

INQUIRY INTO THE WORK OF THE SOIL PACKER IN SASKATCHEWAN.

Moisture, and its control, is the most important problem of the grain grower throughout a large part of Saskatchewan. Were the moisture supply from the clouds certain and invariable the problem would be simplified, but as conditions are the grain grower who would be successful must plough and work to conserve and store in his fields as much as possible of the moisture that falls on them from time to time. Any system of farming or any tillage implement that will assist him in this work is worthy of his careful consideration. It may not render him sufficient aid to justify any change from existing methods or to warrant the expense of securing such an implement. On the other hand such a change or investment might quickly justify itself.

The summerfallow is an example of a change in the accepted system of farming which has justified itself over and over again from the standpoint of conserving moisture. The drag harrow is an implement which has an universally acknowledged value in the same connection. During recent years, however, a new type of implement has been introduced for which great claims have been made as to its value in helping the farmer to store up his moisture. This is the soil packer. Packers vary widely as to design, construction and method of reaching results, but all have the same general object in view, namely, so to compress the ploughed land that evaporation shall be reduced to a minimum and the free flow of capillary or film water in the soil re-established.

The department of agriculture asked its crop correspondents some questions as to what results could be noted from the use of packers in each one's township. One object in view was setting before those farmers of the province who have not bought a packer as yet and who hesitate to invest so much money in one, the consensus of opinion as to their worth, upon the part of those who already own one. Another object was that those who already have packers might be enabled to compare notes and learn under what conditions and at what stage in the tillage operations the different kinds of packers can best be used.

The questions asked of crop correspondents were as follows:

"On about what percentage of the land under crop in your township this year was a roller or packer of any kind used?"

"What kind of a packer is most used in your township—surface or subsurface?"

"At what stage in the seeding operations is the packer usually used?"

"What effect does the use of a packer appear to have on:

"(a) Soil drifting?

"(b) Even germination (sprouting) of seed?

"(c) Rapid growth of crop?

"(d) Moisture in the top three inches of soil?"

The Extent of Their Use.

The following table will indicate in a general way the extent to which packers of one kind or another are being used in Saskatchewan today. Only the areas upon which surface or subsurface packers or