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## GLF agronomist calls grasslands biggest single untapped market for fertilizers in the East

ONE OF THE FOREMOST SUPPLIERS of agricultural chemicals in the East is the Cooperative Grange League Federation Exchange of Ithaca, N. Y., serving over 100,000 farmers in New York, New Jersey, and northern Pennsylvania. Last year, its sales of fertilizers, pesticides, and limestone reached a wholesale dollar volume of close to \$20 million. In the region it serves, GLF is the largest single supplier of mixed fertilizers and fertilizer materials.

Chief technical man in GLF's soil building division is George H. Serviss, agronomist. A leading authority in his field, Serviss is his company's prime source of information on new trends in fertilizers. He is continually in touch with state agricultural experiment stations throughout the country, as well as with the USDA and other agricultural groups. If there is an important fertilizer conference anywhere in the U. S., he is almost certain to be there.

To carry forward his intensive fact-gathering campaign, Serviss spends at least half of his time out of the office. By keeping on the forefront of new technical developments, he is amply qualified to pass along to dealers and growers the latest and best agricultural information available. This he does through personal contacts and through his company's central information office in Ithaca.

As another major responsibility, Serviss supervises a field staff of seven technical representatives stationed in leading cities throughout the GLF territory. These field men work closely with dealers and farmers to promote the most effective use of fertilizers and pesticides. They work not only with GLF's own retail outlets but also with its franchised dealers, who sell about half of GLF's total agricultural chemicals output.

In addition, Serviss plays an active part in GLF's own research and development program. In large measure through his efforts, GLF decided to install a special pilot plant at Bridgeton, N. J., to test the production and marketing of liquid mixed fertilizers. A relatively new development in the East, liquid fertilizers, he believes, may have unique advantages in specific applications.

In recent years, Serviss has been especially concerned with promoting greater use of fertilizers on grasslands for dairy cattle. Grass fertilization, he emphasizes, is the largest single untapped market for fertilizers in the East. Dairy men could very profitably use several times more fertilizer on grass than they are now using. It's a matter of farmer education, and Serviss means to do something about it.

On the million or so acres of corn grown in the GLF area, use could also be made of at least 50% more fertilizer. Another application for fertilizers that could well be expanded is in the growing of oats on grasslands. Serviss and his staff are giving concentrated attention to all of these markets. "The potential is there," he says, "and our job is to develop it."

### Raised on the Farm

Serviss is no city slicker turned farm expert. As a boy, he grew up on farms in Arizona and Virginia. At the age of six, he was hauling water and wood for his father, a raiser of dairy cattle.

When it came to choosing a college course, Serviss just naturally selected agriculture. At Syracuse University, he majored in agronomy, with a liberal exposure to chemistry. After receiving his B.S. in 1925, he transferred to the University of Arizona for advanced training in agronomy.

After getting his master's degree in 1926, he did research for four years at the Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station on crop irrigation and fertilizers. His findings indicated clearly that fertilizers could very profitably be used in Arizona in the growing of cotton.

Later, he did fertilizer research for the Department of Agriculture in South Carolina and Florida. At the Orlando experiment station, he participated in some of the earliest work in this country on the role of minor elements in crop growth.

Between 1934 and 1945, Serviss was an extension agronomist with the New York Agricultural Experiment Station at Cornell. Working with farmers and county agents, he helped



**George H. Serviss**

Born Feb. 23, 1903, Raritan Town, N. J. Syracuse University, B.S. in 1925; University of Arizona, M.S.A. 1926; Ohio State University, work toward Ph.D., 1940-41. Assistant agronomist, USDA, in Fla., S. C., 1930-34. Extension agronomist, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 1934-45. Agronomist, Cooperative GLF Exchange, 1945 to date. Sec'y. (1953), V-Chmn. (1954), Chmn. (1955), ACS Division of Fertilizer and Soil Chemistry.

to carry information from the research laboratories to the farmers. This meant extensive traveling and speaking. During winter months, he often gave four or five talks a week before farm groups.

Joining GLF as its agronomist in 1945, he was instrumental in setting up its first quality control laboratory. He also played a leading role in the company's first major promotional program on fertilizers. In furtherance of this program, he still gives talks before farm groups, although much of this activity has by now been turned over to his technical field staff.

An able writer, Serviss is coauthor of the text, "Grassland Farming," published two years ago. He is a frequent contributor to the *American Agriculturist* and other technical publications. For over 10 years, he has written a regular weekly column, "Current Crop Facts," for the GLF periodical.

In discussing present-day plant food problems, Serviss says that one of the biggest is the inadequate understanding of the value of fertilizers by fertilizer dealers themselves. Many of these dealers, he points out, also sell seed, feed, and equipment. Not nearly enough emphasis, he believes, is given to promoting fertilizers. However, through personal contacts, pamphlets, handbooks, posters, and other means, Serviss and his group are spreading the educational message. "It's important," he says. "After all, fertilizers are basic."