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Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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MR. G. H. BURVILL APPOINTED ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE

One of Western Australia’s best-known agricultural scientists, Mr. G. H. Burvill, has been appointed to the new position of Assistant Director of Agriculture in the Western Australian Department of Agriculture.

Announcing the appointment, the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. C. D. Nalder, said that continued expansion of West Australian agriculture had caused rapid growth in the Department of Agriculture.

Its increased size had necessitated the appointment of an Assistant Director, who would assist the Director and deputise for the Deputy Director in all matters of technical and general administration of the Department.

This is an important year in a distinguished career for Mr. Burvill, who was also recently elected Federal President of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science for 1969. The Institute is the professional body of agricultural scientists, with a membership of more than 2,500 throughout Australia and New Guinea.

Mr. Burvill is widely known among agricultural scientists and farmers in Western Australia for his exceptional knowledge of the State’s geography, climate, soils and farming.

He has had 40 years of close association with all aspects of agriculture throughout Western Australia, as an officer of the Department of Agriculture. He joined the Department as a cadet in 1927 and graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at the University of Western Australia in 1929, and completed an honours degree in 1930.

He was appointed to the Department’s Plant Nutrition Branch, and from 1931 to 1936 he was involved in soil surveys in the Salmon Gums and north-eastern wheatbelt areas. He was one of a team which carried out detailed soil surveys for more than a million acres, mostly related to potential soil salinity problems.

In 1936 he was seconded to the CSIRO Division of Soils for soil survey work in Victoria and South Australia. During this period he was awarded the degree of Master of Agricultural Science at the University of Adelaide, for studies of the physical properties of soils.

From 1938 to 1946 Mr. Burvill was one of a Department of Agriculture plant and soil research group which helped lay the foundations for Western Australia’s major post-war superphosphate development projects. During work on differences in plant responses to pre-and post-war superphosphate he was closely associated with the early recognition of zinc deficiency on light soils in this State.

In 1944 he carried out the soil survey which was the basis for the Ord River Irrigation Project. This survey involved 86,000 acres of detailed survey, with reconnaissance of some 750,000 acres, between Wyndham and the W.A.-Northern Territory border.

In 1947 Mr. Burvill was appointed Commissioner of Soil Conservation.

Since 1956 he has served as Chief of the Plant Research Division, guiding it through a period of intensification of research and a widening in the range of investigations. He has represented the Department at specialist conferences in Australia and overseas, and on a number of State committees.

Mr. Burvill faces a challenging period as Federal President of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. The profession has made tremendous advances in agriculture in Australia, but many agricultural scientists believe that it also has a responsibility to promote agriculture in the underdeveloped countries of the world where food production can not keep up with population growth.

As Federal President Mr. Burvill will be deeply involved in efforts recently started by the Institute to establish a project under which it is hoped that Australia will set up an overseas agricultural development institute.
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