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Soil Surveys

The first soil map ever made of California Soils was prepared by Dr. E. W. Hilgard, back in the eighties and nineties. Dr. Hilgard was the first dean of the College of Agriculture, in the University of California. The first official detailed and published soil map, however, was made in 1910. It was for the Fresno area of California.

We learned this from Dr. Hans Jenny (Yenny), who is soil chemist in the University, and also president of the Soil Science Society of America.

Dr. Jenny told us that today there are some 30 million acres of California lands that have been surveyed and mapped, as to soil conditions. Only about eleven million acres of land, that might be termed potential agricultural lands here in the state, have not been mapped as yet.

The American system of soil surveying, and mapping, it appears, is done by giving each soil type its own name. This is usually after the area in which it was first found. The same name is given thereafter to all soils that have the same characteristics, no matter where they are found. The deciding factors, or characteristics, are color, texture, acidity, alkalinity, profile features, and so on. By using this system, some 14 hundred different soils have been mapped here in California.

We're told that European countries don't use this system. They use a much broader base, grouping the soils in large, over-all classes. However, some foreign countries have adopted the American system, according to latest reports, and more are expected to follow.