

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Dry Juice

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION of powdered orange concentrate is scheduled for next year. As a result of research at the Western Regional Research Laboratory, the Vacu-Dry Corp. of Oakland, Calif., has developed a product which seems to have passed field tests with flying colors. The product is vacuum dried to 1% of moisture, reconstituted with water. It yields a juice which is apparently satisfactory in flavor, nutritive content, and stability. Vacu-Dry has already announced plans to build a similar plant in Florida which they plan to have ready to process next year's citrus crop.

Sprout Stoppers

BOTH STERWIN CHEMICALS and Naugatuck Chemical Co. have announced products for the control of sprouting in stored vegetables. Fusarex, the Sterwin product is dusted on potatoes after harvesting to prevent the loss of weight and shriveling due to sprouting. The active ingredient of the material is 3% 2,3,5,6-tetrachloronitrobenzene suspended in a dark clay. Naugatuck has just obtained approval from the USDA for the use of MH-40 to prevent sprouting in potatoes and onions. It is about 40% maleic hydrazide and is applied by spraying before harvesting. Application to such vegetables as beets and carrots is in the offing.

Weed Killer Precautions

COTTON FARMERS in Eastern Arkansas have been advised to report violations of spraying regulations for 2,4-D weed killer to sheriffs and prosecuting attorneys. The chief inspector of the State Plant Board says that numerous lawsuits have occurred between cotton and rice growers over the use of the herbicide. The State Plant Board established strict regulations for the application of the material this year. The rice growers use 2,4-D to control weeds, but it also destroys cotton plants.

Stauffer Expansion

STAUFFER CHEMICAL CO., a big factor in agricultural chemicals (30% of its total sales), is planning its first public offering of common stock and debentures, to finance expansion, repay bank borrowings, and provide working capital. Debenture issue is expected to bring \$15 million, and common offering is 325,000 shares (\$10 par). Ag chemicals expansion includes enlargements of super phosphate plant at Tacoma, Wash., and facilities for new phospho-ammonium fertilizer, using an Italian process (AG AND FOOD, April 1, page 3). Expansion of Idaho phosphate rock reserves is also planned.

Labor Hearing

THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD has called for hearings on Sept. 13 to hear arguments on the questions of industry vs. craft unions in American Potash and Chemical Co.'s Trona, Calif., plant. The case revolves around the situation which now exists there. The present NLRB policy is to recognize the separate bargaining units for each organized craft within a plant. This policy has the backing of the AF of L. The CIO is in favor of single bargaining units for a whole industry. The industry's wide concept of unionization is apparently shared by the AF of L chemical workers as well as the United Mine Workers District 50. Opposed to these groups are the AF of L electrical workers and machinists at Trona who want craft organizations.

Slags for Liming

BLAST-FURNACE SLAGS, in some use as liming materials for 40 years, now show increasing promise as partial answer to ever-growing liming needs. Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, at Wooster, tells us that in field tests, currently available slags compare favorably with some limestone. Some slag boosts hay production as much as 35 to 50%, although water-cooled slag, because of high specific surface area, is considerably better than air-cooled slag, and even has a slight edge over limestone for improvement of crop yields. Specific surface, largely determined by particle size (but especially high for irregularly-shaped water-cooled slag particles), determines rate at which material reduces soil acidity. Finely ground particles are better than coarse. Granulated slag proved superior to air-cooled slag and to limestone, with materials of agricultural meal grade or finer giving most promising performance.

How Much Soil Conditioner?

AT THE CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION, the addition of a synthetic organic soil conditioner at the rate of 200 pounds per acre increased the yield of beans about 16%. However, when the amount of conditioner used was boosted rather steeply to 3125 pounds per acre the yield fell off about 16%. No conclusions were drawn from the experiments, but it was noted that in the heavy application of soil conditioner the harvest from the third picking of beans was higher than either the first experiment or the control.