



## Adaptation Underdone

**T**HE MERE FACT that a material or a procedure has been in extensive use over a long period of time doesn't mean it is the best that can be made or found. This applies to farming and food production as well as to factory operation. Nature has provided us with soil, crops, and animals in a system which can appear relatively simple and self-perpetuating. But that gives no assurance that the "natural" system stands best under all conditions.

Adaptation is a fundamental characteristic of man's relationship with nature. The dinosaur is housed only in museums today because he was proved unable to adapt to his natural environment. Man not only has proved capable of adapting to his environment, but now is applying his knowledge to adapt nature's resources to his benefit.

This summer, in the "black blizzards" of the Southwest, we have witnessed another impressive and significant failure of living creatures to adapt the conditions of their environment. Man has learned to change the natural system to work for him, but it has been done incompletely and with only the short range view.

This year more than 5.5 million acres of land suffered significant wind erosion in the southern section of the Great Plains. Federal estimates indicate that 4.5 million acres unsuitable for crop land have been under cultivation. In Texas alone it is estimated that 1.5 million acres unsuitable for cultivation have been plowed—during a period of troublesome surpluses of agricultural products in this country. Some believe that the level of government subsidization of crop prices has been a factor.

Probably there have been many factors, but certainly one of the broadest and most nearly basic has been failure to apply existing knowledge of sound farming practices. The governments, both federal and state, have spent large sums to inform the farmer of new knowledge of the best way to care for his land. But it appears not always to have been used. There is room for something more.

For many years the more alert chemical companies have been aware of the value of customer service. It has meant more than merely selling a customer products in a pleasant and courteous fashion. It has meant furnishing him with advice, ideas, and assistance related to use of the materials he buys—even indirectly related, for the prosperity of a customer's operations has a significant bearing on the prosperity of the man from whom he buys. The life insurance companies of this country are justifiably credited with important contributions to the public welfare through their campaign to make the public more acutely aware of methods of improving health and the benefits to be derived. Both the public and the insurance companies benefited.

Two weeks ago in the *AG AND FOOD* Newsletter, we quoted, from the drought area: "A farmer sitting on his front porch watching his crops burn is not very enthusiastic about buying new equipment." It may be presumed that the same is applicable to buying fertilizers, pesticides, and other commodities. There is a large industry, or group of industries, serving agriculture through the application of technical knowledge. They are, or should be, in a position to keep abreast of technical developments. Through

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their own efforts and in cooperation with the Government they should be able to advance the effective presentation of good technical ideas to the farmer. Both the manufacturers and the farmers are in business for profit. Industrial cooperation on improvement of methods to get a better profit should have a sound ring and if presented effectively should improve the ring of cash registers, to say nothing of the conservation of our resources. There's much talk at present about the "farm price squeeze." There's also much talk about how to beat it. Is the "how-to-beat-it" talk being translated into a language convincing to the men who need to beat it? And there's much more than a current cost-price struggle at stake. Here is a service opportunity for the industries serving agriculture which should pay off at both ends.

## A Grain Sanitation Committee

**G**RAIN INSPECTION has been in the news since January 30, 1952, when a proposed program of inspection regulations for grain was announced, with the avowed purpose of reducing the amount of contaminated material reaching food channels. At the request of trade associations, the enforcement program against insect infested grain was postponed from May 1952 until July 1, 1953.

In April 1953 a memorandum of understanding was signed by the secretaries of the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare and of Agriculture, in which a new basis of inspection was substituted, as of July 1953, for the announced program of the Food and Drug Administration; the FDA agreed not to recommend legal action against wheat clearly identified as property of the CCC. In return, CCC agreed to divert from domestic human food channels, wheat which was subject to action.

The secretary of the DHEW said that attempts to reexamine the program made clear the need for more facts. A committee now has been appointed to get all the facts and to recommend a practical solution to the problem. The USDA and the USDHEW have declared that they have given the matter a great deal of thought. They have given the committee a free hand to find facts and make recommendations.

The Advisory Committee on Grain Sanitation, under the chairmanship of Charles Glen King, the very able scientific director of the Nutrition Foundation, is composed of representatives of industry, universities, and public institutions. It has the declared support of the government departments concerned. It deserves the active and cooperative support of industry and the public. And the public is justified in expecting direct and effective action.