

On Overcoming the Blight

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and feed costs but no serious damage to the agricultural community.

What concerns individual farmers, of course, is that their personal losses may be far greater than the average, or that they will be stuck for more than the average share of increased feed costs.

There is also some concern that the national loss will exceed 5 to 10 per cent. This would make the overall situation much more serious.

The Future

Looking ahead, the major concern is how serious the blight will be next year and the year after.

How well will the blight winter over? Reports indicate the blight will winter over, but to what extent? Will the blight get an earlier start next year and do more damage? Perhaps this will depend in part of what type growing season occurs.

In this respect, farmers should perhaps strongly consider the advice of Arnold Lueck, associate county agent. Lueck states the blight has been most severe in fields where the corn crop has been under stress, either from not having enough or too much of various types of nutrients, where the crop has been weakened by rootworm, where the plant population has been too high, where a heavy stand of weeds has been allowed to compete with the corn.

Review Management

If Lueck's analysis is valid, it would indicate that farmers next year should carefully review their management practices before planting time to give the corn

crop the best possible growing conditions. The corn rows shouldn't be too close, the plantings shouldn't be too frequent within the row, the soil should be tested in advance and the proper ratio of nutrients applied, proper precautions should be taken against such pests as rootworm where they have been found to exist this year, proper weed control should be used. In short, the farmer should be extra careful to use the kind of practices which he should already be using anyway.

Seed Corn Firms

Also for the future, all eyes will be turning to the seed corn firms.

Can the firms supply enough resistant seed corn to avert a crisis? Reports on this so far are contradictory, with some sources citing huge seed corn crop losses to the blight and others citing such factors as foreign seed corn production as a salvation.

Farmers should be able to count on an all-out effort by both government and private firms to develop resistant seed very rapidly. Various sources indicate it will take from one to three years to develop adequate supplies of resistant seed. But perhaps by next year, farmers can already expect a significant trend toward elimination of the most susceptible varieties.

The speed with which the job is accomplished may ultimately determine how serious the blight situation is for the farmer and the nation.

Finally

With so many unknown factors and so much depending on what happens in the future, it is impossible to say how serious the blight really is.

The farmer shouldn't lull himself into not being prepared for the consequences of the blight, but as the same time there are many bright signs. Like many another disaster which has befallen the farm community in the past, it may soon be found that this too shall pass.

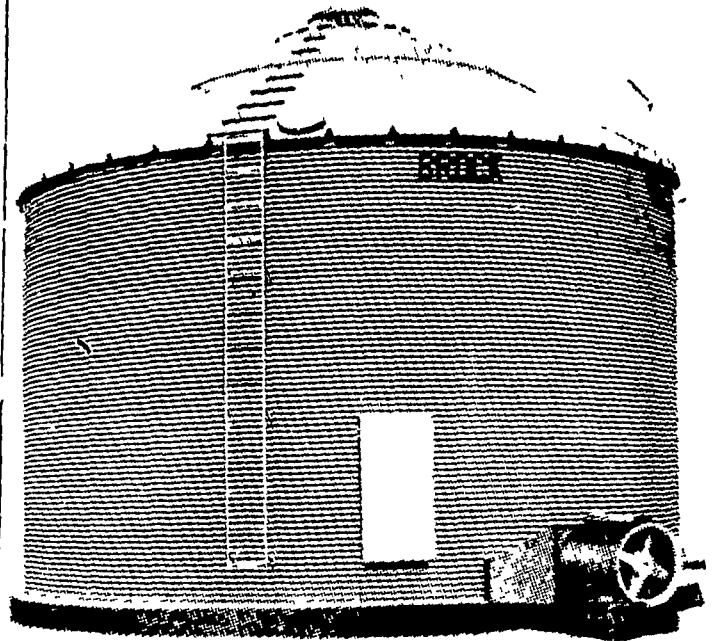


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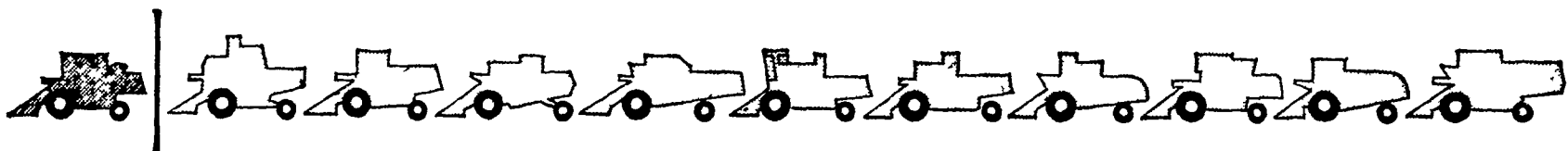
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