

Home-made Potato Bagger

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BECAUSE of the acute shortage of labour for picking potatoes last season, many more farmers will be considering attaching bagging machines to their diggers for lifting next season's crop. The mechanical digger-baggers which can be purchased are expensive for a farmer who is growing only about 20 acres of potatoes and, unless a considerable amount of contract work is offering, a grower who does not produce on a large scale will find that buying a machine ties up too much money. The high prices of manufactured digger-baggers have induced some farmers to build their own baggers, and this article describes how one farmer designed and built suitable equipment.

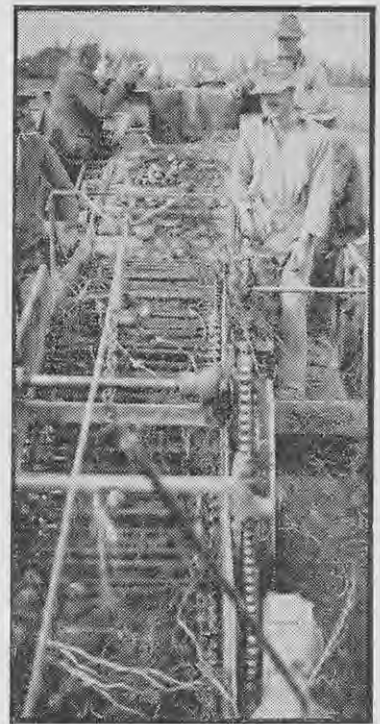
IN designing and building a bagger many problems have to be overcome. The varying soil conditions under which the machine has to operate and the varying amounts of stones, weeds, and haulms with which it has to cope must be taken into account; whether table and seed potatoes are to go in together or table potatoes are to be picked off on the machine must also be considered. A Hororata farmer, Mr. W. Oakley, has built himself a machine which seems to have overcome most of the problems mentioned. It is a bagger on which the table potatoes are picked out from the seed on the machine.

Construction and Operation

Potatoes are dug by a digger which has had the back apron raised so that it feeds on to the bagger. The latter has one main canvas elevator about 3ft. wide, which carries everything that comes off the digger. Three men stand

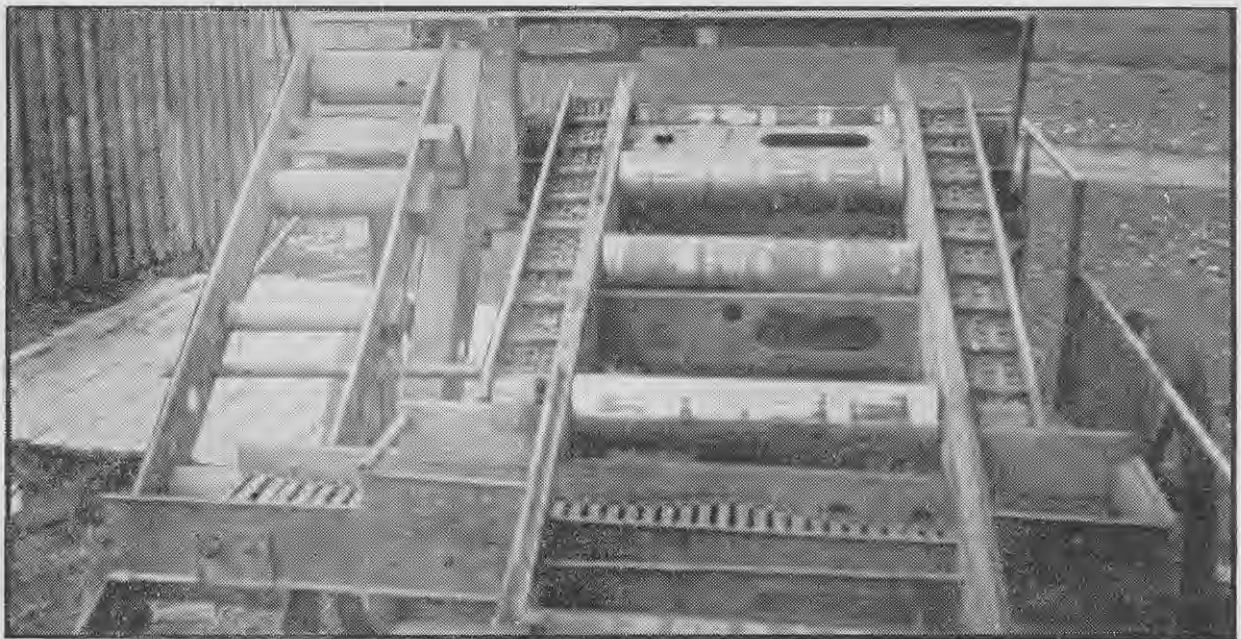
each side of this conveyer; the first pair (on opposite sides of the conveyer) pick off the table potatoes and put them on to a conveyer belt which runs across and under the main canvas elevator to an elevator on one side which leads to the back of the machine where the potatoes are bagged. The 2 men also pick off the bigger weeds and haulms. This leaves clods, stones, some weeds, and all potatoes under table size on the main elevator. The seed potatoes are picked off by the next 2 men (one on either side of the elevator) and put into 2 small elevators which run up alongside the main elevator and thence to the bags. The material remaining on the canvas is returned to the ground.

The remaining 2 operators stand on the bagging platform, running across the rear of the machine, on which there is ample room for them to handle the bags from the 3 bag holes —1 for table potatoes and 2 for seed.



Digger and bagger viewed from the tractor.

Table potatoes are picked off first, as this eliminates further handling and the possibility of damage. On this farm, which produces Certified seed, all the seed is picked off and graded later into the respective sizes of under-



The bagger without elevator canvases. The main elevator is in the centre of the illustration and the seed-potato elevators are on either side of it. At left is the elevator for table potatoes and in the foreground is the conveyer which carries table potatoes under the main elevator.