RESEARCH IN REGIONAL PEAT INVESTIGATIONS

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During the meetings of the First International Congress of Soil Science held in Washington, D. C., June 13 to 22, 1927, a Sub-commission was established for the study of peat land and its uses. A special committee was appointed to develop an international program for the various lines of research and methods of study which touch upon the subject of peat.

The area of peat in the United States, exclusive of its possessions, is estimated to be over 100,000,000 acres, while that of Eurasia is believed to aggregate more than 200,000,000 acres. The acreage of peat deposits in the southern hemisphere of the world has not yet been determined or properly investigated and therefore cannot be considered at this time.

It is well known that deposits of peat represent one of the chief sources of raw organic material for agriculture and certain related industries. In addition to being one of the great undeveloped land resources, they constitute the indispensable record upon which to base our views and ideas regarding plant life and changes in its environment. Both a far-sighted view and international cooperation are imperative to clear up the obstacles with which the study and utilization of peat land are confronted. Excellent as has been the work in peat investigations in European countries through many years, it is obvious that in considering the great future importance of American and Eurasian peat lands, something more can and should be done along the lines of organized effort and collective thought.

In this program the Sub-commission recognizes the need of basic facts in the selection of peat lands for different purposes, including the conversion of raw peat materials into a commodity of commerce, for the protection of peat areas from destructive agencies, and for the improvement of yields in quantity and quality. Accordingly, the Sub-commission proposes in its program to promote the correlation of such work with similar research by member countries of the International Society of Soil Science. It welcomes the fullest cooperation on the part of individual investigators and different states and countries, and every effort is being made to coordinate in a practical way what experiment stations and extension services are doing.

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