

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Hercules Ammonia

LATEST FIRM STEP IN AMMONIA EXPANSION has been taken by Hercules and Alabama By-Products Corp. in a joint project. They will set up a 45,000-ton-a-year plant for anhydrous ammonia in the vicinity of Birmingham, near Alabama's Tarrant Works. Completion is scheduled for 1955. Alabama says it has been exploring for some time in an effort to improve utilization of chemicals extracted from coal during carbonization. This plant, they say, "will be independent of natural gas pipelines and will be the first in the country to draw its raw materials exclusively from coal." Hercules, already in ammonia production near Oakland, Calif., also has a lease and option to purchase the Louisiana, Mo., Ordnance Works. As we go to press Hercules is reported to have decided to pick up its option, adding interesting angles to the already intriguing ammonia picture.

Nitrogen Retires

NITROGEN EXPANSION GOAL is now closed with what is believed to be a certain amount of finality by the Office of Defense Mobilization. Earlier the closed goal had been reopened at request of Commerce Department. Nitrogen industry said Commerce's figures were inaccurate and goal was put in suspension. Industry gave Commerce new set of figures to work from and said industry could produce 0.3 million tons more nitrogen than the reopened goal of 3.5 million tons asked if new production was included. These figures were based on 100% capacity, however, and ODM prefers to work on rated capacity figures. On that basis, ODM found a shortage of 163,000 tons capacity. The goal then was moved from suspension to open again for one week in order to accept applications for certificates of necessity. As of April 9, the goal has been closed. Around 20 applications for certificates were received and are now being processed.

More Fertilizer for Northwest

FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF AN AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE PLANT at Kimberly, B.C., Consolidated Mining & Smelting now plans to expand ammonia production at Calgary, Alta. CoMinCo, which already accounts for 90% of the primary fertilizers manufactured in the Pacific Northwest, will thus up its total fertilizer another 50,000 tons per year. Although completion date has not been set, output will be shipped in part as anhydrous ammonia to Pacific Northwest, and will mark first entry of CoMinCo in fertilizer ammonia market in that area. Balance of expanded output will be used in ammonium nitrate production at Calgary and Trail. Calgary plant will use natural gas for ammonia synthesis. CoMinCo has developed as a supplier to western U. S., shipped 200,000 tons of fertilizer to the area in 1947; last year's exports reached 450,000 tons.

Tonnage Down, Analysis Up

A DOWNWARD TREND IN FERTILIZER TONNAGE is reflected in reports from Texas; totals for last 6 months of 1953 were 17,000 tons below the same period in 1952. Most of the decreases can be accounted for by drop in sales of superphosphates. Sales of nitrogen sources, ammonium nitrate and ammonium sulfate, showed an increase. Trend toward narrowing of the nitrogen-available phosphoric acid ratio is also evident in reports from the state chemist. Ratio for entire state was about 3-5-1 in 1953, as compared with 3-18-1 in 1949.

Price Support Showdown

GOVERNMENT CROP SUPPORTS will face a showdown test in Congress this week. The Senate is scheduled to consider a bill designed to support wool prices. Senate may try to tack on amendments to restore 90% parity support of dairy products and extend fixed supports on farm commodities for 2 more years. The proposal, which is counter to Secretary Benson's theory of sliding scale price support, may be the battleground for decision on question of price support levels. Present law would place all price supports on sliding scale next Jan. 1.

Milk Research

MILK HAS BEEN THE OBJECT of two recent research reports. Swift & Co. is now testing a "synthetic" milk substitute consisting of finely chopped and screened meat, with carbohydrates and minerals added. Swift's synthetic product is intended for use in diets of infants allergic to cow's milk. Kralax, a modified cow's milk to be used as a protein supplement for hospital feeding, has been developed by the National Dairy Research Laboratories. Skim milk is passed through ion exchange column, to remove minerals, casein is then added, and the material is spray-dried or canned. Medical reports say that because of the low initial cost of milk as compared with other animal protein, and the simplified methods of manufacture, Kralax could find relatively wide application for persons on high protein or low sodium diets.