THE FUTURE OF THE SOIL SURVEY IN OUR NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY

By

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The ancients, so far as history and tradition are available to us, were curious as to what made plants grow and as to why crops grew differently in different localities and on different soil types. In the earliest stages of the life of man on the earth when they depended upon the wild things of nature they were keen for a knowledge of where their necessities could be obtained. In the early nomadic life of the people it was essential for them to know where the best natural food for their flocks and herds could be obtained. Such people needed only general information.

As the nomadic life gave place to the sedentary life and the growing of crops, they needed more particular information because to produce crops they had to settle on a definite piece of land. The selection of the land where they should settle became of supreme importance. When a country was sparsely settled knowledge of the soil type was relatively unimportant because of the wealth of land available so that they were able to support themselves in a way on the product of their labors. As the country became more densely settled more and more organization had to be introduced with a consequent increase in taxes and in public improvements, competition became greater, and more intensive effort became necessary.

According to the early Chinese records, which are apparently authentic, in the Yao dynasty from 2357 to 2261 B.C. certain parts of that country were then so thickly settled that the emperor directed that there be made what was probably the first soil survey and there were established nine different types of soil. There were the yellow and mellow soils of Yung Chow (Shensi and Kansu) which were put into the first class and the red, clayey rich soils of Su Chow (Shantung, Kiangsu and Anhwei) which were put into the second class. The third class comprised the whitish and rich salty soils of Tsing Chow (Shantung) while in the fourth class were placed the mellow, rich, dark and thin soils of Yu Chow (Honan). In the fifth class were the whitish and mellow soils of Ki Chow (Chili and Shanse), in the sixth class the blackish and rich soils of Yen Chow (Chili and Shantung) and in the seventh class the greenish and light soils of Liang Chow (Szechuen and Shensi). The miry soils of King Chow (Hunen and Huphe) were in the eighth class and the miry soils of Yang Chow (Kiangsu) were in the