with the present one, he stated. But that was confined to July, and was over by this time of the year, and this one is still continuing. Certain parts of the country were harder hit in that year than they have been so far this year, but as the present drought threatens to continue for some time it is quite likely that this will prove far worse than 1901.

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