UTILIZATION OF SOIL SURVEYS.

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The value of the soil survey depends on the extent to which it can be used by the people. As a historical document—an inventory of soil resources and conditions—to be filed away in libraries, it has little justification; the basic reason for supporting the work is the anticipation that the survey will have a definite utilitarian value—will be of positive use in solving the problems of today.

The Farmer -

The first and most obvious use of this soil data is by the farmer who already located on the land, producing crops from the soils of his own farm. The use by farmers is not as general nor the results as satisfactory as we could hope. This is due to two major reasons—first, the farmer does not know how to interpret the soil surveys; and second, the scale on which the maps are made does not show the many variations in soil conditions which he knows exist on his farm. The first of these difficulties will gradually disappear provided we teach, in school and college, in short courses, in farmers' meetings, and elsewhere, the possibilities of the survey and the ways of interpreting its results. The second will always be before us, but with a better conception of soil classification and soil differences the farmer can more readily understand the limitations of the soil maps and the import of those minor variations on his own farm. The use of the soil maps by the land holding farmer will never, in my opinion, be the major use of our soil survey data.

The Land Seeker -

The surveys are of much more direct value to the land seeker, the man who is purchasing a farm, the new settler who is not familiar with the soils of the region and who needs and desires unbiased and honest information regarding the farm lands that are offered to him. In those sections of the country where new lands are still available, the soil maps are almost indispensable and will give the desired information provided the user can interpret its data—provided he comes to the soils departments for assistance and advice in using the maps.

While the use of the survey by these people is not as general as we could wish, it is growing rapidly, as a study of the files of any Soils office will show. We can promote this use by suitable publicity, both through our bulletins and the rural press, and by our instruction, particularly during short courses. In California, we last year gave short courses in Land Settlement and for New Settlers and this year will give another in Land Colonization. Each of these courses much time is devoted to discussions of the soil, soil surveys, and the use of the available data. As these short courses are attended...