

# Future of the Peanut Depends Upon An Expanded Market

## Record Rise of the Soybean Is Believed Possible for Peanuts, Marketing Specialists Point Out

### Research Work Is Offering Greatest Hope For Peanuts

#### Improvement Needed in Handling and Marketing The Goobers

Speaking before the twenty-second annual convention of the Southeastern Peanut Association in Pennsylvania last week, J. B. Weyoff, Chief of Marketing Section, United States Department of Agriculture, pointed out that the future of the lowly peanut depends on an expanded market that research, educational and promotional work will have to be advanced if the peanut farmer is to survive. The specialist's address follows:

It was only about six months ago that I first became seriously interested in the peanut industry and its problems. My interest has not wavered. I'm not like the new office boy employed by a big law firm. After he had been there a couple of weeks one of the members of the firm rather facetiously asked him how he liked the law. "I don't like it, and I wish I'd never learned it," he said. After six months I fear I haven't learned the first rudiments of the peanut business. That I am interested in it is certain.

To the average man the peanut is something connected with ball games or elephants. On second thought it may occur to him that peanuts add to the palatability of candy bars, and that peanut butter is sometimes a good filling for a sandwich. He has no conception of the present and the still greater potential value of peanuts as a source of food for man or beast and as a basis for industrial products.

In recent years we have seen another agricultural product, the soybean, raised in the public mind from obscurity from the obscurity of an oriental novelty to the spotlight of persistent publicity. The soybean is a valuable addition to our agricultural economy. Soybean oil can be used in food and in paint. Soybean meal is a good protein feed; and by further processing it may be made into yield flour and synthetic plastics.

**The Modest Peanut**

But how about the modest peanut which has been playing shyly at home all these years while the glamorous, oriental soybean has been parading before us?

The peanut has all the virtues of the soybean except that its oil is not a drying oil. This non-drying quality, however, is in itself a virtue, because it opens to peanut oil many uses for which soybean oil is not available. The oil of the soybean as a vegetable is more than offset by the value of the peanut for oil of high rating for peanut butter and for use in confections.

Yet the acreage of soybeans harvested for beans has increased from 415,000 acres in 1925 to 1,068,000 acres in 1939. 2,697,000 acres in 1935 and 4,926,000 acres in 1939, an increase of more than 900 per cent in fourteen years. Production has increased from 4,819,000 bushels in 1925 to 13,471,000 bushels in 1939, 44,376,000 bushels in 1935 and 87,409,000 bushels in 1939, an increase of nearly 1700 per cent in fourteen years. Expressed in weight, the soybean production has increased from 146,250 tons in 1925 to 494,130 tons in 1939, 1,331,340 tons in 1935 and 2,622,270 tons in 1939.

In the same period peanuts picked and threshed have increased from about 1,000,000 acres to 1,860,000 acres and the production from around 469,000 tons to 600,000 tons. This is a healthy increase, and I do not wish to suggest that there should have been a more rapid increase in production with the means of utilization available, but the comparison of peanut acreage and production with that of soybeans, does suggest possibilities of further growth of the peanut industry when new methods of utilization are developed.

The soybean, of course, has the advantage of a cost of production lower than that for peanuts. The yield per acre is higher and harvesting requires no hand labor. These advantages have made the soybean a valuable alternative crop in areas where oats and corn acreages have been reduced. Similarly, peanuts are the logical alternative to cotton in many areas of the South, but the cost of production is still too high for competition of peanuts with soybeans on a price basis.

The comparison between soybeans and peanuts should not be carried too far, for they are distinct products, both valuable, and competing with each other only for certain uses. The lesson the peanut industry should learn from the success story of the soybean is that of the value of research and the value of educational and promotional work.

**Value of Research**

The rapid increase in the production and utilization of soybeans was made possible by years of intensive work by the State experiment stations in the North Central States, by the Bureau of Plant Industry and of Chemistry and Engineering in the Department of Agriculture, and by private industry. This research

### FARMS DECREASE

The number of farms in Martin County continues to dwindle, according to preliminary figures released recently by the supervisor of the 1940 census. Ten years ago there were 2,759 farms in the county. Five years later or in 1935, the number had dropped to 2,683, and now the number is down to 2,419.

