

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Farm Bill Comments

RECENTLY PASSED ADMINISTRATION FARM BILL has met mixed comment in various areas. In California consensus seems to be that move is a step in the right direction. Establishment of commercial wheat areas also meets approval. Under commercial area program, growers of wheat outside the commercial wheat growing areas would not be governed by acreage allotment restrictions. In Texas many farmers wanted rigid supports. Dairy men feel left out, according to spokesman for South Texas producers' association who says dairy men prefer their "self help" plan to any government program. However, with basic crops supported at 82.5% of parity they feel anything less is unfair to the dairy farmer. Rice growers would have preferred a two-price support program, parity for domestic market and world price for exportable surplus. However, they are satisfied with the flexible program.

California Quarantine

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE has slapped a quarantine on a 4 by 12 mile area in the southwest corner of the state bordering on the Pacific and Mexico. Reason: first adult mexican fruit fly was found north of the border last week. Officials have been keeping an anxious eye on the area since infestation was reported in Mexico adjacent to border (AG AND FOOD, Feb. 17, page 163; May 12, page 491). Quarantine means no host fruit can be shipped out of area unless treated for fruit fly. Quarantine is largely academic at present since no commercial orchards are within control area. Situation would become much more serious if infestation is found further north in commercial areas.

Insect Menace— Southwest

IN THE SOUTHWEST, cotton crop is being hit by variety of insects. A brown cotton leafworm is causing considerable damage to cotton in Texas. Damage began to appear in July and has continued to spread. Severe damage extends over several thousand acres, with insects reported last week in six previously uninfested counties. Boll weevil and pink bollworm continue to build up in Rio Grande valley. In Arkansas eight counties have been quarantined against pink bollworm.

Insect Menace— Midwest

CORN BORER INFESTATION in Iowa is most severe since 1949, with heavy infestation also reported in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Recent heavy rains which brought some relief from drought also may have cut down on corn borer moths; however there is no cause for optimism as moths are still abundant and second generation is just now emerging from pupae. In general, entire area of northern Illinois is heavily infested.

Operation Pine Looper

AERIAL APPLICATION OF DDT is being used in England to combat an outbreak of pine looper in a 2500-acre forest. This is believed to be the first extensive use of aerially applied insecticides for forest insect control in England. Britain has not suffered greatly from pine forest insect in the past. However, 120 acres of pine forest were completely defoliated by the insect in the fall. The spraying aircraft, operated by Pest Control Ltd., will move to Scotland to spray 3500 additional acres of forest when the control program is completed in the South.

Contract Fertilization

CONTRACT BULK SPREADING of solid fertilizers, gaining favor in Midwest, may eventually be used for 50% of solid fertilizers in some states. Bulk spreading contracts are especially attractive in areas where labor shortages and large farms make it more economical for farmer to spend time at managerial tasks rather than labor. Trucks now used in contract bulk spreading are physically limited to a minimum application of about 200 pounds per acre; also weight of trucks restricts usage on soft ground which generally means fall pasture application. Weight limitation would be less binding on fertilization of leguminous grasses since these crops are adaptable to fall application.

Anti-Wilt Antibiotic

STREPTOMYCIN is effective for controlling bacterial blight of chrysanthemums. This successful use of antibiotics for control of bacterial disease of ornamentals is reported from New Jersey Agricultural Station. Antibiotic was found effective at 25 to 100 parts per million as a dip for cuttings. Soil application is not as effective. Streptomycin is also reported to be effective for control of bacterial wilt of carnations.

Sulfur Supply Improves

INDUSTRIAL SULFUR SUPPLY will continue to improve. Supplies have been adequate for all industrial needs this year and production continues to increase. Mexican Gulf Sulphur has started production in its Mexican plant rated at 200,000 tons per year. Pan American Sulphur expects to go on stream in 60 days with annual capacity of 500,000 tons. On the Gulf Coast, Standard Sulphur has recently announced plans for expansion, followed by announcement from Sulphur Exploration Co. of plans to prospect sulfur dome in Harris County, Texas. On the Sicilian sulfur front mine owners are engaged in last minute negotiations to prevent closing of all Sicilian mines on Aug. 20.