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New to the Army—

Women as Food Inspectors

Home economics trained women are finding new opportunities as federal food inspectors, says Dorothy Watt

WOMEN have recently become ex-officio members of the United States Army as federal food inspectors.

These pioneers in the field of maintaining processed food standards are responsible for the quality of all food purchased by the Army, Navy and Lend-Lease, since specifications for the purchase of supplies for these three branches is almost identical to United States standards. Their job is to inspect all frozen, canned and dehydrated fruits and vegetables to see that they meet federal specifications.

Not only military personnel must be safeguarded against inferior products but also civilians must be protected. The food for workers engaged in pouring millions of planes, tanks and guns from the production lines and in other non-combatant services must be subject to similar precautions.

Lessons learned during the Spanish-American War and World War I have revealed the necessity for keeping our soldiers on the fighting front and on the home front at peak condition with pure, high-quality food. To meet this demand there must be a highly specialized force ready to check not only the standardization of processed products but also transportation, storage, processing, market organization and market facilities.

To fulfill these high expectations, women inspectors receive thorough background in all phases of foods work. They are ever-watchful for ways of improving specifications and of helping processors meet these standards. Duties of the inspector are to check sanitation conditions throughout the processing plant, determine the quality of raw materials going into the finished product, evaluate the product to see if it meets specifications and check the processor's grades.

Women entering the field are between the ages of 21 and 35. Most of them are home economics graduates, although some are food technologists and chemists. Such college courses as food chemistry, bacteriology, marketing, food selection and preparation and horticulture have been of value to them.

Competent women in the field are invited to attend a week's indoctrination course in various parts of the country at their own expense. If they prove themselves adept, they are selected as federal processed food inspectors and given six months' training in the inspection of foods.

Upon graduation from this course they work as assistant marketing aides for the Processed Foods and Standardization Division of the United States Department of Agriculture. Beginning salaries range from $1620 for recent college graduates to $1800 for women with previous experience. All workers are offered the chance of advancement within a year, subject to the approval of the Civil Service Commission. After their promotion they are termed junior marketing specialists. The inspectors may be assigned according to their individual preferences to any of the three districts of the Processed Food Division.

Women will continue to be essential in this field and are being called to it as quickly as they can be released from non-essential positions.

THE IOWA HOMEMAKER