What does the decrease in the number of farms mean? No one seems to offer any definite reason or any results of the downward trend. It is possible that farm youth in this county is selling out his farm interests and looking for a livelihood in the towns and cities.

was directed first to the development of new and improved varieties and new methods of cultivation and harvesting. The average yield per acre has been nearly doubled in fifteen years and varieties of higher oil content have been developed. A vast amount of research has been conducted on new uses for oil and meal and it is through many of these new uses that publicity has been obtained. It is interesting to note, however, that the much publicized use of soybean meal in plastics has utilized less than one per cent of the meal produced. More than 80 per cent of soybean oil is still used for food purposes and the meal is mainly utilized as a high protein concentrate feed.

Much research work has also been done on peanuts, but it must be admitted that peanut research has lagged behind that for soybeans. One reason may be the greater resources for experimentation and study in the northern as compared with the Southern State experiment stations. Another reason may be that no great industries like the Ford, Glidden, Archer-Daniels-Midland, Spencer-Kellogg, and Staley companies have interested themselves in peanuts. Recently, more research work on peanuts has been undertaken by southern experiment stations, and a broad program of peanut studies has been developed for the new Southern Regional Laboratory at New Orleans.

Research is needed to develop new and better varieties of peanuts for various uses. There should be varieties of higher oil content than any that we have today which would be used for crushing purposes only, and other varieties for out-of-hand eating and other purposes. Better methods of cultivation and harvesting should be developed to increase yields and reduce costs.

It should be possible to reduce the total cost of production of peanuts for crushing purposes to a point at which they could be grown and sold profitably without any government assistance.

**Potential Markets**

Then there are improvements needed in the processes of handling and marketing peanuts and in the mechanical processes incident to crushing them for oil and meal. Peanut oil is a quality product, and its quality needs to be emphasized. That means that more attention should be given to the modernizing of crushing mills, and especially to the cold pressing process which would make available virgin oil for salad and other uses. Advantage should be taken of the fact that peanut oil is perhaps the best of all vegetable oils for deep-fat frying and that it ranks with olive oil for salad and table use.

There is still much to be learned about the chemistry of peanut oil. We know it is good for shortening, margarine, salad and cooking oils and synthetic waxes, but better methods of processing for these uses may be developed. We need to know more of the composition and properties of peanut oil. Much can still be done with peanut oil by-products. There are among the projects to be undertaken by the New Orleans Regional Research Laboratory.

It is known that peanut meal may be used in the manufacture of synthetic fibres, films, plastics, adhesives and sizes. One of the most promising uses is for the manufacture of a synthetic fibre which may be substituted for wool. Indications are that peanut meal may be the best material available for the manufacture of wool substitutes.

From peanut shells many valuable products may be derived, but too much hope should not be based on industry profits from shells. Most of the products now known from such waste products are either low value products or products of high processing cost. Their production at a profit depends entirely on the low cost of the raw material. One of the most promising uses of peanut shells is in the production of furfural, a chemical which is used in large quantities for the purification of petroleum and in the manufacture of synthetic plastics. The principal source of furfural at present is in oat hulls, a by-product of the manufacture of rolled oats. Peanut shells are an equally good source of furfural and they are available in any quantity that may be needed for a long time to come. At present the supply of oat hulls is largely limited by the utilization of oats in hulled form. There are some indications of what may be done for peanuts by research.

### Promotion

The next task is to acquaint the consuming public with the exceptional quality and value of peanut products. The modest peanut must acquire some of the glamour which the soybean has attained. When peanut processors are able to supply products of uniformly high quality, it should be possible to make the fact known to the public by educational publicity.

It has been said, "This soybean production has grown too fast. We're all pretty well scared about it. We know it can't go on at this rate and it may have gone too fast and too far already." I haven't heard anyone say that about the peanut industry, which in the last four or five years has done nothing sensational or disturbing, but has become a well built and well stabilized industrial structure, economically sound, and increasingly profitable to the various elements which constitute the important parts of the structure. Its stability comes mainly from a program inaugurated by the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the industry itself and based on a stabilization fund from Congressional appropriations. A fund which might, if this were a corporation, be considered an annual capital promotional investment. It is true that this fund is a small but important element in the structure, by the removal of which its stability would be weakened. In comparison with the towering competing industry which I have been discussing, the peanut industry is a relatively small structure, possible of definite expansion on a thoroughly sound basis by a united cooperative effort on the part of all the elements in the industry, fighting to maintain the ground already gained and to add to it each year in new markets and new uses. I look for a great future for this industry.

