

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Nicholas Sandar, County Extension Agent, Othello, Washington
and General Chairman of Conference

On behalf of the Agricultural Extension Service of Washington State University and the Washington State Potato Commission, I take this opportunity to welcome you to Washington State's First Annual Potato and Vegetable Conference in its permanent home at Moses Lake. Schools and conferences have been held in the past with sessions of two, one and half-day duration in six or seven areas of the state. This imposed limitations on the type or scope of the program that could be presented since personnel had to be committed for periods of up to two weeks.

We have added vegetables to the agenda in recognition of the fact that vegetable production is important and will continue to gain importance in eastern Washington.

A permanent location has also made it possible to develop a display section featuring commercial products and equipment of importance in potato and vegetable production. We welcome those who have sponsored displays and expect that you will visit each one. Indirectly each display has a place on the program as complimentary information.

It has been a trying year for the potato industry - overproduction coupled with low grade-out and even lower prices. The many production problems have not disappeared but there is far greater understanding of these. New problems are coming to the foreground with many new cases of nematodes and Verticillium wilt is building up in our fields.

It was most encouraging to see the industry face up to the perennial problem of leaf roll in our Russet Burbank crop. Use was made of aphid traps, systematic spray programs for aphids and for the first time there was extensive roguing of chronic leaf roll plants in planted potato fields and as volunteers in other crop fields. Ring rot again took its toll but the losses were considerably below those of 1960.

The future calls for continual and more emphasis on quality in all its aspects. Our industry can be proud of the quality of our fresh potatoes shipped out of the area but we must remember that potatoes acceptable for fresh market may be totally unacceptable for processing. According to the January 19, 1962 disposition report of the Washington State Potato Committee, a total of 3367 carlots (400 cwt.) of 1961 Washington potato crop were used for processing out of 15,203 carlots that went for human consumption. There is no doubt that a high percentage of the present stocks on hand in eastern Washington will move to processing. We welcome Country Gardens of Warden and Prosser Packers of Prosser who started operations in 1961.

Since processing problems are related to the production and handling practices, our growers must think in terms of growing potatoes specifically for processing. The situation can be summarized in two statements.

- (1) There are very great variations in specific gravity between grower lots and even between loads from the same field. This results in unevenness of frying (both french fries and chips) and is a real concern to processors.
- (2) Potatoes are now purchased by processors on a fresh market grade. Lots of the same fresh market grade may vary greatly in terms of recovery as determined by - blackspot, bruises, hollow heart, net necrosis, jelly end rot, greening, ring rot, etc.

We have a full program for these two days of the conference. At times we felt that an extra day should have been planned to get at other problems and issues facing the potato industry. Our primary objective is to bring together research and other information in a way that can be understood and used by the potato and vegetable industry. The progress we have made and continued successful conferences, has and will focus attention on this industry in the state. We can look back to July of 1961 when the annual meeting of the Potato Association of America was held in the state of Washington for the first time in history. Yes, this was national recognition of our progress in the potato industry. Let's not stop now but continue as leaders.