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New Soils Chief appointed

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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The appointment of Mr. S. T. Smith to the position of Commissioner of Soil Conservation and Chief of the Soils Division in the Department of Agriculture was announced last month.

Mr. Smith, formerly Officer-in-Charge of the Department's Soil Research and Survey Section, replaces Mr. L. C. Lightfoot, who relinquished the position for health reasons. Mr. Lightfoot remains in the Department as a senior officer in the Soil Conservation Service.

Mr. Smith is well known to farmers throughout Western Australia for his work on soil surveys and soil salinity. He was raised on a farm near Corrigin and completed a Muresk Diploma of Agriculture (with honours) before studying agricultural science at the University of W.A.

He graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1943 and joined the Department of Agriculture in 1944. Later, he was awarded the degree of Master of Science in Agriculture for research on soil salinity.

In his 23 years in the Department of Agriculture Mr. Smith has worked on a wide range of activities in soil and land classification in all parts of Western Australia. He has carried out important research in the fields of plant nutrition, soil salinity, soil structure and irrigation.

As the Department's Senior Soil Research Officer since 1952, Mr. Smith has travelled widely in the farming areas and has been associated with work on the problems of soil conservation, erosion and flooding, which are major concerns of the Commissioner of Soil Conservation. In co-operation with the Lands Department he has taken an important part in work on preparations for release of Crown lands in the West Midlands and on the margins of settled areas.

In 1962 he spent a year as a technical expert on soils for UNESCO in the Sudan and last year represented the Department of Agriculture at a UNESCO soil science conference in the Netherlands, followed by soil research investigations in England and the U.S.A.