

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOW GRASS AND CLOVER SEEDS ARE GRADED FOR CANADIAN MARKETS.

Each Canadian seed house has its own peculiar methods of cleaning and grading grass and clover seed. Some of the terms which are used to designate grades of Timothy seed are:—'Sun,' 'Salmon,' 'Silver,' 'Fancy re-cleaned,' 'Prime Western,' and 'Choice American,' and for clover seed:—'Red Western,' 'Coon,' 'Antelope,' 'Cricket,' and No. 66.' It can scarcely be said that 'No. 66,' 'Antelope,' 'Coon,' &c., are descriptive of quality when applied to grass and clover seeds. Such terms as 'Grade No. 1,' 'Grade No. 2,' and 'Grade No. 3,' if used by a reliable seed firm, would mean much to the purchaser.

Seed Testing Stations.—The idea of establishing seed testing stations with a view to improve the quality of seeds sold, as well as to safeguard the interests of agriculture, is not a new one. Seed testing stations have been established in most of the leading European countries. Such stations usually form a branch of the agricultural experiment stations, but in a few cases separate establishments have been started solely for the purpose of seed testing.

Seed control stations have exerted a wholesome influence among European seed merchants during the last thirty years. It would be useless for a seed merchant to attempt to do business in any of the European countries where seed control stations are maintained, unless he gave a guarantee as to the genuineness, purity and vitality of the seed offered for sale.

SEED TESTING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

(Extracts from the appendices of the minutes of evidence taken before the Departmental Committee, appointed by the Board of Agriculture for Great Britain to inquire into the conditions under which agricultural seeds are at present sold.—Published 1901.)

"An important feature of the work of many of the stations is the so-called "Seed Control" which consists in an arrangement whereby seedsmen enter into an undertaking with the authorities of the station to sell their goods with certain guarantees of purity and germination, based on results of analytical tests made at the station of the samples submitted by them prior to the sale of the seeds, and agree to accept the results of examinations made at the station of samples taken by the buyers from the goods as sold, as the determinant of any question, which may arise as to the correspondence of the goods with the guarantees. Some of the Swedish, Finnish and Austrian stations also certify as to the quality of seeds in bulk by drawing samples on the seedsmen's premises, and furnishing tags to be attached to sacks containing seeds, which come up to certain standards of purity and germination, but this practice has not made much progress outside the countries named.

"In addition to the testing of seeds for seedsmen and agriculturists, experiment and research work in agricultural botany is also carried out at a number of the stations.

"The permanent staff of a good testing station usually consists of a director (except in cases when seed testing forms part of the work of an agricultural experiment station) with one or two male or female assistants, and a fluctuating staff of girls for seed counting and germination work.

"The cost of maintaining seed testing stations is defrayed partly from the fees derived from the control work, and most of the stations are supported by State subventions and by grants either from provincial funds or from agricultural societies.

"In Germany there are thirty-nine establishments for the testing of seeds, many of them being branches of agricultural experiment stations, which are supported by general subventions from the State, while some are supported by grants from provincial authorities and agricultural societies.

"The procedure at German seed testing stations is based on rules drawn up in January, 1898, by the Association of Agricultural Experiment Stations, in order to secure uniformity of methods in seed testing.