

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Fertilizer Price Schedules

A DROP IN PRICES of fertilizer chemicals seems to indicate that raw materials producers are willing to offer significant discounts for fertilizer manufacturers who will take near term deliveries. Ammonium sulfate producers have lowered prizes \$2 per ton on contracts covering deliveries up to end of October. Allied has shifted last year's straight 128 per ton price on nitrogen in solutions to encourage near term shipments. For July and August delivery price will be \$126 per ton f.o.b. Hopewell and South Point, prices then slide upward as season enters into peak, with January-June deliveries selling for \$132.

Forage Fertilizer

RANGE FERTILIZATION is attracting increasing interest in California. U. of C.'s Hopland Range Field Station reports fertilization of sheep grazing land, 104 pounds of 16-20-0 per acre, gave nearly 2500 pounds of forage, dry weight basis, per acre, compared to 550 pounds on control plots. Upping fertilizer to 520 pounds from 104 increased forage to nearly 6400 pounds. Cost for the extra forage, \$4 per ton at lower rate, \$7 per ton at the higher. UC agronomist R. M. Love points out that even at \$7 the forage is cheap, especially when the sheep harvest it themselves. Another significant point, effects of fertilization are felt early: in January a ton of dry matter was available, contrasted with 200 pounds on control plots. Sheep grazing on the fertilized plots have gained one third pound a day since January, comparing favorably with gains on irrigated pasture.

Chilean Nitrate

LABOR TROUBLES PLUS CURRENCY MANIPULATIONS have interfered with the production of Chilean nitrate, leading to a situation which could result in chaos, according to the latest report from Aikman, London. Production has slipped from 247,000 tons last year to an estimated 227,000 tons. Production costs and prices are rising due to disparity of exchange rates, officially pegged at 110 pesos per dollar, when free rate on dollars is about 300 pesos. Aikman says old plants which have not been mechanized must now be producing at a loss, but foreign bankers are refusing to underwrite modernization of nitrate plants because of unsettled political conditions. For more on Aikman report see Business and Finance (page 646).

Hopper Battle

FOUR-MILLION ACRE BATTLE is shaping up in the Rocky Mountain area as the 1954 grasshopper crop begins to hatch on western range lands (AG & FOOD, March 17, page 275). Bids for aerial application of aldrin on 250,000 acres in Wyoming have been opened, winning bids as a start toward control on 1.3 million hopper infested acres. Farther west California looks for relative quiet on its crop lands, following 1953's serious threat (AG & FOOD, June 10, page 423). There, control, should it prove necessary, will probably come late and be confined to eastern edges of San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys.

Gypsy Moths

GYPSY MOTHS have now turned up in south central Michigan. Not previously reported west of Pennsylvania, the insects are a potential threat to peach, cherry, and apple trees in Michigan. Use of state funds is planned to finance a 100,000-acre control program, applying DDT to forest land in the Lansing area.

Dairy Products Drag

KICKING OFF "JUNE DAIRY MONTH" at a luncheon last week in Chicago, Secretary Benson once again urged greater determination in approach to research and distribution problems as most promising methods for dairymen to advance their industry and throw off government subsidies and controls. He said that dairy industry's distribution system has not kept pace with production advances, resulting in decline of per capita consumption of dairy products from 821 pounds in 1942 (an all time high) to 689 pounds last year. If consumption rate today were equal to that of 12 years ago, Benson noted, nation would be experiencing a milk shortage. Since last year's dairy month promotion effort, CCC stocks of surplus butter have risen from 167 to 317 million pounds. Government is now buying dried skim milk at the rate of 3.5 million pounds per day, five days per week.

Synthetic Sweeteners

THE USE OF SYNTHETIC SWEETENERS such as saccharin and cyclamate compounds (Sucaryl) in ordinary foods is a violation of the Federal Food and Drug Act according to the Association of Food and Drug officials of the U. S. The officials adopted a resolution of the use of synthetic sweeteners at their recent meeting in which they said that, "The indiscriminate sale of artificially sweetened foods is not in the best interest of the public health and welfare." The officials called for conspicuous labeling of synthetically sweetened foods as special dietary foods. They also recommended that manufacturers of special dietary foods give values of nutritional factors such as carbohydrate, fat, protein, and calories on the label of the foods.