

The Commercial

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UNITED STATES CROP OUTLOOK.

The official United States crop report of late years has been a very unreliable document. The report has so persistently underrated both the area and condition of the crops, that it has generally come to be regarded as a document prepared specially to "boom" prices, in the interest of the farmers. Many of the commercial and grain trade papers in the United States have taken this view of the case. The Commercial does not believe that the Washington department has willfully under-rated the crops, but it is quite possible that many of its correspondents have knowingly done so, thus misleading the department and getting it into bad repute with the trade.

The June report of the Washington department this year, however, is something of a surprise, as the estimates of crop area and crop conditions are considered as fully up to, if not in advance of actual conditions. This may be accounted for by a change in the mode of obtaining crop reports. The department has obtained reports from 15,000 millers throughout the country, in addition to the reports from its regular agricultural correspondents.

The report places the winter wheat area at 22,791,000 acres and the spring wheat area at 11,825,000, or a total of 34,616,000 acres of winter and spring wheat. Last year the area was 31,047,332 and in 1891 it was 34,832,486 and in 1893 it was 31,629,418 acres. Thus it will be seen that there has not been much variation in the total wheat area of the United States for four years.

The spring wheat area, as shown by the June report this year, it is a little greater than for the preceding three years, while the winter wheat area shows a slight decrease. The spring wheat area of the important spring wheat states is as follows: Minnesota, 3,200,000; North Dakota, 2,530,000; South Dakota, 2,463,000; Nebraska, 1,221,000 acres. Last year the area of these states was: Minnesota, 2,851,000; North Dakota, 2,907,000; South Dakota, 2,483,000; Nebraska, 1,232,000. North Dakota shows a considerable decrease in the area, which is in the Red river valley, owing to the wet spring. The report however, shows a considerable increase in the wheat area of Minnesota, while the other two leading spring wheat states are much the same as last year. The increase in Minnesota about balances the decrease in North Dakota, and the total spring wheat area, as already noted, is slightly in excess of the three previous years.

The winter wheat area, according to the June report, was reduced somewhat by the plowing up of some fields, but this is we may say an annual occurrence. Among the winter wheat states California again leads in point of acres, with 3,011,000 acres, which is a little less than last year. Kansas comes next with 2,681,000 acres, which is a decrease of nearly 800,000 acres as compared with last year, and a decrease of over 700,000 acres as

compared with 1891. In 1893 and 1894 Kansas had a larger area than any other winter wheat state, reaching 8,395,000 acres in 1891, but last year and this it takes second place to California. The other leading wheat states come in the following order this year: Ohio, 2,422,000 acres; Indiana 2,291,000 acres; Illinois, 1,906,000 acres; Missouri, 1,418,000 acres; Pennsylvania, 1,239,000 acres; Michigan, 1,202,000 acres. All other winter wheat states have an area under 1,000,000 acres each.

The areas of oats, rye and barley are all slightly reduced as compared with last year, wheat being considered a more profitable crop at current prices than any of these grains.

As reported in The Commercial last week, the condition of spring wheat is said to be high, being placed at 99.9 per cent. Winter wheat is only fair, the condition being only 77.9 per cent. Corn is not fully reported in the June returns.

WHERE SKILL AND INTELLIGENCE ARE NEEDED.

The French government has been endeavoring to improve agricultural methods in that country, to enable the farmers to profitably produce a sufficient quantity of foodstuffs to supply the home market. According to recently published statistics, a great measure of success has attended these efforts. Some years ago it was claimed that the cost of producing wheat in France was \$1.40 per bushel. But owing to improved methods, France has gone on producing wheat, even in larger quantities than in former years, at a much less cost than \$1.40 per bushel. Experimental schools were established, and the farmers were taught the use of fertilizers, the rotation of crops, changing of seed, etc., resulting, as a recent report says, "in great benefit through the introduction of scientific methods."

The Commercial has frequently referred to the good work being done in our own country by the Dominion Experimental farms. Canadian farmers could compete with the world and make money, if they would study and practice improved methods. A recent investigation into the condition of agriculture in one of the eastern states was made, and in the report the cause of the majority of failures was said to be owing to careless or unscientific methods of farming. If such an investigation were made in Canada, it would certainly be found that in the very great majority of cases where farmers were not doing well, unscientific methods would be at the bottom of the trouble. Many farmers merely make a living or progress slowly, when they might get along to much better advantage by improved methods.

The work of the Dominion experimental farms places within the reach of every farmer in Canada a great deal of the information which is necessary to enable him to succeed. Of course, practical experience must not be overlooked; but after practical experience, any one possessing ordinary intelligence can gain almost all the theoretical and scientific knowledge required by carefully following the work of the experimental farms from year to year. A great work is thus being

done in the interest of the farmers of Canada, if they would only avail themselves of it. Unfortunately a great many pay very little attention to modern methods, and prefer to go on in the old way, and the result is apparent on every hand.

There is no more noble nor independent occupation than that of the farmer. There is no occupation which gives greater scope for the application of the highest order of intelligence than that of the farmer. The farmer can make his daily work a source of education to himself and benefit (through observation) to his neighbors, by intelligently seeking to excel. The avenues for gaining experimental and practical knowledge are illimitable. Young people leave the farms to obtain a "higher education," and then devote themselves to other pursuits. Why not turn their "higher education" to account on the farm? There is no place where it could be used to better advantage. There is something wrong in our social system that it does not recognize this fact. There is ten times the scope for the application of a first-class education on the farm, than there is in most city offices. Many of the advanced studies, such as chemistry, botany, etc., can be turned to constant use on the farm. The idea that any ignoramus will do for a farmer, is the greatest error. Education and intelligence are nowhere required more urgently than on the farm.

In these days of low prices of agricultural products, what is required is intelligence applied to agricultural pursuits. It is not necessary to have a nation of scientists devoted to farming. What our farmers do need, however, is to endeavor to make use of the information which is being worked out for them by the experimental farms and other agencies, applying such information intelligently, combining therewith the personal determination to excel in their work, and to profit continually by the experience gained by themselves or through observation.

The trend of education and of social influences in Canada have been in the wrong direction in the past, but a change is taking place at last, and the needs of agriculture are beginning to be recognized. Canada is an agricultural country, and every effort should be made to encourage our principle industry. Without any increase of population, our annual exports might be almost doubled and our national wealth vastly increased by the application of improved methods of agriculture. Other nations are beginning to see the advantage of encouraging the farmers to adopt improved methods. In Denmark, for instance, the government has done a great work in educating the farmers in this direction. If Canada is to hold her own, a strong effort must be made to assist the farmer to adopt more improved methods, thus enabling him to produce at a profit, even at current low values.

At the experimental farm at Brandon last year, the lowest yield of wheat from twelve leading varieties sown, was 42½ bushels per acre, and the highest yield 49 bushels per acre. At the Indian Head experimental farm, the lowest yield from twelve leading varieties of wheat was 43½ bushels per acre, and the highest yield was 52 bushels per