

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Counter with Research

SECRETARY BENSON apparently believes that research is the answer to the farm surplus problem. Quotes from a recent speech to cotton growers: "... There are some things price supports are incapable of doing. They cannot by themselves improve the efficiency of farm methods. They cannot create a market for a commodity if the support is pricing the commodity out of the market." "... The best remedy here is to increase or diversify production and make it more efficient." "Cotton has been researched out of the market." The job as he sees it: "... To secure for cotton and all of agriculture, parity of research with industry."

Coumarin Safety Questioned

ROUTINE TOXICITY TESTS by a commercial testing laboratory on a manufacturer's new flavoring material gave definite indications of toxicity resulting in damage to livers of test animals. Coumarin was indicated as the toxic agent. A delegation of the four major manufacturers submitted a report to Food and Drug Administration and advised that they were voluntarily withdrawing the product from sale for all uses in food. Interested trade associations are co-operating by advising users of the hazards involved. Because the chemical is used in soaps, perfumes, and in electroplating as well as in the food industry as a flavoring material, FDA is expected to prohibit its use only in food products. A revision of FDA's standard of identity for chocolate is also expected as coumarin is listed as an optional ingredient.

Fats on the Pan

FATS AND SUGARS are meeting some resistance in the food markets these days and there is some concern among the producers as to what to do about it. For example, we heard at the recent conference of the food advisory committee of the Nutrition Foundation that in 1934 the per-capita consumption of fats in butter and margarine combined was 21 to 22 pounds—more than 75% was from butter—while at present it is about 17.5 pounds—more than half from margarine. It was pointed out that the layer in hogs finished for market has been reduced markedly. One of the comments was to the effect that milk was unfortunate in having been so closely connected with fat content—no one seems to be concerned today in looking for "nonfat meat solids" or "nonfat egg solids," but there is much demand for nonfat milk solids. The latter constitute one area in which milk products sales are up strikingly—137% above prewar for 1952.

Leaner Meat from the Range

ONE PROPOSAL for reducing fat problem with beef we heard recently at Hopland, Calif.'s new range experiment station. Better use of agricultural areas with limited resources was the suggestion. Much of the feed going into cattle after they leave the range goes to fat, they said, so why not do more feeding on the range. Furthermore, the land now used for producing fattening feeds could grow roughage for range feeding.

Presidential Lunch

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER sampled some results of research on agricultural products in a luncheon Tuesday, May 26, with Secretary Benson at the USDA's research center in Beltsville. The luncheon featured a number of new and improved foods developed in the laboratories of the Agricultural Research Administration. Among the items on the menu were: modified milk containing increased nonfat milk solids and decreased butter fat, dehydrated frozen peas, orange juice reconstituted from a dehydrated powder, and butter prepared, presumably, by the usual methods.

Acreage Allotments?

THE ITEM IN USDA's budget allotting \$429.25 million for acreage controls on wheat and cotton may be prophetic for 1954. Under the existing law, the Secretary of Agriculture must proclaim acreage allotments when wheat surpluses reach a certain level; the acreage allotments will call for a minimum reduction in wheat plantings of 20%. If these wheat surpluses reach anticipated levels, Secretary Benson may also have to consider the question of marketing quotas. The quota decision is left up to the farmers and can be adopted by a two thirds vote. With marketing quotas farmers will still have wheat supported at 90% parity; without quotas the price support program is dropped to 50% of parity.

Lettuce Oil Meal

A PREVIOUS WASTE DISPOSAL PROBLEM for California lettuce processors may have become the beginning of a by-products industry. A process developed by J. G. Macey of Salinas, Calif., uses damaged heads, outside leaves, and culls and yields vegetable oil and cattle feed meal. The waste lettuce is chopped, pressed, dehydrated, ground, and solvent extracted. The extracted oil is rich in carotene, chlorophyll, and xanthophyll. The meal residue, to be offered as a cattle feed, contains about 24% protein and 17% fiber as compared with beet meal which contains 9% protein and cottonseed meal with 43% protein. The process can also be applied to celery.