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Recent Developments in Market Gardening

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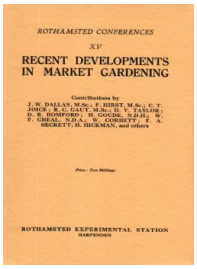

Foreword

Sir E. J. Russell

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FOREWORD

By Sir E. John Russell

The prevailing distress in British agriculture is causing farmers to examine all kinds of other possibilities and naturally they are looking to see what chances there may be for market garden crops. They are attracted by the circumstance that the area under these crops continues to expand: the acreages under green peas, cabbages, Brussels sprouts, cauliflowers, beans picked green, celery and rhubarb in England and Wales having been greater in 1931 than in any previous year of which there is any record; carrots and onions however, slightly fell off. In 1932 there was an even further increase for all crops excepting Brussels sprouts and cabbages. The acreages are:

	England and Wales			
	1922	*Average of 9 years,* 1922-1930	1931	1932
Peas picked green	50,418	48,675*	57,445	60,800
Brussels sprouts	14,951	22,876	35,580	32,900
Cabbages (Human consumption)	27,954	26,784	35,702	33,900
Cauliflower and Broccoli	10,475	12,504	15,783	17,600
Beans picked green ..	12,684	12,782*	13,218	14,400
Carrots	14,084	9,935	9,430	12,500
Rhubarb	5,718	6,522	7,843	8,300
Celery	5,282	5,581	7,310	7,700
Onions	3,557	2,276	1,534	1,900

*1926-1930 only.

Figures for 1922 and 1932 kindly supplied by Mr. H. V. Taylor. Increase on acreage 1922 to 1932, 45,000 acres.

The agriculturist argues that he has had to reduce the areas under agricultural crops because he lost money over them: the market gardeners, on the other hand, have increased their acreages and must therefore have found their crops profitable.

There is the further consideration that demands for vegetables are increasing, and that recent fiscal changes have imposed duties on certain imported vegetables and fruits which give the English grower a sufficient degree of confidence to permit him to grow them. Mr. Dallas' paper shows how these various factors have reacted in Bedfordshire, one of the chief market garden areas in England, which was dealt with in detail because it can be regarded in many ways as typical.

Finally, the new industry of canning fruit and vegetables is now established and its success reveals the existence of a demand which needed only to be discovered in order to ensure its being satisfied. It opens up new hopes, for already an export demand has arisen from

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English people resident in the tropics who yearn for the taste of English fruits and vegetables. The canning industry has the great advantage for the grower that it enables him to work on a contract system so that he knows beforehand the price he will get and can adjust his procedure accordingly.

These crops would have had no interest to the farmer but for the fact that they are not necessarily restricted to market gardens. Some of them can quite well be grown on farms as alternatives to roots. Brussels sprouts, cabbages and cauliflowers have the advantage that the residues and any excess not saleable can be consumed on the farm : this problem was discussed at the Tenth Conference,* when enthusiastic accounts were given of the value of stalks of Brussels sprouts for stimulating the flow of milk in dairy cattle. Peas are already known to farmers as a grain crop : the cultivation of the crop for picking should not present insuperable difficulties. The practical problems of the change over from ordinary farm crops to market garden crops are discussed by Mr. Joice and others in the following pages, and methods are described by which in practise they have actually been overcome.

Farmers must not suppose, however, that the sowing of market garden crops is going to be a remedy for all their ills. Market gardeners have their own troubles, as the new entrant to the industry soon discovers. Swedes, turnips, kale and other crops grown for livestock are accepted without demur by the animals at the farm buildings. The vegetable market, however, is by no means unlimited ; it is very particular, even fastidious, and the buyer may refuse cabbages, sprouts and other vegetables for reasons which may appear wholly inadequate to the farmer who feels rather proud of them. Mr. Taylor's paper sets out the facts very concisely.

The requirements for the canning industry are only beginning to be known ; Mr. Hirst's statement will therefore be welcomed by growers.

Among the problems which are discussed in the following pages are the supply of suitable seed, the use of labour saving machinery for cultivation, the proper manuring of the crop, the crop diseases, especially the vague " sickness," and the ways of ensuring the best condition or quality for market. There still remains much need for experiments to discover more about these things, and there are other problems to work out, one of the most important being the best way of combining vegetable production with production of animals, such as poultry or pigs, so as to ensure economic utilisation of unsaleable material and some supplies of animal manure ; and these we hope will shortly be undertaken. But the greatest problem of all, which lies perhaps beyond the power of any body of mere men, is to persuade the lady in the kitchen to cook vegetables so that they can be eaten with pleasure and satisfaction. Who of us would have the courage to venture on this errand ?

*" The Growth of Cheaper Winter Food for Livestock " Report (2/6), obtainable from Rothamsted.

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