The production, marketing, and use of potassium fertilizers is very important for crop production. This is especially true in the more humid regions where soils are more often deficient in K. Significant changes have occurred in recent years in production methods, materials produced, marketing procedures, and methods of application of K. This chapter discusses these changes.

I. POTASSIUM FERTILIZER PRODUCTION

Commercial scale production of K fertilizers began in Germany about 1861, approximately 15 yr after Liebig found that K is an essential element for plant growth. German salt deposits were being mined at the time for the production of common salt. Potassium salts, present in some of the run of mine ore, were regarded as contaminants and rejected from the salt production operations as wastes. Thus, when needed for fertilizer K production, the mines were in place. What remained to be accomplished was the construction of refining facilities to upgrade the crude K-containing salts into agriculturally useful products. This challenge was met by German chemists, resulting in the birth of the modern K fertilizer industry. Due to a favorable reserve position and technical expertise, Germany was essentially the only source of agricultural-grade K salts until World War I. This situation began to change at that time when France acquired the Alsatian

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