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Home-Grown Nitrogen as a Guide Post to "\$500 More a Year Farming."

NITROGEN IS ONE of the things we must have if we grow crops; and if we are to grow paying crops, we must have more than most of our soils now contain. Our cotton and grains and grasses—all our crops, in fact, except the legumes—remove nitrogen from the soil; and even more than the crops remove is washed and leached away.

This, then, is the problem we are up against: The already deficient quantity of nitrogen in our soils is continually being reduced by the crops we remove and by the action of the elements. We must not only keep up, we must increase the supply before we can make the crops we should. How are we to do this?

There are two ways: (1) We can get it in commercial fertilizers, or (2) we can get it by the growing of leguminous crops.

We have tried the fertilizer plan—that is, we have tried the putting on of 4 to 6 pounds per acre, at a cost of 20 cents or more a pound, to replace that contained in the crops we took off. In the seed of a cotton crop making 250 pounds of lint to the acre there will be about 16 pounds of nitrogen. This, at 20 cents, is worth \$3.20—much more than the farmer gets for it. When he puts on the land 300 pounds of 8-2-2 goods he applies only 6 pounds of nitrogen, which costs him at least \$1.20, and leaves his land poorer by 10 pounds of nitrogen than it was in the beginning. As Prof. Massey says: "He sells the nitrogen in his cotton seed at about 10 cents a pound and buys back a fraction of it in commercial fertilizers at 20 cents." Then, if the land is left bare till the next cotton crop is planted, the winter rains will wash out more nitrogen than the crops remove. The result of this method of trying to supply nitrogen is shown in the low average yields of all staple crops in the South, in the thousands of acres of land abandoned because they will no longer produce enough to pay for working them, in the low average income and the consequent poverty of Southern farmers.

The second way to get this necessary nitrogen, the growing of leguminous crops, is not an untried way. The best farmers depend largely on it, and there are few who have not tried it at some time or other. But it should be the rule and not the exception. No Southern farmer should need to buy any nitrogen in commercial fertilizers, except for special crops or under special conditions where a quick-acting form is needed. The picture and the letter printed herewith show how this may be done. Crimson clover in the winter and cowpeas in the summer, these two crops—not necessarily following each other, ordinarily they should not—would, if properly used, in five years enable the farmers in the South to grow better crops than they now do without spending one cent for nitrogen, where now \$25,000,000 is expended.

It is only a question of whether the farmer will let nitrogen impoverish him or make it help enrich him. Can any one conceive of any good reason for buying at 20 cents per pound what he can get for nothing—can even get paid for taking? For the legumes not only supply nitrogen, they make the finest feed for all sorts of stock; and if one-third the land planted in cotton were each year devoted to leguminous crops, in five years, there would not only be more bales of cotton made at a much smaller cost per bale, but there would also be more and better live stock in the South, better crops of all kinds, fewer bills to pay for feed and "supplies," more money coming in and less going out, richer farmers and a more prosperous country.

The most prosperous farmers of the South, almost without exception, get their nitrogen by growing legumes; the poorest ones get theirs from the fertilizer bag. One way leads to poverty, the other leads to prosperity; and it is for each man to choose which path he will travel.



This is a photograph of my clover field containing 9 acres. I used one and a half bushels of crimson clover seed. It made a beautiful field of clover, cutting about two tons of hay to the acre. The soil is not unusually rich, just a medium rich, grey land, such as will bring a fair crop of corn, wheat or oats. The hay is very superior to common meadow hay, and is not hard to take care of. This patch will give me all the hay I need with some to spare. I shall sow in peas after the clover as there will be ample time for a full crop, either for turning or picking.

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