

Virginia Tobacco Cultivation Near Manila Promises Well

Goldleaf Tobacco Company's second crop large, and plowing underway for 800 to 1,000 acres next season. Turkish leaf grown too

The illustrations on this page are among the most significant this magazine has published. They demonstrate not only the establishment of a new branch of the islands' tobacco industry, that of growing tobacco for the modern cigarette, but also a most practical outcome of cooperation between a plantation company and the government's agriculture experts. They show Virginia and Orinoco tobacco growing in the fields of the Goldleaf Tobacco Company on its plantation at kilometer 27 on the Novaliches road presently terminating at the Angat river.

To prepare this paper, this plantation was visited. Harvesting is in full swing. Cured leaves are of a uniform golden color. Larger fields are being put into till for next season's planting, expected to cover from 800 to 1,000 acres. Judge John W. Haussermann is president of the company; other directors are J. P. Heilbronn, head of the paper company bearing his name, and of Botica Boie; Santiago Carrion, a leading Manila cigar and cigarette manufacturer; Otto Frauendorf, manager of Aguado Hermanos, and T. P. Lim, manager of a cigarette company here. F. A. Kretschmar manages the plantation, the extensive Novaliches estate, piedmont formation, the home of Mr. Frauendorf, first to notice its possibilities for tobacco.

The market for such tobacco is worldwide. The local demand steadily grows, is now between the value of ₱5,000,000 and ₱5,500,000 a year, comparing with ₱4,000,000 in 1931. Manager Kretschmar's tobacco-growing experience in the Philippines, prior to his connection with this company at Manila, was in the Cagayan valley during a period of 5 years. He is at the prime of life. He also has an experienced assistant.

Under efforts of Dr. Manuel L. Roxas while heading the old plant industry bureau, and of Domingo Paguirigan of the tobacco section of that bureau, Virginia tobacco has been experimented with on Luzon from the Cagayan valley, where it was first tried in 1924, to the experiment station at Alabang. The results wished for were only obtained at Alabang, for the Virginia leaf grown there proved to have a nicotine content, Manager Kretschmar says, averaging 1-1/2%, so low that the tobacco when used in cigarettes needs no toning down with Turkish leaf. In the Ilokos region, as the experiments moved toward Manila, the nicotine content was too low. The Alabang leaf being satisfactory, there was assurance that leaf grown on the Novaliches state would be satisfactory too, the climate of the two places being the same.

Such are Manager Kretschmar's assertions. To the eye, the leaf being cured now bears out his claims fully. All leaves



Upper left, field of Virginia tobacco; upper right, field of Orinoco tobacco; center, field of Turkish tobacco; below, leaves of Virginia tobacco showing their mature size. Goldleaf Tobacco Company's Novaliches plantation.

are large, fully mature, uniformly golden in color. The pictures show the vigor of the plants; the man in the pictures is more than 6 feet tall. Uniformly mature leaves come of picking the tobacco leaf by leaf, as maturity occurs; mature ones being plucked off, the younger ones receive the full strength of the stalk and mature in their turn. This is said to be in contrast with methods in Virginia and Carolina, where gathering is done by plucking the stalk with leaves both mature and young on it. The leaf-by-leaf method gives maximum yield, and both the surety of a consistently dry harvesting season and cheaper labor—family labor, employed the year round—make it feasible at Novaliches.

Manager Kretschmar reckons the climate here a decisive factor in the success of this new branch of the Philippine tobacco industry. Making possible the employment of families throughout the year, it settles the labor permanently on the estate; and the legume crops, grown during off-season months, replenish the soil's fertility so that year after year the same fields can be utilized for tobacco without wearing them out. But besides the Virginia tobacco, main objective of the estate, Orinoco and Turkish tobaccos have been produced this season with favorable promise. Trial crops were grown during the 1932-1933 season. All being well, commercial areas were seeded for the 1933-1934 crop now yielding a heavy harvest.

Fields are prepared by tractor power, oxen pull the cultivators. The rolling surface of the fields precludes drainage problems. One thing to be noted in connection with the current crop is that, heavy as it is, it suffered from the exceptional dry weather of November and December. Offsetting this have been the showers persisting during the first months of this year, showers that were hardly needed for the crop's maturing.

Officers of the company have no idea of resting with the production during next season of a crop from 800 to 1,000 acres only. They plan putting the entire estate, some 5,000 acres, into tobacco as early as possible; and, looking to the welfare of the industry, they are encouraging neighboring owners to study their methods of planting, cultivation and curing, and to plant cigarette tobaccos, Virginia particularly, as the crop of main dependence. The effort helps in the solution of the Ilokos migration problem, intensified by the pause in Hawaii's labor demands and the exclusion of Philippine labor from the States under the new commonwealth-independence act. Some 150 to 200 Ilokos families will be settled on the estate to produce next season's crop.