

Losses Should Be Computed from the Possible Yield

In his editorial in the August 1983 issue of *PLANT DISEASE* (page 839), M. V. Wiese makes an eloquent plea for accurate assessment of crop losses. He presents a strong case for an important subject, but I want to point to an error that sometimes appears in such discussions. As an example of the inaccuracy of many current assessments of crop losses, Dr. Wiese states that the total estimated yield losses for all pests often approaches or exceeds the actual yield of some crops. This seems absurd until one realizes that the amount of food and fiber that we harvest and utilize is the amount left *after* pests, diseases, and climatic influences have taken their toll.

In the South, where the mild, moist climate favors diseases, insects, and weeds, it is not uncommon for the total losses from all pests to exceed the amount harvested. Additional losses from climatic extremes of drought and spring frosts are common. When calculating losses from these sources, the percentage loss should be computed from the

theoretical possible yield if no losses occurred—not on the amount that is actually harvested. If the computed losses exceed the amount actually produced, the figures should strengthen—not weaken—the case for more urgent action to mitigate losses.

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Majority of Plant Science Is Published in English

Dennis E. Mayhew makes several very valid points for plant pathologists giving a pretty low priority to learning a second language (*PLANT DISEASE*, Vol. 67, No. 6, page 593). He is right in assuming that the majority of plant science is published in English. Recent figures from the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux data base show that since 1973, 60% of all papers in plant science have been in English.

Nevertheless, possessing expertise in any discipline should not be confused with being able to communicate that expertise! Agriculture is still the preoccupation of the majority of our planet's population, and the majority of them do not speak English. Perhaps someone working on a tropical crop should consider becoming well enough acquainted with the growers' language to at least be able to read their extension literature. Someone interested only in temperate agroindustrial crops, on the other hand, doesn't need to bother with languages!

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