

# THE OBSERVATION POST

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## Industry Has a Big Stake in ACP

IN THE APRIL 15 issue of the JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD CHEMISTRY, we discussed the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) of the Department of Agriculture. The article was written before the new administration had formulated its policy with respect to agricultural conservation practices and before it had decided on budgetary recommendations. Since that time a budget request for \$140 million for 1954 (compared with about \$250 million for years 1951 and 1952) was submitted. Congress increased this to \$195 million. In this, as in other matters pertaining to agricultural legislation, Secretary Benson had indicated that notwithstanding his own views and recommendations he would give sound administration to the legislation which Congress in its wisdom places upon our statute books.

### ACP in Retrospect

In our earlier article, it was suggested that the ACP program constitutes a good investment to the extent it is carried out in a scientific environment. Our Government spends large sums on research to conserve and improve the richness and tilth of our soils. Many branches of science participate in these investigations. Even larger sums are spent to provide educational services and the technical assistance farmers need to plan, install, and maintain sound systems for conservation and use of their soil and water resources.

By integrating the Agricultural Conservation Program with the research, technical aid, and education agencies, it becomes practical to implement research and make more effective demonstration activities. It permits soil scientists in government, universities, and industry a greater opportunity to test theories, implement proved practices, and study the results of scientifically conducted practices.

### Criticism of ACP

The preceding suggestions appear constructive. If followed, they should gradually eliminate a major criticism of ACP; that is, that payments are made for recurring conservation practices, such as

maintenance applications of phosphatic fertilizer and lime, after they have become a regular part of farm operation, and thus assumes part of the farmer's annual operating expenses.

### Industry's Stake in ACP

The achievement of more efficient conservation systems of use and management for our soil and water resources will require service of much new equipment and a greatly enlarged production, distribution, and use of a variety of industrial products such as lime, fertilizers, herbicides, and materials required in drainage and irrigation. Industry is affected directly by agricultural production and income which influences demand for industrial products. Conservation farming directly affects agricultural production and income.

Industry thus has a big stake in a well-managed Agricultural Conservation Program. If invited, industry can contribute much to ensure good management and progress.

### Industry Advisory Committee Appears Desirable

It is here suggested the industries supplying chemicals, irrigation and drainage equipment, grass and legume seeds, and other materials and equipment for which the demand and uses are affected by ACP be represented on an advisory committee in the formulation of policy regarding both practices and payments. Industry should logically be invited to assume a measure of the responsibility for the successful implementation of the program as almost every practice requires the use of materials or equipment it provides. This should lead to more constructive demonstrations and sounder educational programs. If appropriate cooperation between industry and government can be achieved—and we believe it can—certain aspects of ACP can be better emphasized or de-emphasized in accordance with needs and funds.

Much long-range planning and work need to be done. Industry can collaborate with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, land grant colleges, state exten-

sion service and experiment stations, and other agencies in providing guidance regarding the nature and objectives of demonstrations as well as locations of studies and installations. It can anticipate material and equipment requirements and make special efforts to supply the need. It can suggest business methods for getting maximum educational values and sound economic appraisals.

It would not be inappropriate for industry to view these government expenditures as private investments to build up future markets. Past ACP activities have helped build present markets for materials and equipment. It is now up to businessmen to see that the returns on this investment become larger and larger.

### Looking Forward with ACP

ACP can be compared with the vanguard and rearguard of an army. It can perform scout service by confirming, implementing, and publicizing new useful practices, thus paving the way for new developments. It can accelerate progress of backward groups by encouraging and providing demonstrations of more efficient practices. Thus, the whole agricultural economy can be helped to move at a faster pace. In these activities industry has a stake because of its interest in the creation or extension of markets.

The new administration has already established a broader base for the development and operation of ACP. The 1954 program is being developed jointly by ACP, the Soil Conservation Service, Production and Marketing Administration, Forest Service, Soil Conservation District Governing Bodies, Extension Service, and other interested groups, on a county, state, and national basis. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Congress, the national program encourages, but is not limited to, permanent and semipermanent practices. This constitutes progress.

In recent months, Secretary Ezra T. Benson has repeatedly emphasized the desirability of getting Government and industry to cooperate. An over-all national ACP advisory committee should be organized and industry should be adequately represented thereon.