DUTIES OF THE SOIL SURVEY INSPECTORS


For the information of those who are not familiar with our organization, I will state briefly of what the Bureau of Soils, U.S. Department of Agriculture consists: It has a Chief, Dr. Milton Whitney, and the work is divided into the Division of Soil Chemistry, the Division of Soil Physics, the Division of Fertilizers, and the Division of the Soil Survey. Dr. Marbut as you know is the head of the soil survey work.

The United States is divided into five districts each having an inspector—four of these in the east, and one in the far west. Mr. W. E. McLendon has the northeastern part, Mr. T. D. Rice, the northwestern, Mr. Macy H. Lapham, the western, and Mr. H. H. Bennett and I have the southern part. My territory comprises the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Florida. Mr. Bennett covers the remainder of the south.

In the inspection work usually two or more visits are made to an area or county. The first trip is made at the time, or soon after the field man begins the work. On this trip we go over all parts of the area with the field man endeavoring to obtain a general idea of the soils, that is, to classify soils into series, and so far as possible identify the types, and to see their relation to the established series. In many counties the soils will naturally fall into old well recognized series, while on the other hand, it may happen that one or more new ones may be developed. In many cases the field man has serious problems, particularly, if he has not had experience in an area of similar soils. It is the work of the inspector to correlate the soils, decide upon the series, and to keep down series unless the material possesses characteristics sufficiently definite to warrant the establishing of a new series. All of you are more or less familiar with the factors to be considered in establishing a soil series. These are color, texture, structure, origin, topography, drainage, and the presence of carbonates. A series has different characteristics just as certain characteristics are developed in a Holstein cow, or a Poland China hog. Of course, soils naturally grade into each other, and in many cases there appears to be a close similarity between some of the series, perhaps in one locality, but a greater difference may exist between these soils in some other region. In moving the men from one section of the country to another it frequently happens that an inspector is needed in two or even several places at about the same time. To be at all of them at the same time is a physical impossibility, but we try to reach the area as soon as convenient.

Our second trip is made about the time, or a few days prior to the completion of the field work. Again we go over the county, see and study every series and if possible, every type for the purpose of final correlation. Generally about 95 to 99 per cent of the soils run uniform to some established series. A new series can be made, but there are always a few small areas of soil which give trouble. These are not distinct in themselves, that is, they do not fit into any pre-established series, and therefore it is our duty to decide as to whether these soils shall be considered as exceptions to some main series, or whether one or more new series are necessary. It is our duty to maintain uniformity, but we also have the interest of the farmer in mind, and it is necessary to establish and maintain a uniform series for any given area in order to have uniform reports and uniform methods of handling these soils. It is our duty to decide as to whether we are going to make a new series or to follow the established series, and if we are going to make a new series, it is then our job to establish a new series.