

#### XIV. THE USE AND MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS AND FILES

Immediate availability of records on any sample that has been tested during the previous 12 months or under the times specified in the rules and regulation of the Seed Act is essential in seed testing. A method needs to be developed for handling and filing the test results in such a way that every staff member can find a report at any time. Simplicity should be the key to any system used.

The use of the Entry Form, the Laboratory Record Form and the Report Form (Appendices VII, VIII and IX) has been discussed in previous chapters. These forms constitute the most important sections of the record system. The way these forms are handled within the laboratory will result in the success or failure of the filing system.

Since information may be needed on a sample before all tests are completed, it is necessary to develop a means for locating material in the process of testing as well as after the test has been completed.

##### Handling records during the test period

###### *Entry Form*

Since the Entry Form contains a summary of information about the sample and the laboratory test number, the easy accessibility of the forms is vital. Many laboratories keep these forms in a ring notebook of an appropriate size or a ledger. The forms may also be bound in book form (Figure 110). The loose leaf arrangement provides a bit more flexibility in adding pages. Regardless of the method used the essential point is to have these forms constantly available because they will normally be the first place to check to obtain information about a sample. This form carries both the sender's name and the laboratory test number. It is only at this point that the two are normally combined during the test period.

###### *Laboratory Report Form*

The Laboratory Report Form travels with the sample for purity analysis. As soon as the analysis is completed it should move ahead to the germination section with the portion of the sample to be germinated. As the purity test is completed the analyst could note the date in the purity column of the Entry Form. By doing this any one attempting to locate a sample being tested would know by looking at the Entry Form whether the sample in question is in the purity or germination sections.

As samples are put for germination a method needs to be evolved for determining which samples should be removed from the germinator for reading on any particular day. This can be achieved by organizing the Laboratory Report Forms by the date on which readings need to be

made. A simple file of 31 folders representing the 31 days in a month could be utilized for holding these forms. The folder for the day could be checked at the beginning of the day for determining which samples need to be read. To facilitate the locating of samples and knowing their exact position, the date on which the samples are first put in the germinator should be recorded in the germination column of the Entry Form. For convenience the germination section might also keep a summary sheet showing the laboratory test number and the date the sample was placed in the germinator.

When the sample has completed all tests and the report has been sent, the date on which the report was sent should be entered on the Entry Form. Thus, by checking the Entry Form it should be clear whether or not the sample is still in the process of being tested or the tests are completed and the report sent.

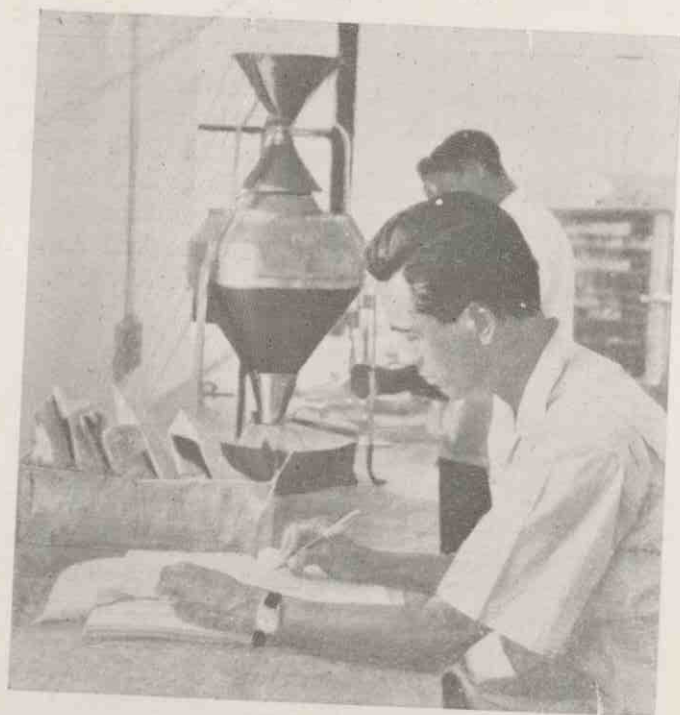


FIG. 110—An entry book is used for recording details about the sample as soon as it is received in a laboratory.

