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The Seed Situation Today

While the cost of replacing faulty lawns and greens, and of turf maintenance in general, continues to rise, prices of lawn seed still wallow at inordinately low levels.

Unfortunately, the low cost of grass seed is in large degree a result of foreign imports and inconsequential tariff protection. It is impossible to harvest bluegrass seed profitably in Kentucky and north from Missouri into Canada, when imports are landed in New York at not much more than 20 cents a pound.

Essential quality of this imported seed is not necessarily to be impugned. However, as far south as Kentucky it has not proved very durable in USDA comparison tests. It seems logical that domestic seed is better adapted to domestic conditions, since, for example, bluegrass that has *survived* in a certain region has the wherewithal to *withstand* local conditions.

There have been reports of weed inclusion in imported seed. Recently New York State declared annual bluegrass a "noxious weed"; this plant is almost invariably a component of imported seed, but is rarely found in natural bluegrass from our own Midwest.

There is no question that there would be national advantages if the industry did not have to fight importations so strongly. Under the present circumstances, not only is domestic production being partially obliterated, but prices are held unduly low so that future research and development are minimized because low profits forbid such luxuries.

What can we do?

Contract lawn maintenance firms can recommend varieties which are best suited for the areas in which they operate; these will more than likely be domestically produced varieties suited to the local climate. Turfgrass managers in other pursuits, such as golf course superintendents and highway supervisors, should consider the value of U.S.-produced, specially adapted, quality-controlled seed to induce healthy stands of grass with fewer weeds and less chance of loss.

And all of us as citizens would do well to comment to our congressmen that, under present regulations and conditions, the domestic lawn seed industry is not flourishing as it could and should.

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.