

Buckwheat - a market for every bushel grown

LANCASTER, Pa. — In Lancaster, buckwheat noodles are even better than the perennial hotcakes. This is the news for American farmers, because the Japanese aren't able to grow buckwheat to fill domestic needs. In the past 10 years, we never been able to get the demand for buckwheat," notes Ben Fought, president of the Buckwheat Institute of America. "If a farmer wants to grow buckwheat, he sure can't have any trouble finding a market." Fought is a partner in R.S. Fought & Sons, a family feed business and flour mill in Hughesville, Pa. The lights have been in the buckwheat business in and

around Hughesville, which is in the central part of the state, since 1909. Fought said the farmers who grow buckwheat for him usually do so as a second crop or after the first crop has failed.

"Buckwheat matures in only 70 to 90 days," Fought said. "A good yield is 30 bushels to the acre, which is much less than other cereal grain crops. But a crop of buckwheat can produce income in fields that might otherwise produce nothing in a particular year."

Last year's buckwheat crop sold for around \$6 a hundredweight (a bushel of buckwheat weighs about 48 pounds). This year's crop should sell for at least that and could go higher, Fought said. "And when the

Japanese go into the market, they'll pay just about anything for good buckwheat. They've paid up to \$14 a hundredweight."

While gross income from an acre of buckwheat may be lower than it would be from other grains, it can still be a worthwhile crop for many farmers.

"Buckwheat seed is inexpensive, it doesn't get planted until July and it doesn't take any fertilizer," Fought pointed out. "In fact, it hates good ground. So with very little outlay, a farmer might get a crop in a field that otherwise would be good for nothing but weeds."

Fought said that he and other members of the Buckwheat Institute are trying to develop more interest in the crop. This Fall they plan to schedule their annual meeting to coincide with the 1977 PennAg Industries Association conference in Lancaster, Pa. PennAg is a trade organization of some 400 Pennsylvania agri-business firms. Most of the Buckwheat Institute members also belong to PennAg.

Not only will buckwheat produce more income than a field of weeds, it can also be used to eradicate weeds. It grows so quickly and so vigorously that it soon chokes out even persistent weeds like Canada thistle.

Actually, buckwheat is a kind of weed, itself, rather than a true cereal grain. It is a first cousin to such pests as

dock, sorrel, knotweed, bindweed, and smartweed.

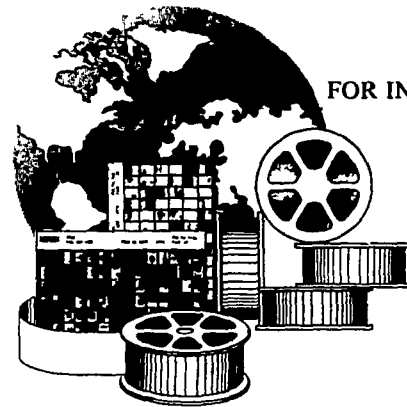
Buckwheat is good eating. Mixed with wheat flour it adds a robust flavor to bread. Buckwheat pancakes have long been a breakfast staple. Groats are the roasted inner part of the grain, after the hull has been removed. They can be used much like rice or to make a porridge. Butchers who make scrapple use buckwheat flour by the 100-pound bag. It finds its way into sausage, too.

Nutritionally, buckwheat outshines the common cereal grains. Protein content ranges from 11 to 15 per cent, much better than corn. And in protein actually absorbed by the body, it outshines rye, whole wheat, and even soybean flour.

When buckwheat was commonly grown, particularly in the Northeast, the crop was one of the beekeeper's principle sources of nectar. Now it's such an uncommon commodity that the strong flavored buckwheat honey is more expensive than just about any other type.

Fought said the demand for buckwheat and buckwheat products has been increasing in recent years, both from the Japanese and from shoppers here at home. "I think people are going to want to buy more and more buckwheat in the coming years. I just hope we can get enough farmers to grow it."

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Lampeter Fair receives \$6500

LAMPETER, Pa. — Senator Richard Snyder will present a check for \$6500 to the West Lampeter Fair this Saturday evening. The money will go toward the cost of raising a pole barn, constructed for last year's fair. Snyder will attend the 23rd annual chicken barbecue at the fairgrounds, and is scheduled to arrive at 5 p.m.

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