WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN WHY ?

Twenty Million Pound Tung Nut Crop Indicated

From a recent visit to the American tung tree belt, which is located in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, C. C. Concannon, chief of the Commerce Department's Chemical Division, learned that the 1938 crop is expected to yield in the neighborhood of twenty million pounds of nuts.

If this yield of nuts is attained, it will be equivalent to approximately four million pounds of oil, which, Mr. Cocannon pointed out, is less than 5 per cent of the annual requirements of American manufacturers of paints, varnishes, linoleums, oilcloths, printing inks, and numerous other products in which this essential raw material is found to be practically indispensable.

Earlier in the season fear was felt for the current crop due to premature blooming and the consequent danger of frost blight. The danger period has now passed, however, and except for a few groves, notably one of 1,000 acres which suffered a 90 per cent loss, fruit clusters are set, and barring the unusual, a good crop is assured, according to Mr. Concannon.

While convinced that the South has completed the groundwork for another great American agricultural industry, Mr. Concannon feels that there are still many difficult problems to face. First and foremost is the weather hazard, as the tung blossom is particularly sensitive to frost. In 1935 the entire crop was lost due to early blooming followed by unseasonable weather. In 1936 ten million pounds of nuts were harvested, but again in 1937 widespread frost damage resulted in very few nuts being produced. Other problems are the proper selection of soil, air and water drainage, and the elimination of ill-advised speculative movements, it was stated.

Mr. Concannon states that much money has been squandered throughout the tung belt in ill-starred ventures and urges that orchardists and prospective investors inform themselves thoroughly concerning the prospects for profits before investing time and money in tung groves. Acreage continues to be planted in places not suitable for the tung tree according to present accepted ideas, and all too frequently groves which might otherwise thrive fail from lack of care, according to the Commerce Department specialist.

He pointed out that the fundamental requirements of climate and soil are now generally known and that increasing attention is being given to the problem with the view to safeguarding future developments.

Mr. Concannon found in his tour of inspection that considerable new acreage has been set to tung trees during the past year, particularly in the Mississippi-Louisiana area. Although accurate records do not exist, he estimates that upwards of 150,000 acres are now planted to tung trees in the south, though he feels that due to neglect and other unfavorable factors, probably not more than half of this acreage will prove to be successful.

While the tung tree is not new to the south—a few experimental trees 30 years of age are still bearing in certain regions—there are practically no groves of any consequence more than eight or nine years of age, and the large majority of groves now properly planted and receiving adequate care are not yet of bearing age.

United States consumption of tung oil, practically all of which up to this time has come from China, has been increasing steadily in recent years. Last year when the record amount of close to 150,000,000 pounds were consumed, according to estimates, American importers paid China $20,000,000 for our requirements.

New Offices of Skelly Oil Company at Kansas City, Mo. Skelly manufactures special solvent cuts which are much used for the extraction of a variety of vegetable oils from seed.