

AGRICULTURE

United States Has No Monopoly of Misfortune

Drought a Disaster Shared by Whole World, Department of Agriculture Survey Shows

THE DROUGHT, like the Depression, makes itself felt as an international disaster, and not merely as a misfortune to one nation. A study of the new report on the drought situation issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture brings home this point most impressively.

The roll of countries that could answer "Trouble!" in the drought line-up reads almost like a roster of the world's best farm lands. Russia: little wheat to export this year. Germany: livestock must be slaughtered; not enough feed. Poland and the countries of the Danube Valley: grain crops short. China: rice in the Yangtse valley badly damaged.

Our nearest neighbors, Canada and Mexico, have had to take their share of the punishment that has fallen across the American grain belt. And most remote, Australia, away "down under," already reports reduction in grain crop seeding because of dry weather. Argentina, the other great Southern Hemisphere grain land, has somewhat the same story to tell.

Yet in spite of what threatens to be a bad crop year throughout the world, it seems unlikely, the report states, that there will be a world shortage of bread grains. As in the United States, so in other lands, the large carry-over of wheat and other cereals is expected to prevent the nations' cupboards from being found bare.

Serious the situation unquestionably is; but it is not regarded as alarming. And if there is any consolation to be derived from the realization that we are all in the same boat, a large part of mankind is entitled to that reflection.

Taking a closer look at the domestic situation, the report is most pessimistic about the condition of the corn crop. There is "practically a total failure of the crop, so far as the grain is concerned, in an area including the major parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and South Dakota and in parts of southern Iowa and west central Illinois. . . Even the production of corn fodder was ser-

iously reduced in the drought area."

Pastures are stated to be generally in bad shape, and the crops of grain sorghum and other plants used mostly for stock feed not encouraging in prospect. The prospective hay crop suffered a decline of seven per cent. during the month. With short pastures, with only about 65 per cent. of the usual quantity of grain available for feeding, and with other unfavorable factors at work, "a rather drastic adjustment in the number of livestock will have to be made before fall and winter feeding begins."

Food for human beings, however, is entirely adequate, the report reassures. There may be local shortages in places, which will have to be ironed out by larger shipments than usual. But taken on the whole: "Stocks of bread grains and several other food products are large. Production of most canning crops will be about normal, fruits and vegetables fairly abundant outside the drought area, and the supply of meat, dairy and poultry products adequate for the remainder of the year."

Science News Letter, August 25, 1934

PHYTOPATHOLOGY

War Against Plant Diseases Waged By Government

WITH DROUGHT already seriously curtailing crop prospects, plant diseases assume more than ordinary importance, so that Government scientists are redoubling their efforts to beat down these fungous enemies that increase the farmer's per-bushel cost and correspondingly cut his profits. In a talk given in Boston, Mass., under the auspices of Science Service, F. C. Meier told of methods that can be and are being used in this warfare. Mr. Meier is Senior Agriculturist in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and secretary of the American Phytopathological Society.

The most obvious method of getting rid of a plant disease is to spray the plant with something that will kill the fungus. Next comes the breaking of the

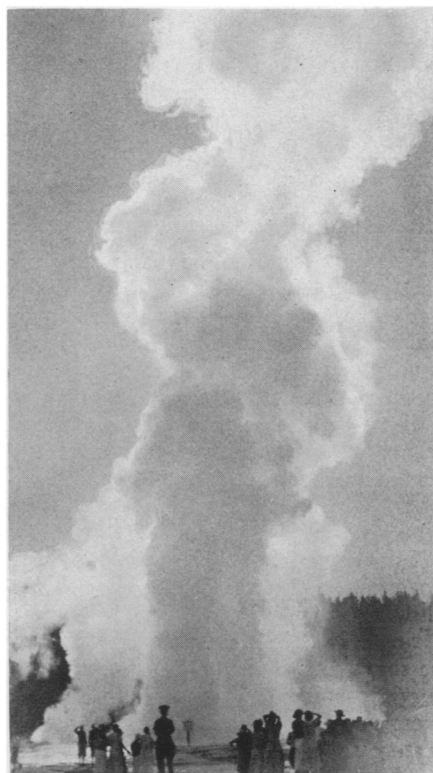
complex life cycles of some of the fungi, which spend part of their lives on one plant species and part on another.

More important still is the development, by scientific plant breeding, of disease-resistant varieties of plants.

Defeating plant disease is of importance in times of abundance no less than in times of drought, however, Mr. Meier said. He continued:

"It is necessary to a planned production of agricultural crops. Uncontrolled reduction in yield due to the ravages of disease is one thing and a decrease in production due to a purposeful and intelligent limitation of acreage which when planned is given proper protection, is quite another. In the first case, we have uncertainty and waste of labor, land and expenses incident to growing the crop; in the second case, we have economy and some certainty of obtaining normal production."

Science News Letter, August 25, 1934



THE GIANT ROARS

Greatest spectacle in Yellowstone Park is an eruption of the Giant geyser, but few of the quarter million persons visiting the park each year catch a glimpse of the famous gusher. Here the Giant is shown in the only eruption of the present park season, when it gave a two-hour display on August 2. Park visitors had waited from May 5 for this eruption, but when it came, the wait seemed justified, for the column of steam and boiling water shot into the air 250 feet to dwarf Old Faithful.