

THE FERTILIZER SITUATION IN FLORIDA

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My assigned subject is "The Fertilizer Situation in Florida." While I am sure your primary interest is in the future, I want to take a few minutes to review the history of the past twelve months. A year ago at our Fifty-Fifth Annual Meeting, I endeavored to give you a maximum of reassurance as to the supplies that would be available in the 1942-43 season. My forecasts were based on the best information available to me but I must admit now that there were so many things that could have happened to the supplies referred to that it was with much misgiving that I forecast their availability. I am sure that the entire fertilizer industry joins me in a tremendous sigh of relief that the 1942-43 season is drawing to a close. We have had many anxious moments and, while we fully realize that there are many trying days ahead, the industry has met a tremendous problem and has the satisfaction of having conquered it.

While it is true that some farmers did not receive exactly what they wanted in the way of fertilizer in the season now closing, I do not know of a single instance in which a farmer could not get sufficient fertilizer of a recognized type for the production of his crops.

The only official records available of deliveries of fertilizer this season are from July 1, 1942, to March 31, 1943, a period of nine months. Comparing the same periods in 1940-41 and 1941-42 with the current season we find that the fertilizer industry delivered to the farmers of Florida 95,000 tons more this year than in 1940-41 and 32,000 tons more than in the 1941-42 per-

iod. I am confident that the industry's deliveries for April, May and June of 1943 will exceed the corresponding period in any previous year.

Much has been said in the past twelve months about Nitrate of Soda and Potash Nitrate for at the beginning of this period this material was in smaller supply than some other materials, but for the nine months ending March 31st the industry distributed as straight material over 16,000 tons, either in the form of Nitrate of Soda or Potash Nitrate. This was only about 1,000 tons less than was distributed in the same period last year. Credit for the availability of this material must be given to the War Production Board and the Chilean Nitrate Sales Corporation who, in spite of apparently insurmountable difficulties, arranged for the shipment all the way from Chile of in excess of 1,000,000 tons of Nitrate to the United States.

Of course, the industry has not had the freedom of action that exists in peace time. The vast majority of our materials are allocated to us by the War Production Board. The distribution of all fertilizer is under the competent jurisdiction of the Food Administration. It has been necessary since January, and will continue to be necessary during the war, for the farmer to make application to the fertilizer industry for his requirements of fertilizer. This procedure is solely for the purpose of being sure that you get your share. Of course, the variance of crop needs by individual farms is so great that it is not practical to issue ration tickets either by farms or by acres. As we all know, in vegetable growing par-

ticularly, weather affects crop requirements of fertilizer.

Enough of the past — let us look toward the future. The Ordnance Department of the Army has done such an exceptionally fine job of providing for the armed forces potential needs of gunpowder that it finds itself in position to release substantial quantities of Nitrogen to agriculture from their recently completed Nitrogen plants. This Nitrogen will either be in the form of Nitrogen Solution or grain Ammonium Nitrate. Nitrogen Solution has been used in Florida for many years in the manufacture of ammoniated Superphosphate and we are assured that the agronomic results of the use of Ammonium Nitrate will be equal to the use of Nitrogen in the form of Solution, which is entirely satisfactory.

I am making a sincere effort not to encroach upon my good friend Porter's subject, but it is difficult to present the Florida picture without consideration of the National one, for, after all, they are one and the same. The present outlook for Chemical Nitrogen, even though some unforeseen disaster might prevent the importation of Chilean Nitrate, indicates that there will be available to the fertilizer industry 20 percent more than in 1942-43. And if Chilean Nitrate is imported in the same quantity as last year, the Chemical Nitrogen supplies will approximate 50 percent more than in the season now coming to a close.

The Potash industry, with the assistance of the War Production Board, has done an excellent job in the distribution of American Potash and not only every farmer but every American should give thanks for the foresightedness of the pioneers of the American Potash industry, for were our country today dependent upon European supplies as they were at the beginning of the last World War, we would be in a bad way. The outlook for Potash is that the fertilizer industry will have available from 92 to 94 percent as much as was available in 1942-43. The mines have been at peak production but as it is more economical to

supply the needs of agriculture to our allies than to supply the agricultural products, there will be a little less Potash for American consumption this coming year.

