PUFFBALL WITH A FOOT

exceedingly variable species, *Podaxis pistillaris*. This name refers to the enlarged "foot," to the fact that the stem extends through the head to the summit, and that the plant is club-shaped.

This fungus has been described under eight different genus names and twenty-five species names, due, doubtless, to great variations in size, color, and to different external and internal aspects at different stages of development.

Science News Letter, November 18, 1933

A railroad in Minnesota is planting willows, conifers, and other trees to serve as snow catches along its right of way.

The University of Wisconsin has a new "chair of game management" to promote the raising of game birds and game animals as part of regular farming operations.

AGRONOMY

Agricultural Scientists Seek New Crops For the Desert

Products That Will Not Compete With Those of Older Farm Lands to be Grown in Boulder Canyon Region

WHAT CROPS shall be grown on the new million acres of land in Arizona and California that will be brought under irrigation by the Boulder Canyon Dam now being built? What can be planted that will not add to the already terrific problem of agricultural over-production?

These are the questions that have been put to research scientists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The hunt for non-competitive crops for America's coming New Egypt is on.

The problem can be solved, the scientists are confident, because of the unique character of the climate of the prospective new farming area. The great bulk of American farm lands are in regions of humid climate, depending on rainfall for their water supply, and not having the hot sun and dry desert air of the Southwest. Their crop possibilities are already well realized, and while the Southwest irrigated country can compete with some of them, the moist-climate areas cannot compete with the irrigated Southwest in producing the crops to which that region is best adapted.

An irrigated land with hot sun and dry air must look to such countries as Egypt and Mesopotamia, the first homes of farming, for agricultural suggestions. And this is just what the Department of Agriculture scientists are doing.

Home-Grown Sewing Thread

One of the staple crops of the Boulder Dam area will probably be Egyptian cotton, especially the American-bred Pima variety of Egyptian cotton, and a new Pima-Sakel hybrid suitable for making sewing thread. These cottons are not competitors with the varieties grown from Texas to Georgia. They are special, long-fibered cottons, used mainly for tire fabric, sewing thread, fine lisle hoisery, and certain other special kinds of clothing. The American market absorbs all the Egyptian-type cotton that can be grown in the Southwest at present, and sends to Egypt for thousands of bales more. It is expected that much of this present import requirement can be met by extending Egyptian cotton culture into the new irrigated lands as they come available.

Another possibility of the area is dates. The American consumption of dates at present is only half a pound a year per capita. Canadians eat twice as many and Englishmen three times as many. If the American demand can be raised merely to the Canadian level, that would mean a market for 120,000,000 pounds of dates a year. Supposing that half of that requirement will still be met by dates imported from the Near East, as at present, the new domestic market could take care of all the dates raised on 10,000 acres of land, at the yield rate of American date orchards at present in bearing.

From the Land of the Califs

Another fruit now imported largely from the land of the Califs is the Smyrna-type fig. This is also a possibility for the Boulder Dam area, for it requires the oasis climate provided by irrigation under a hot sun.

These three crops are well-tested possibilities for Southwestern irrigated agriculture. They are not competitors with agriculture elsewhere in the United States, and it is probable that they will take some years of development before they can make a serious bid to replace all imports in their respective fields.

Before any of these can be recommended to settlers on the new lands, they must be tested out in the region, their possibilities realized, and adaptations made to overcome difficulties of cultivation and handling. For this reason it seems desirable that the Department of Agriculture scientists should go now into this unirrigated desert region, make limited test plantings irrigated with water from deep wells, and arrange a planned agriculture for the country in advance of its settlement.

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