

Operation Incomplete

ENTHUSIASTICALLY we agree that research is a good thing—but you can't sit back and glow over the future just because some good research is being done. It is impressive to consider how much is being learned about doing a better job of farming.

But despite the obvious research gains, there is a crying need for helping the farmer beat the weeds, the insects, land depletion, erosion, and a host of other dead losses that harass him. This greatest of agricultural countries is wasting a lot of its potential. Last year weeds alone stole about \$5,000,000,000. Other pests ran up a bigger combined total. Clearly the situation is one which could use some help—research or anything and everything else which can do some good.

But men who spend their time studying this put some of the blame on lack of action. They say that by putting to work what we already know, we could avoid half the loss attributed to weeds—that is \$2,500,000,000, or more than \$15 for each man, woman, and child in the country.

But the market for agricultural chemicals is going down. If you try to add up all of this, you'll suspect that another factor is needed somewhere.

Never before in history have so many people lived at such a high standard as they do in the United States today. Why? Because we have a big market which has been convinced of the value of having something better; and we are using new ideas to offer something better faster than ever has been done before. We put new ideas into practical form, let the consumer know that he can have something better, and convince him that he ought to have it.

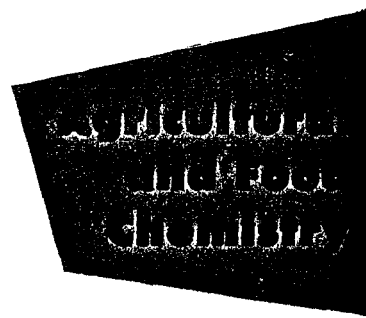
A drive through an average American farm community will show that farmers have been convinced of the value of an automobile as a means of making life pleasanter. Yet it seems that far fewer are convinced of the value of the best that might be done to protect the income that makes his automobile—or electric refrigerator or modern gas stove—possible.

What can be done: the best possible research; effective dissemination of the new knowledge to producers of fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, and other agricultural chemicals; convincing and informing those dealing with the farmer—county agents, retail stores; and informing and convincing the farmer.

These lines of approach have put an automobile beside most American homes. Is the automobile as basic to the average family as the protection and improvement of crops is to the farmer?

Markets or Museums?

ABOUT 134,000,000 pounds of butter, 250,000,000 bushels of corn, and 300,000 tons of cottonseed meal are being held by the Government—bought to maintain prices at parity. How many reaping cradles and “old oaken buckets” has it on hand?



WALTER J. MURPHY, Editor

We are producing much more of some kinds of food than we are consuming. Yet our diet would be improved by the incorporation of more of some of that stored food:

“If farmers and the dairy industry could team up to recapture the market for the 130 pounds of milk per person which has been lost in the last 13 years, they could turn milk surpluses into scarcities. If everyone followed the recommendations of nutritionists—that they use 5 quarts of milk a week—we would be consuming one-fifth more milk than we are now.”—Secretary of Agriculture Benson.

The Government isn't storing reaping cradles. Years ago, someone made a mechanical reaper which did a better job than did the cradle. When the old “binder” was superseded by the combined harvester-thresher, binder makers began competing to make better “combines.”

Butter held its top position for centuries, but recently another product has been made comparable in nutritive value and its other qualities are such that, at a lower price, it is taking an important part of the market away from butter. Can the dairy industry offer a battle in return? Why not? For example, we hear mentioned as a possibility, a low-cost, all-dairy spread which reportedly contains more milk solids and less butterfat than butter, which might well be made nutritionally superior to butter or existing margarine. Have the possibilities been studied exhaustively? Will the dairy industry allow tradition to turn it from an aggressive investigation of such possibilities? Not if it believes in fighting for its future and following the successful American tradition of building a better mouse trap.

Just now the path is being beaten to someone else's door, but there is evidence that it need not be. The nonfat solids of milk, a large amount of which is not going into human food, could be increased in the diet with benefit to the consumer. How well educated to this is the consuming public? In western U. S., the consumption of cottage cheese, a source of high-grade, low-cost protein, is appreciably greater than in eastern U. S. Credit is given to the education of the public.

Perhaps milk and butter have been taken too much for granted. There is no surplus of milk above the full dietary needs of our people—who might do well to learn that milk is more than merely a baby food or a source of butter.