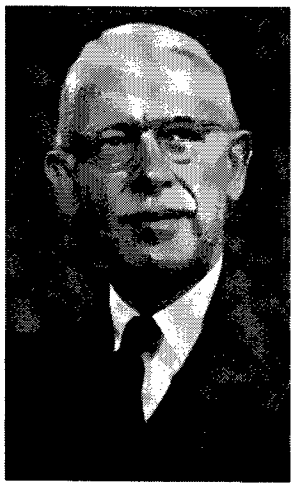
Your Technical Committees -- and Their Accomplishments

THE American Oil Chemists' Society has for many years supported a number of technical committees, whose work has been of outstanding value to the fats and oils industry. The Fat Analysis Committee, the Soap Analysis Committee, and the Glycerine Analysis Committee have developed many of the official methods and have studied critically scores of others. The editor of the Official Methods of the A.O.C.S., working in the closest cooperation with these as well as several other committees of narrower scope, has effected the publication of the volume of Methods, which is in constant use in every industrial and commercial laboratory in the fats and oils industry and may be found on the shelves of many libraries both in the United States and abroad. Although their principal task has been concluded, the three aforementioned committees continue to investigate new methods and strive to improve those already published, with annual revisions of the book.



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The Refining Committee has been active since the early days of the Society. In the 1920's this committee developed the present Official Methods for the refining of cottonseed and peanut oils, which for many years have formed the basis for trading in these commodities under the Rules of the National Cottonseed Products Association. During the past 10 years the Refining Committee has undertaken the development of refining methods for soybean oil of all types, and these methods have also been adopted by both the National Soybean Processors' Association and the National Cottonseed Products Association as the basis for their trading rules. The Refining Committee continues to study existing methods and to endeavor to work out new and improved ones and, like the other permanent committees, is always willing to give new ideas most careful consideration and often engages in collaborative programs to determine the accuracy and reproducibility of new techniques in refining.

Another committee which has done yeoman service to the Society and to the fats and oils industry is the Oil Color Committee. It was this group which, realizing the need for standardization of the Lovibond glasses which were universally employed for the grading of refined oils, enlisted the aid of the U. S. Bureau of Standards. As a result of the work of Priest and others, means of standardizing the glasses were worked out; and through the cooperation of the Bureau and the Electrical Testing Laboratories the Society was able to assist its members to obtain glasses which were standardized against a master set and thus greatly to improve agreement between laboratories. This committee also developed the modified Wesson Tintometer for use with the standardized glasses, and the adoption of this instrument again improved the reproducibility of color determinations on oils.

When as a result of the war and the attitude of the English makers of Lovibond glasses it was found impossible to obtain types which could be standardized, the Oil Color Committee developed a spectrophotometric method of reading oil colors which could be correlated with the old Lovibond system, and this has proven to be more reproducible than the former. The method has been adopted as tentative by the Society and has been reported upon favorably by the Technical Committee of the N.S.P.A. and the Chemists' Committee of the N.C.P.A. for use in trading in soybean, cotton, and peanut oils. Thus many industrial and some commercial laboratories who were without any means of reading oil colors are now equipped with an invaluable tool for this purpose.

SPACE precludes a discussion of the activities of many other committees, but the services of the Smalley Foundation Committee in maintaining a high standard of accuracy in the determination of oil and nitrogen in cottonseed and soybean meal and of the Referee Board in the certification of new commercial laboratories and in the constant check of those already certified through a yearly series of collaborative samples have proved of great value to the industry.

The Uniform Methods Committee acts as a sort of supreme court for all of the technical committees of the Society. All new methods proposed by the standing committees and subcommittees must be carefully considered and approved by it before they may become tentative or official. It is the prerogative of the Uniform Methods Committee to turn back any new method to the committee proposing it for further collaborative tests. Another function of the Uniform Methods Committee is to expedite the work of the standing committees by calling their attention to particularly urgent problems requiring special consideration.

There is no doubt of the value to the oil and fat industry of the standing committees of the A.O.C.S., and it is certain that they will continue to function in the future as well as they have in the past, also that the Official Methods of the A.O.C.S., now being translated into at least one foreign language, will be used even more widely as time passes.

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