

DELIVERY AND STORAGE OF SUGAR BEETS

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A sugar beet grower wants to know three things before writing a sugar beet contract.

1. He wants to know something about the price.
2. He wants to know if there will be adequate field labor.
3. He wants to know if he can deliver his beets as harvested, or will he be allowed to deliver only one load per week for each five acres he has planted.

Delivery of sugar beets is not regulated the same at all plants, but the fact remains that there are restrictive regulations of some kind which prohibit the farmer from hauling his beets when he is ready and able to do so under advantageous weather conditions.

So far there has not been much done at the factories to speed up the rate at which beets could be accepted. The reason for this being that the sugar factories can only slice so many beets per day, and the danger of spoilage starting in the stock piles of beets under present systems of beet storage is very likely.

However, with the pick-up loader and the sugar beet combine coming into the picture to take the back bending labor out of harvesting, and speeding it up at the same time, something more than talk is needed. Farmers are demanding that they be permitted to deliver their beets as rapidly as they are harvested.

What is needed is an economical, effective way to store beets. This brings in the research men who have solved other knotty problems for the sugar beet industry and who are now hard at work on this problem and already have made considerable progress.

This does not mean that everything is under control and that growers can haul beets at will this coming harvest season, but there is hope for the near future.

Considerable work on improved methods of storage of beets has been done in the West, and several plants in this area during the past season have also tried out these new methods.

It is known that freshly harvested beets only, should go into a storage pile.

Beets that have been windrowed and exposed to the hot sun are soon wilted and will not keep in a storage pile. For this reason, when a grower instructs his workers to windrow his beets, he should be sure that a pick-up loader and trucks are immediately available and that his

beets can be received at the factory, otherwise beets should be piled and covered for protection from sun or frost.

A good many growers have already taken care of this situation by pooling their equipment and completing the harvesting and hauling of one field before going on to the next one. This system brings in the beets in excellent condition and also allows the grower to use his equipment with a minimum number of moves from field to field.

This plan works fine for part of the harvesting season, but when the deliveries reach the peak, the plants find that their storage facilities are inadequate. Receiving is then stopped for two, three, or more days until sufficient space for more beets is available. This usually happens when harvesting, loading and hauling conditions are ideal for both the field worker and the grower.

When receiving is stopped in a good many instances growers do not want field labor to harvest beets, knowing that they will suffer some shrink. The worker also knows this and is dissatisfied because the yield per acre determines his rate of pay per acre.

Thus, if methods are found whereby beets can be placed in storage earlier in the season without danger of spoilage, during the peak of the harvest season it may be possible to receive beets twenty-four hours a day at the factory. This will make it possible to deliver the beets as rapidly as they are harvested, eliminating the danger of having frozen or wilted beets placed in the storage pile.

Cool, humid air retards respiration of sugar beets and keeps them in good condition. Our grandfathers knew that fruits and vegetables kept better in cool humid air, so they stored them in root cellars. We all know that it is economically impossible to build large root cellars for storage of beets at the factory but we feel certain that the men who are working on this problem will find out how to duplicate these cool, humid conditions in a storage pile at not too great a cost.

The solving of this storage problem will make it possible to do away with the restrictive regulation on deliveries, which means:

1. No more arguments between field men and growers for extra load tickets.
2. No more arguments between field men and field workers over the tonnage rate they are to be paid for harvesting.
3. Delivery of a much larger percentage of freshly harvested beets suitable for the storage pile.
4. More efficient use of pick-up loaders, harvesters, field workers and trucks.
5. Capacity operation of the plant from the start to the finish of the campaign.
6. An increase in acreage and a longer period of plant operations.