### PRODUCTION

The frightening habit annexed by the world and especially Americans in the use of tobacco products, principally cigarettes, has only one equal and that is the mad habit of the farmers in expanded production in excess of consumption.

Last year the twenty tobacco-growing states produced 1,848,654 pounds of tobacco, including all types of the weed for use in the manufacture of cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff. Plantings were increased from 1,599,300 acres in 1938 to 2,014,500 in 1939, North Carolina accounting for approximately 250,000 acres of the increase. To aggravate the situation, per acre yields were greater last year than they were the year before.

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## Interesting Story Told About Civil War 'Ram'

### Completed April 18, 1864, Ram Had Brief But Brilliant Career

#### Ship Was Finally Blown Up By Torpedo While At Anchor

(Continued from preceding page)

rollina pine and oak. She fought two battles in North Carolina and was finally covered by North Carolina waters.

I have before me a letter from Mr. Thomas P. Johnston, of Bristol, Tenn., which I am quoting below:

October 18th 1939.  
Judge John W. Darden,  
Plymouth, N. C.  
My dear Judge Darden:  
I find in the papers of my late father, Mr. Thomas P. Johnston, of Salisbury, N. C., a letter from you written on September 12th 1939. I doubt if my father made any answer to this inquiry. He was quite old, in fact when he died on October 12, he had lived 94 years, one month and four days.  
I suspect that my father was the last living representative of the crew of the Confederate Ram "Albemarle." He did not have any written records

### MUTE EVIDENCE

That the old "Albemarle" saw real action is evidenced by the remains now on display in Raleigh. The old smokestack in the State Hall of History is riddled from top to bottom.

in regard to his service on the boat, but he had told me often of his experiences. I should have written down these reminiscences, but a very busy life has prevented by engaging in so welcome a pastime.

My father served in the early days of the Confederacy under Captain A. G. Brenner as an ordnance messenger. He enlisted in Raleigh, N. C., on his eighteenth birthday, September 8th 1863. He was assigned to the Ram "Albemarle" during the construction and, therefore, helped in building her until she was floated in the spring freshets of 1864. In the crew he was the paymaster's special, buying provisions and paying off members of the crew. He was in all battles of her brief career (about six months) and was aboard her when she was sunk in Plymouth harbor by Lieut. Cushing.

He was then assigned to the defense of Fort Fisher and was in the Fort during the bombardment on Christmas day 1864. When Fort Fisher fell, he was sent to join Lee's Army in Virginia. Soon after the war was over, he returned to his home in Salisbury, N. C., where he lived the

most of his life. He died just this past week.

When you have finished your story on the "Albemarle," I shall be very glad to have a copy.


Very sincerely yours,  
THOMAS P. JOHNSTON

Many stories are told about the great Ram Albemarle and her activities around Plymouth and in the Albemarle Sound during her brief existence. I shall relate one of them here. I do not vouch for the truthfulness of the story. I am relating it as it was told to me many years ago.

The Federal troops, which had occupied Plymouth for some months, as a precautionary measure, had placed large calibre guns at the intersection of Water and Monroe Streets, as well as other streets that cross Water Street. There was at the intersection of Monroe and Water Streets one of the largest of the guns, which was trained on river traffic. They undoubtedly knew that the Albemarle was coming on down the river and was expected to arrive at Plymouth about dawn on the morning of April 19th. The gun crew was at their post and ready for action at a moment's notice. Just as the big ship was drifting into the range of the big gun and the crew was about to fire a young soldier, dressed in a Federal officer's uniform, appeared on the scene and exclaimed, "My God men, don't fire on that vessel, it is one of ours." This threw the crew into confusion and the vessel passed by without being fired upon. They soon learned that it was not one of their boats but the Confederate Ram Albemarle. They then made a careful search for the officer, who had misled them, but he could not be found.

If the above story is true, I would like very much to learn just who the brave young Confederate soldier was who did such a heroic act.

**NOT BLOWING— JUST CONTENTED**



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