

Bent Seed Production in Germany

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Bent seed is produced mainly in central and south of west-central Germany, where the crop grows wild in the forests. The heaviest producing districts are situated mostly in Hesse, Thuringia, and Wurttemberg. Smaller quantities are produced in Rhine and Brandenburg provinces in Prussia and elsewhere. Darmstadt is in the center of the most important district. A drive from Darmstadt to Aschaffenburg would take one through the most important district. Another district could be seen by driving from Gotha to Gross-Tabarz and Fischbach, situated in the heart of the Thuringia district.

The seed is harvested by men, women, and children living in villages adjacent to the producing districts. They do much of their collecting on Sundays and after work in the evening. The crop is cut by hand and either put into a bag or tied into bundles and allowed to dry for two or three days. Collecting usually begins in August and continues until the first cold spell, perhaps in November. The seed can stand much wet weather without having its germination impaired, but rains darken the seed. The seed does not shatter easily, hence harvesting may be extended over a long period without danger of losing much seed. Because the plants are scattered here and there in the woods it is very difficult to estimate the average acre yield. The heaviest deliveries of seed by the collectors to the dealers usually occur in September and October. The re-cleaned seed is ready for export in December.

A small percentage of the crop is threshed by a large grain thresher and some on a hand thresher, but most of it is flailed by hand. Flailed seed usually is considered to be the best because it contains less chaff. When threshed a second time some of the seeds are broken, which lowers the market value. The seed is delivered to the dealers at Darmstadt, Aschaffenburg, and other such points with a purity of from 20 to 40 per cent, and the "rough" seed shrinks about 50 per cent in the cleaning operation. Good re-cleaned seed tests from 70 to 80 per cent in purity, according to some of the leading dealers.

The seed for export is put in bags, 50 kilos (approximately 100 pounds) to the bag. Prior to the war much of the best seed went up the Rhine by boat and was shipped from Rotterdam. This may explain why some of the Dutch firms have exported bent seed because, according to the best information obtainable, this seed has been produced in only small quantities, if at all, in Holland. At the time (1924) the writer was in Germany, practically all the seed was being shipped via Hamburg because of delays in passing through the occupied zone en route to Rotterdam. German exporters received from \$100 to \$150, mostly \$100, for 100 pounds of bent seed in 1923, but prices later declined sharply, sales in June, 1924, being at \$32 to \$45. Wholesale spring prices of bent seed in the United States for the years 1925 to 1930, inclusive, were mostly as follows: 1925, \$55 to \$65; 1926, \$110 to \$125; 1927, \$53 to \$60; 1928, \$48 to \$50; 1929, \$50 to \$60; 1930, \$55 to \$65. At the present time, leading dealers are quoting German mixed bent mostly at \$75 to \$85 for 100 pounds.