Iowa Experiences on the Classification and Nomenclature of Soils

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The subject assigned to this committee on the program was "Ways through which our soil classification and nomenclature may be improved." This is a report only from a portion of the committee, and as you will note from the title of this paper, we purpose merely to give you some of our Iowa experiences along these lines. It is not intended to suggest any definite improvements in our present methods. We are encountering difficulties, of course, and some of the more important ones will be mentioned, but we are free to confess that we are far from having remedies ready to offer for them. In fact, we are not sure but that our difficulties are largely due to the field methods and the personal equation, if you will, of the field men, rather than to anything fundamentally wrong in the system of classification and nomenclature. This is no reflection on the field men, but merely a recognition of the fact that in soil survey work the personal equation is extremely important. The opinion of the field men, based upon their observations during the season of work, and their analysis of the particular conditions in the area surveyed, carry the greatest weight in the classifying and naming of the soils, and correctly so. Furthermore, the field methods employed in survey work are somewhat elastic, and they may be modified in various ways, depending upon the personal attitude of the field men. It is questionable whether hard and fast rules should be laid down, even if feasible. As a result, we must expect to deal constantly with conditions which may be the result of minor variations in field methods.

While difficulties are continually arising, the methods which we are following have many desirable features, and we are convinced that they are fundamentally correct. As we learn more and more about soils, it will undoubtedly be necessary to modify some of our present ideas, but these