2. THE ECONOMICS OF FERTILIZER USE IN THE UNITED STATES

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Thirty-two of the forty-eight states of the Union have an annual fertilizer tonnage large enough to be significant. Of these, thirteen only make official reports of the tonnage sold. But four of these thirteen states, namely, Maryland, Massachusetts, Indiana, and Ohio, make reports in such a way as to show the total commercial plant food used as opposed to the total of the carriers and mixtures in which it is sold. At the very outset, therefore, preparation of this paper was hampered by the fact that data showing the real use of commercial plant foods were lacking.

The best information available is in the American Fertilizer Handbook, which draws on official sources when possible, but which makes estimates from trade returns when such official information is not available. This authority shows a total fertilizer tonnage in the United States in 1923 of 6,619,308. On the basis of estimates made as per methods explained in the appendix, there were contained in this tonnage 17,563,566 units of nitrogen, 67,413,891 of phosphoric acid, and 21,356,102 of potash.

The above fertilizer tonnage compares with a maximum of 7,589,239 in 1920. The rather scanty evidence furnished by those few states which make tonnage reports and present detailed analysis of the same indicates that the total plant food contained in the 1923 tonnage was at least as great as in the greater tonnage of the earlier period.

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