5. THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF OUTLYING EXPERIMENT FIELDS IN AGRONOMY

F. C. Bauer

An important feature of agricultural extension service is the dissemination of experiment station findings in such a manner as to encourage the adoption of them on the farms of the state as rapidly as conditions will warrant. A valued and widely used method in this service is the field, or farm, demonstration. Here, the farmer has an opportunity to see the results of the practice being recommended and to compare it with others not so useful or important. In the field of agronomy, and especially along the line of soils, there is more or less difficulty in carrying such projects to a successful conclusion. This is due primarily to the fact that those farm practices which deal with the soil and that are of lasting permanent value, cannot be demonstrated successfully in a single year's time. Such projects must be planned on a long-time program and confined to the same area of land.

Since the essential combinations for well planned demonstrations of this character are difficult to find, it becomes necessary to supplement them with existing material wherever possible. Such material may be found on the outlying experiment fields of the experiment station and on farms. Often times, however, that material which may be found on farms is more or less fragmentary and does not provide suitable contrasts to emphasize the lessons needed. The experiment fields, on the other hand, are well supplied with contrasted treatments and practices, and, in addition, they have the advantage of careful and exacting supervision, a condition which makes their results more reliable and the conclusions drawn from them more accurate. The chief disadvantage in the use of experiment fields for this purpose is their limited number and the consequent difficulty in applying specifically the lessons which they teach to a large territory. In spite of this difficulty, however, if the experiment fields are given the proper publicity thru demonstration meetings, and otherwise, they will serve to emphasize the fundamental farm practices and to point out to farmers specific problems which they should investigate for themselves. For this reason extension teaching in agronomy, and especially in soils, should make all possible use of outlying experiment

1Paper read as a part of the symposium on "Extension Work in Agronomy" at the meeting of the Society held in Chicago, Ill., November 13, 1923.
2Professor of Soils Extension, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.