

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Grasshoppers in California

FARMERS IN CALIFORNIA'S lower San Joaquin Valley are breathing easier. A threatened grasshopper outbreak was averted by a concentrated spraying program undertaken last month. Between May 13 and 18, some 120,000 acres were sprayed with aldrin to stop the most serious grasshopper invasion in the area since 1939. The hoppers, moving in a 60-mile front, have now been completely eradicated from valuable crop lands. Agricultural officials and valley farmers look on the project as an outstanding example of cooperation between the federal and state agencies, farmers, sprayers, chemical companies, and oil companies. Aldrin was shipped in from Shell Chemical's Denver plant; oil companies contributed some 150,000 gallons of Diesel oil; applicators sprayed at less than cost. Officials estimate that the campaign averted millions of dollars worth of damage.

New Insecticide Product

ROHM & HAAS, Philadelphia, is just getting into production of Perthane, a technical grade of 1,1-dichloro-2,2-bis(*p*-ethylphenyl) ethane, which evidently deals out destruction to a number of agricultural pests. Despite its insecticidal efficiency it is described as a product of extremely low mammalian toxicity. Tests thus far have demonstrated its value for control of insects on a number of commercial crops, including various hopper infestations of alfalfa, cabbage, lettuce, and sugar beets. Tentative cost has been set at 60 cents a pound.

Allethrin Growing

U.S. INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS produced about 6000 pounds of allethrin last month as their new plant in Fairfield, Md., reached full production. This is the first plant built specifically for the complicated 18-step allethrin synthesis. Meanwhile, Carbide and Carbon is busily at work building a plant at Institute, W. Va., designed to turn out approximately 500,000 pounds of allethrin a year. Benzol products has capacity for the annual production of 100,000 pounds at Piscataway, N. J.

Thurston to Grace

W. R. GRACE AND CO. is awaiting only Thurston Chemical's stockholders' approval for absorption of that company. Acquisition of Thurston will mark another step in the expansion of Grace as a major chemical producer. The deal will swing on a stock transfer basis, with one share of Grace common to be exchanged for each 2.229 shares of Thurston. One big advantage to Grace: an increase of superphosphate capacity by more than 100%. Last year Thurston made and sold superphosphate and mixed fertilizers to the tune of about \$7 million, while about \$6 million were sold by Grace NACO subsidiaries. Thurston merger will give Grace sales outlets in eight more stages.

Safflower Seed

FALLING LIVESTOCK PRICES, adequate feed supplies, and charges of government dumping of cottonseed meal rule out the anticipated 33% increase in the safflower acreage in California this year, processors estimate that 45,000 acres have been planted, about the same as 1952. Nevertheless, it seems that safflower is becoming established in the high plains area, mainly in Colorado and Texas. Meanwhile, we hear California growers are banking on recent pilot plant work which shows that safflower seed meal, superior in protein to most other oil seed meals, can be made by removing some or most of the safflower hulls. Also, new seeds giving a product with lower fiber content, easier to process, are expected to be available within two years.

Market Quotas

EFFORTS TO REVAMP the acreage control regulations are under way in anticipation of the expected enforcement of control measures for the 1953-54 wheat crop (AG AND FOOD, May 27, page 351). Congressman Hope, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, has introduced a bill to ease the anticipated cut in wheat acreage, currently estimated at about 77 million acres. Under the present marketing quotas, this acreage would be cut about 30% to 55 million. Hope and USDA think this is a bit steep and are trying to get cut back to about 66 million acres. Chances seem good for passage in time for the 1953-54 season.

FDA Slashed

THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE has recommended a cut of about \$680,000 in the Eisenhower budget proposed for the Food and Drug Administration. The slashing action was led by Congressman Taber (R.-N.Y.), committee chairman. Taber has expressed vigorous disapproval of the FDA—even charging dishonesty. A Washington newspaper quoted him as calling its people "The worst thing in our Government." Budget cut means: (1) approximately 25% reduction of the already inadequate force inspecting for filthy and decomposed food products and (2) complete elimination of economic inspections; these are concerned with standards, labeling, and composition of food products.