Superphosphate has given the industry much concern the past twelve months. The demand has been greater and production has had difficulty in keeping pace. The War Production Board has stepped into this picture and, while Superphosphate is not under direct allocation, it is definitely under their watchful eye. I am confident that, with the assistance of the War Production Board, agriculture has little to fear in the way of shortages of this material. There has been some misunderstanding in the past year between the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Superphosphate producers and the fertilizer industry. The Superphosphate producers have delivered to AAA during the past year for Grant of Aid and Soil Conservation approximately 1,250,000 tons of Superphosphate. This distribution has at times delayed deliveries but I believe distribution will be so coordinated in the future that it will not again occur.

The only dark picture of all the primary plant foods is the Organic situation. We in Florida are particularly conscious of this form of Nitrogen, primarily due to the peculiarities of our soils. Organic materials have been the subject of much discussion and investigation by Government as well as industry. Considering the national picture, Organic Nitrogen represents less than 5 percent of the Total Nitrogen to be used in food production. Six months ago we were laboring under the impression, honestly based on information available at that time, that the industry would have to absorb in fertilizer 500,000 tons of Oil Seed Meals which would not be fed to animals. This picture has completely reversed itself and animals are actually dying of malnutrition because of the lack of sufficient Oil Seed Meals. The Government issued an order some five months ago prohibiting the use of Oil Seed Meals in fertilizer. No one can challenge the properness of such action

if they know the facts, but this order took away from the fertilizer industry some of its main sources of Organic Nitrogen and greatly accelerated the demand for the few remaining Organic materials obtainable for fertilizer, such as Castor Pomace, Activated Sludge, Nitrogenous Tankage, etc. In my humble opinion, supplies of Organic Nitrogen in mixed fertilizer available to Florida growers next season will approximate 50 percent of the quantity used in the 1942-43 season. To provide for more equitable distribution, it is believed the Government will require that the small supply of Organic Nitrogen available be used in mixed fertilizer. If any appreciable quantity of these materials were used as such on crops, it would mean that thousands of other acres would have to use all Chemical fertilizer. The use of Organic Nitrogen in mixed fertilizer is recognized as the method which will utilize its effectiveness to the greatest extent.

I was assured in Washington two weeks ago that the Secondary metals, so vital to Florida agriculture, should be in ample supply during the coming year.

I have given you the supply picture as it appears at the moment to me. There is one other thing on which the production of fertilizer depends 100 percent and that is manpower. Our plants are staffed with children, old people and women and not nearly enough of even these. The industry's productive capacity has been greatly reduced during the past twelve months. There have been seemingly unnecessary delays in deliveries. Some plants have been at a standstill for days because of the lack of sufficient labor to manufacture. This condition is not going

to improve any time soon and the best advice I know of that might be given to the Florida farmer is to take delivery of his fertilizer well in advance of the time he is going to need it, that he order it from his supplier and get it on his farm. Jacksonville and Tampa are the two largest producing points of fertilizer. Each of these cities now has very active shipyards with unceasing demands for labor at a much higher wage than the War Labor Board will allow the fertilizer industry to pay. Labor cannot be condemned for taking advantage of the higher income available to them, but it presents a huge problem to us. So should you delay in ordering your fertilizer, do not be surprised if the day comes when your supplier says "I have the materials but you will have to furnish the labor to permit me to manufacture the fertilizer and ship it to you."

If you do not have sufficient storage on your own grove or farm, make every effort to find it in the neighborhood and place the order for your fall application with your supplier as soon as you can and authorize him to make shipment when possible. This precaution will give you the assurance that you will have your fertilizer and it will permit the industry to make available to agriculture a greater quantity than can possibly be available on the normal seasonal basis.

On behalf of the industry, I want to take this opportunity to thank agriculture for their cooperation and patience during the past season. With a continuation of this spirit, the primary goal of increased food production in Florida will be assured next season.