

1-1-1961

Haphazard Seed Production

H. D. Bunch

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/seedtechpapers>

Recommended Citation

Bunch, H. D. (1961). Haphazard Seed Production. *Seedsman's Digest*, 1-2.

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSUES) at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Seed Technology Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

HAPHAZARD SEED PRODUCTION ^{1/}

H. DEAN BUNCH ^{2/}

There has never been a real place in the seed industry for the careless of "happenstance" seed producer. He exists only because he has non-discriminating customers. Seed buyers encourage him by purchasing the lowest-priced rough seed available, regardless of quality. Farmers encourage this type of production by "across the fence" buying, with little regard for genetic purity or quality factors.

Who is this producer? Is he a 10 acre man or does he measure his production acres in three figures? Actually he is not characterized by the size of his operations. He is better identified by other features. He is a fellow who is growing a cash crop of cotton, soybeans, grain, etc., putting the highest quality on the market and saving some of the tail end of the crop for planting. He doesn't bother to have it tested, since he is only going to plant it himself or sell a little to his neighbors. Besides "how good can a free test at the State Seed Lab be?"

This type producer may be rare, or at least he is not referred to in all quarters as a seed producer. But consider another type who is definitely in the business. This second man sees no difference in producing a crop for food, feed, or fiber than in producing it for seed. He does not know or does not observe that many practices which are satisfactory for the production of the former are not good practices for producing high quality seed. Planting rates, spacing, weed control measures and fertilization may differ, depending upon the crop and the use to be made of it. Methods of harvesting and subsequent handling provide good examples of how the intended use of the product affects the care of the seed. In general, grain or other seeds not to be planted can be left in the field longer after maturity than can seed crops. Drying temperatures can be higher when applied to grain for feed or food than for seed grain. While damaged kernels is of importance in market grain, mechanical damage is of much greater consequence in planting seed. Cotton waiting to be mechanically picked may be useless as planting seed.

Seed moisture levels during storage differ also. While 15% commercial corn may be safely stored for a given period, this same corn would not make very strong planting seed if stored at this moisture level.

^{1/} Reprinted from "Seedsmen's Digest", February 1961.

^{2/} Dr. Bunch is Supervisor, Seed Technology Laboratory, Mississippi State University, State College, Mississippi.

Other types of poor seed producers could be described, but the important point of note is that seed production is a special kind of operation. This is not to say that a good seed producer cannot be a good grain grower, tree farmer, or a successful livestock producer at the same time. It is to emphasize that those operations directed toward seed production must be handled with the aim of producing high quality planting seed as a first consideration.

It requires an alert man to consider and apply good seed production methods. He must know his land, his crops, the cultural practices which tend to favor the production of good seed rather than forage or fiber. He must secure the proper types of seed stocks, observe isolation distances in accordance with the demands of the particular crop; control weeds, with special emphasis on those whose seeds cannot be separated from the harvested crop seed; harvest at moisture contents to give the least amount of mechanical damage to the seed, and artificially dry and store the seed at safe temperature and moisture levels.

On special crops such as hybrid corn the producer may be planting as many as three different types of seed stocks in the same field and in a definite pattern. Only the man who is on top of his job can accomplish the trick without mishap.

Seed production is "special". The really important items being handled cannot be seen. The life of the future plant contained within the seed is the product of the seed producer. If this life can be destroyed or seriously impaired during the production of the seed crop, then the producer has failed. The failure is not always his, nevertheless, good production practices will tend to reduce the number of occasions when failures do occur.

A good seed producer is "salt of the earth". He should be proud of his occupation, because he is truly producing the basic commodity which sustains life. This very fact should also make him humble with the knowledge of the huge responsibility upon his shoulders. Producing high quality seed is hard work and an expensive business. Seedsmen can help develop more good producers by paying for high quality seed from the field. It will often pay for itself in the cleaning plant alone. And if not here, then surely in the market. For, inspite of the results of drill box surveys, which indicate that much poor quality seed is planted, the fact remains that an increasing number of farmers are demanding the best seed available. A continuous trend in this direction will elevate the good seed producers to his proper place in the business of feeding and clothing the peoples of the earth.