

## SEED - TESTING.

### THE DETERMINATION OF PURITY.

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AGRICULTURAL seeds probably vary more in quality, and therefore in value, than any other commodity that the farmer has to buy. At the same time they are, weight for weight, the most expensive of any of his recurring purchases. It is consequently obvious that great care should be exercised in the buying of seeds, both with regard to their fitness for producing a satisfactory crop and to determine which sample shows the best value for the price demanded; or, in other words, which sample is the cheapest to sow. It can be taken as an axiom that seeds offered below their ordinary market value are *always expensive*. The reverse is, unfortunately, not always true with normal and high-priced samples, and thus the determination of their relation of value to cost becomes an important consideration. At the present time New Zealand farmers almost always buy their seeds on a mere superficial examination of the general appearance, and this is in many cases comparatively valueless so far as determining their fitness for agricultural purposes is concerned. It is quite valueless in determining the relation of value to cost. This is especially true of such seeds as those of the grasses, clovers, turnips, and mangels that vary more in quality than any others that the farmer handles. In most cases the price is used to determine the quality rather than, as it should be, the quality determining the price. Again, with high-priced lines, the farmer nearly always relies on the general appearance rather than on a determination of those special qualities that should at least be the real reason for making such seed command a higher figure than lower-priced samples. The only proper method of deciding the fitness of a sample for agricultural purposes and the proper relation of value to cost is by a thorough test of both its purity and germination. The buying of seeds on their general appearance alone instead of with a knowledge of their purity and germination is very nearly equivalent to the purchase of a dairy cow on appearance instead of on her capacity for producing butter-fat.

The Department has now a small but fairly well equipped laboratory for the purposes of seed-testing. Farmers are therefore