

# MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

## EXPERIMENT STATION

PRESS BULLETIN NO 44

To the Editor:

The notice below will be of value to many of your readers. We, therefore, ask you to cooperate with us in calling attention to this timely matter.

R. S. SHAW,  
Director.

### The Seed Corn Situation

On account of the continued cold and wet weather during the summer of 1915, the corn crop made a much slower growth than usual, and with few exceptions, failed to mature.

Immature corn, when used for seed, does not germinate well and the plants are apt to be weak and backward in their growth. Moreover, the unripe corn harvested last fall contained an excessive amount of moisture which favored the development of mold and other fungus diseases and was responsible for serious injuries from freezing.

In order to determine the seriousness of the seed corn situation the Department of Farm Crops made a limited seed corn survey in representative sections in ten counties in Southern Michigan. Inquiries were made as to the amount of seed corn available and samples were secured for germination tests.

While results varied somewhat in different sections, the conditions were found to be very unsatisfactory in all of the ten counties. It was found that only 59 per cent. of the farmers had saved seed corn, and many of these had not enough for their own use, and much of that which had been saved was not fit for planting. The average per cent. of germination, including the weak sprouts, was 53.4 per cent.

It is readily seen from these figures that the seed corn situation in Michigan is very serious. It is a situation that will result in thousands, if not millions of dollars loss to Michigan farmers the coming season unless an unusual effort is made by all corn growers to secure the best possible grade of seed corn.

It is a matter of prime importance that all seed corn used for 1916 planting should be tested. A very satisfactory germination test may be made as follows: Make a flat box 3x20x30 inches inside measure and fill nearly full with moist

sand; then mark into squares two inches across by a cord which is passed around nails driven in the sides of the box. The squares in the first row beginning at one end are numbered 1 to 10, the second 11 to 20, etc. After placing six grains from each ear in their respective checks, another one-half inch of moist sand is used to cover the corn. If in any check all of the grains do not grow or if the sprouts do not show sufficient vigor, the corresponding ear should be discarded. It is frequently possible by the use of the individual ear test and discarding of the dead and weak ears to secure a good grade of seed corn from a supply which averages low in germination.

It is not advisable, as a rule, to go to other states for seed corn or even to go very far south in Michigan, especially if the corn has been grown on a more fertile soil. In most sections of the state there is some fairly well matured corn of the 1915 crop and some 1914 corn that has been stored in dry, well ventilated cribs that is suited for planting if carefully tested by the individual ear method. Farmers who wish to purchase seed corn should first investigate the supply in their own sections. If a satisfactory supply is not located in this way, application should be made to the local county agent or to the Agricultural College.

The seriousness of the seed corn situation is not generally appreciated and it is feared that many farmers will have very thin stands which will produce only a small percentage of the usual crop. It is important that every corn grower who has not already done so should test his seed corn at once. Use the individual ear method and throw out the dead and weak ears, making a good grade from your own variety if possible. If necessary to purchase seed corn, make arrangements to do so as early as possible, securing varieties adapted to local conditions.

V. M. SHOESMITH,  
Professor of Farm Crops.

EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN,  
April 12th, 1915.