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HARVESTING, STORING AND MARKETING THE

POTATO CROP

by

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A. POTATO HARVESTING MACHINERY:

If a person has an acre or more of potatoes and plans to grow them right along, a potato digger is a good investment because there is no other way to get the potatoes out of the ground without wasting time and spoiling the potatoes to a certain extent. If the potatoes are dug with forks, even when the man who does the digging is careful, a good many of them will be stuck through with the fork tines and more or less spoiled. If the potatoes are dug with a plow many of the tubers will be cut as some of them will lie either at the edge or at the bottom of the furrow. This causes a lot of waste. If you are obliged to dig the potatoes with a fork or with a plow because you cannot afford a digger be very careful. The fork should be put into the ground several inches from the place where the vines come out of the ground so as to avoid sticking the fork through the potatoes at the edge of the hill. If you use an ordinary plow, set it to plow at least six inches deep or at least an inch under the depth at which the potatoes were planted, and use a 14-inch plow if you can get one so that the furrow will be wide enough to get out all of the potatoes without cutting very many of them. But by all means get a good potato digger if you can, because it will pay out in the end. There are a number of good potato diggers on the market and most of the machinery dealers can help you look over the catalogues and select a good type.

B. PROPER POTATO STORAGE:

Potatoes do not ordinarily require such careful storage facilities as other vegetables. Pits, cellars and common storages are mostly used for this crop. Most of the crop is stored relatively close to the producing area and not many potatoes are stored near terminal markets.

In the preparation of potatoes for storage they should be free from serious damage caused by sunburn, cuts, scab, rot, blight or other injuries when placed in storage. They should be stored immediately after harvesting.

When stored in common cellars in the bulk they should be piled not more than five feet deep and should be put into bins which are separated by air spaces and which have slatted sides and bottom. It is not advisable to place the potatoes on earth floors, regardless of whether stored in bulk or in containers.

Low temperatures are necessary to prevent sprouting. About 55 - 40°F is the best temperature. It is desirable to keep the cellar dark also to prevent the growth of sprouts.

(For complete information regarding storage and storage houses consult S. D. Extension Cir. No. 9, "VEGETABLE STORAGE", State College, Brookings, S. D.)

C. -U. S. POTATO GRADES:

The most recent grades for potatoes were made up last year by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. These recommended grades are in general use on all markets of the United States. They are given in the attached Circular No. 238 issued July 1922.

It is important that growers become acquainted with the requirements of market standards. A thorough understanding of these grades may be obtained from this circular attached herewith.

D. POTATO MARKETING REQUIREMENTS:

The marketing of potatoes is indeed a much more complicated procedure than that of marketing almost any other product grown for commercial use in South Dakota. Being a perishable product additional problems arise that are not incident to non-perishables.

Probably the most important recommendation in connection with potato marketing would be to HAVE STANDARD GRADES. All potatoes should be graded before being marketed. An investigation conducted by the Minnesota Potato Exchange recently revealed the following information regarding the losses to the growers for shipping an ungraded product:

Loss from shrinkage for ungraded cars - - - - -	\$80.20
Loss from lower price received - - - - -	82.51
Additional expense at terminal (which would not be necessary on a graded product) - - - - -	21.13
Additional freight on culls and tubers graded out - -	52.46
Total loss per car - - - - -	\$236.30

It is very evident that it pays to sell only a well graded product. It is always easier to sell a well graded product at a premium than a poorly graded product at a discount. Such marketing services begin on the farm by growing pure varieties, keeping them up to standard and by giving the product the best of care.