

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Supports To Sag

IT APPEARS QUITE PROBABLE that the USDA will lower price support levels for barley, oats, and rye. These "nonbasic grains" are presently being supported at about 85% of parity, but prospects are that levels of 70 or 80% will be announced for next year's crop. Purpose of the support drop is to prevent a surplus which could develop if farmers plant these crops on acres diverted from wheat because of production controls.

Allethrin Progress

NO IMMEDIATE PRICE DROP from the present \$32 per pound for allethrin is anticipated despite the fact that Carbide & Carbon's production plant will be synthesizing the material next spring. The plant located at Institute, W. Va., will have the largest capacity of any allethrin installation in the U. S., 0.5 million pounds per year. Operations are expected to begin next April, but because of the complexity of the 12-step synthesis, the first allethrin probably will not be available 'til June or July.

Bollworm on Increase

KENAF, THE FIBER PLANT recently introduced into the Southwest, has been found to be a host for the pink bollworm. The USDA has extended its pink bollworm quarantine to 66 more counties in the Southwest, principally Texas. Last year was the most destructive in history for 65 or 70 affected counties in Texas, total losses to bollworm amounted to roughly \$30 million. Texas operated a state quarantine last year until the federal quarantine was set up. Described as the most serious threat to cotton in the U. S., bollworm seems to be still on the increase.

Taste Testing

TASTE AND AROMA ANALYSIS methods are being molded at an increasing rate into a semblance of scientific method. Last week (Oct. 8 and 9) the National Research Council's Advisory Committee on Quartermaster Food Problems sponsored a two-day Symposium on Food Acceptance Testing. One objective of the meeting: to determine how standardized methods can be applied to measure the acceptance of foods and help suppliers to produce foods of maximum appeal. As one of the conference leaders, Dean Foster of U. S. Testing Co. commented, the conference wasn't expected to resolve issues or evolve new principles but at least there was progress toward definition of the primary problems. Foster has long urged standardization of nomenclature and methods in flavor testing to open up problems for scientific investigations.

Cold Sterilization

COLD STERILIZATION OF FOODS needs more fundamental research before it becomes a practical reality. H. E. Robinson, of Swift, told the American Meat Institute that the big hurdle blocking acceptance of cold sterilization is the production of foods which will meet normal acceptability standards. A more likely application of radiation to food processing is for control of insect infestation in grains. This could be accomplished with very low dosages and relatively little flavor change.

Rainmaking Goes Over Down Under

THE ARTIFICIAL RAINMAKING idea, quiet in the U. S. this past summer despite the recent drought, has apparently found a new fan in Australia. Australian experimenters report good results from cloud seeding experiments using dry ice distributed from airplanes. Following recent tests in the Sydney area, the rainmakers insist that rainfall over a large part of the subcontinent could be increased up to 50% by cloud seeding. With the great Australian desert of approximately 10,000 square miles of arid but potentially arable land, artificial rainmaking might open up new farming land down under. The Aussies anticipate that they can seed the monsoon cloud and get some of the rain which normally falls farther north. They hope to develop economical methods for rainmaking within three to five years.

Another Reorganization For USDA

PLANS FOR REORGANIZATION of the USDA's conservation program will probably be announced shortly. A tentative draft of the proposals was presented to members of the Senate Agriculture Committee recently without any serious opposition. The Senate committee has been skeptical of Secretary Benson's reorganization powers, but this move apparently meets with approval on the grounds that it will save considerable amounts of the already depleted Agriculture funds. Although the plan has not yet been officially announced, it is understood that one aspect involves the substitution of state conservation committees for the present plan of seven regional offices for administration of the agricultural conservation program.