### Filing and maintaining records

#### *Entry Form*

All of the Entry Forms should be kept together for any particular year during which the tests were conducted. As has been indicated, the current year's Entry Forms can be kept readily accessible in an Entry Book. After a testing year has been completed these books or the record forms

then can be grouped year-wise and filed in a steel cabinet or file drawer with the other records that correspond to that year of testing.

### *Laboratory Record Form*

After the test report has been prepared and sent, the Laboratory Report Forms should be filed in serial order according to the laboratory test number. A steel drawer file with folders or appropriate dividers to identify each 25, 50 or 100 report series number will work well for this. To avoid searching for reports, it is important that these be filed promptly and neatly.

### *Report Form*

The Report Form may need to be prepared in duplicate or triplicate; therefore, it is preferable to arrange to have these forms printed and the information typed on them. One copy should be sent directly to the person or organization holding the lot of seed that has been tested. Another copy might need to be sent to an inspector or a possible buyer of the seed. One copy could be kept in the laboratory and filed alphabetically according to the name of the person or organization owning the seed. Individual folders would be desirable for seed producers or organizations which have several seed samples being tested. The report forms should be filed in serial order by laboratory test number within each seedsman's or seed farm's folder. This file can be very useful in answering questions immediately about results for any particular organization or for enforcing the Seed Act. A steel drawer file is very satisfactory for holding these records, also.

### **Service, certification and control test records**

Since tests on service, certification and control samples carry different significance and may need special attention, it will be desirable to separate these samples according to their classification as they enter the laboratory. This necessitates a different series and thus separate files for each series should be maintained. Initially laboratories testing primarily service samples would not need to be concerned with this; however, as the volume of work increases and the certification and control programs become operative their samples should be separated and handled as a group. Different colours may be used on forms to signify the different categories. For example, white might be used on all service sample forms, blue for all certified seed forms and red or pink for control samples (either different colours of paper or of ink can be used).

If the seed certification officer is in the same building as the seed testing laboratory, the field inspection report file might be integrated into the Report Form file for certified seed samples. This would provide the advantage of being able to check field and laboratory reports on a given lot at the same time.

A colour code system may also be used on both field and laboratory forms to indicate major crops. As the volume of work increases convenience

and efficiency might also justify keeping two or three of the major crops separated upon entering and handled throughout the laboratory on a individual crop basis.

### **Discard of old records**

#### *Service Sample records*

Unless a special problem exists on individual samples, service sample records need not be kept for more than a year after a report has been issued.

#### *Seed Certification records*

Certified seed records should be saved for a minimum of two years and preferably three years after the year the seed was certified or as prescribed under the Rules and Regulation, under the Seed Act. Records on foundation seed lots that are being held in temperature controlled chambers may need to be kept for five to six years.

#### *Seed Control records*

Seed control records should be saved for the period indicated under the Rules and Regulations of the Seed Act.

### **Useful Tips**

1. Do not allow old records to accumulate in the main work sections of the laboratory.
2. Plan to transfer old records to an out of the way place at a specified time during the year.
3. Active records should be kept in a place readily accessible to the laboratory staff. Many laboratories keep their Laboratory Record Forms and Report Forms in a file in the purity room. The Report Forms might be kept in the main office area for easy access by the seed testing, seed certification or seed control officer. The actual organization and layout of the laboratory should dictate the most satisfactory location.
4. Keep filing current—do not allow forms to stack up.
5. Send reports immediately upon the completion of tests.
6. Be sure everyone understands the total system.
7. Keep one person responsible for filing ; however the laboratory attendants and research assistants should be free to remove items from the file for use at any time and replace the same immediately after use.
8. Keep files to a minimum.