

Certification From the Seller's Viewpoint

By Jack Cameron

"Thank you, Charlie."

"Well, as a representative of the seed industry, I feel rather privileged to **be** here and I think that the sellers of seed are very much in the minority of this group. We're primarily a group of prospective buyers or producers.

"One might say that there would be very few, if any, sellers of seed who would **be** really eager to see a certification program go through. There are reasons for that. You've got far more complications to your business, you've got an added cost gone into your product. There is no businessman who is going to stay in business who doesn't produce a product that the purchasers want. There are all kinds of degrees of quality within a product, and within tree seed. We have some of the more difficult types of quality to define. On the West Coast, we have been particularly **privileged** to deal with **extremely** cooperative groups of people. The state organizations, the Federal

Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management **as well as** the timber industry have pretty much taken the outlook of, with some exceptions, procuring their seed supplies through the commercial seed dealer. The seed dealers, of course, have the responsibility to supply material to 'the purchaser which they want. I hadn't thought of speaking too much about the proposed seed certification authority on the West Coast, 'but from the remarks made here, . I think that it perhaps might be a little more in order than I had thought. The Northwest Forestry Seed Committee two years 'ago set up a subcommittee on seed certification with the idea of exploring what the needs were and what approach might be taken to setting up certification.' From this committee came a suggestion that the seed dealers of the West Coast might get together and form their own organization and put forth a proposed seed certification plan. This suggestion was acted upon, and we now have the association of eleven firms on the West Coast which form the West Coast Forest Tree Seed Dealers Association. This association has set about sponsoring another nonprofit association, which is named the West Coast Forest Tree Seed Certifying Authority, a long—handled **name. The** purpose of this organization is to set up a certifying procedure which can be used to certify the origin of seed for governmental purposes and to fill the needs of private industry and at the same time fill the need for seed to be exported, primarily to Western Europe. The approach that's taken has changed several times along the line as suggestions have come in from other groups. We've sought and gained assistance from a good many people and organizations. In reference to what we have at the present time, the West Coast Forest Tree Seed Certifying Authority is incorporated in the state of Washington. The articles of the corporation are filed and it is **an** official organization. The **by—laws** of the corporation are in the state of being revised. We feel that at our next meeting, I believe the sixteenth of September, we will arrive at a final revision of the by—laws. We expect, of course, that as the organization **gets** into practice, there will be amendments and changes made. **The** organization as made up will be controlled by a Board of Directors, half of which will be appointed by the West Coast Forestry Association. There, we're thinking primarily of two possibilities which are the Western Forestry Conservation Association or **the** Industrial Forestry Association. We have' approached the West Coast Forestry Conservation Association. They have given us encouragement that they will be interested **in participating in a** program of **selecting** trustees for a certifying authority. The other half of the trustees would be appointed by the Seed Dealers Association so that we end **up** with a 50 percent buyer and 50 percent seller representation in the controlling body. The board of trustees will then select a seed certifier. This **individual or** corporation, it may be any individual who would act as the seed certifier or it may be a consulting forestry firm who would delegate someone in their organization to be the official seed certifier. The degree of inspection **in** the field is, as Dick pointed out, governed by the amount of money, that the 'Our—. chaser wants to spend per pound of seed. This will dictate the

degree of field inspection. In addition to this \$50 a day cost for field inspection, there are considerable other costs that are involved. We have a lot of records to be kept, inspection of extraction plants to see to it that identity is preserved throughout the extraction, and in storage and records must be kept of the sales of the seed so that in the case of collection in a certain geographical area which would be assigned a collection number by a certified authority, we can find out whether a dealer has sold 10,000 pounds and collected only 1,000 pounds. All of this will have to be maintained by the authorities so that we can, through the system of records, keep watch

on the pounds of seed. There are two basic approaches to certification as we have thought of it. One is the certification or the verification of the integrity the person who is doing the collecting. For this approach, the system of records at minimum standards has been set up, where each dealer will have to keep records of his collections and make certain inspections of his own, etc., on down through the whole procedure. This will be supplemented by field inspections by representatives of the certifying authority. The degree of field inspection is something that is going to have to be decided by the board of trustees. Of course, we can go to the extreme if you want to verify every seed or every sack of cones coming from one specific place, we're going to have to have as many inspectors in the field as there are cone pickers, and we might as well forget the whole thing. Or, you can go to the extent in this checking of records of assuming that people are honest. In between here some place lies the economical answer; and it's not only an economical answer from the purchase price of the seed, it's an economical answer as to the use of the seed. There is certainly no use of knowing the very tree that the seed comes from unless you have some way to make use of this knowledge. There is no reason for knowing the exact stand that the seed comes from unless you are going to make use of this knowledge. This is a point we must bear in mind. The geneticist has one set of standards that he would want to use for seed certification. A rather intensive tree farmer may have another set of standards. The State of Oregon may have another set of standards. The Forest Service may have another set of standards, all based upon the use they're going to make of this seed and the controls that they can exercise for the use of the seed. So that the seed certification program has to be flexible. Flexibility does not necessarily mean that it has to be unreliable. There are many cases, some of which have been cited at our seed dealers meetings, that there are those who would like to have seed certified as being from Western Washington or Oregon. That's the total degree of seed certification that they want. There are those who would like to have seed certified, as Charlie pointed out, from 1,000 to 2,000 feet elevation in the Skagit River Valley and you can carry it on to almost any individual organization or person. This has been some of the basis of the difference of opinion that has been expressed that some of these certifying programs have been set up primarily for the certification of orchard-grown seed or seed from tree improvement areas. We of the West Coast, at the present moment, **have** little use for this, because we have yet to harvest more than a very, very few pounds of seed from such areas. However, we certainly are

dealing in large quantities **of wild** collected seed and **that is** what our program is designed to take care of. There's certainly nothing in the program that says that as the situation changes, and orchard-grown seed and genetically improved seed can enter into the economic picture, then it' **can** fall into the same program with a different set of standards set up for it. I could go on for quite same time, but I think I've basically covered the ideas that we have in mind. I might say that it certainly is true that in a few years now seed certification will take on a different form than what **we** are proposing at the present time. As seed dealers we have to rely on our customers to tell us what they want. That's been one of the big problems whether the purchaser of seed realizes it or not. He's not exactly sure what he wants himself; and when the seeds are all collected and into storage, he suddenly decides what he wants. And then the disappointed seed dealer doesn't have the origin definitely defined for him. We hope certification will take care of some of those problems, because it will certainly encourage the seed buyer to think a little more in advance of what he wants. Thank you."

"Thanks a lot, Jack. Were running a little bit behind time, but I think it's all very worthwhile and with that I'd like to ask John Barber to present his talk."