

## The Pesticides Industry

WITH THIS ISSUE, AG AND FOOD presents its semiannual survey of the pesticides situation. Developed by the editorial staff through nationwide direct contact, it presents a picture of the recent past, current status, and future outlook. This survey has been a regular feature of AG AND FOOD since its beginning in 1953. Putting together those published in the past with that now presented gives an interesting brief current history of the agricultural chemicals industry. The general picture presented is not, by any means, entirely a bright one. But there are reasons to see something better in the future.

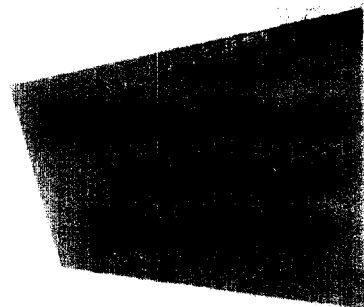
The industry has shown a rise in gross sales of active components from \$35 million to \$195 million during the past 20 years. It has a basis for optimism in the prediction of doubled volume in the next quarter century.

It is no secret that the recent past history of the pesticides industry has an unfortunate tone. There have been price cutting, troublesome consignment selling, excess manufacturing capacity, damage suits, and other unhappy trends. Some companies have dropped out of the business and it is not unlikely that more may drop out.

Is this industry then a hopeless mess? Is the picture ahead entirely dismal and doubtful? There is good reason to believe that it is not. It is not yet out of its trial by fire, but the results of evolution influenced by the hard facts of science and business can very well lead to something sound, effective, and prosperous. New and powerful compounds have been and are being developed. They are expensive to produce. There are risks and uncertain factors in their marketing and their application requires rigorous care. The industry has observed the folly of plunging into the miracle chemical business without sufficient forethought, planning, and investigation. Idle DDT plants over the country today will testify to costly mistakes or the failure to realize gold rush hopes. This past history makes some doubt the wisdom of putting money into research with the idea of developing something for the future. But the industry can build a sound future only through research. Inadequate education for the handling of powerful pesticidal agents not only may cause harm to humans but can cause damage to crops, and, with expensive materials, improper and excessive application can prevent the farmer's getting a return on his investment. All of these faults must be prevented in the future.

This, it seems, makes it clear that companies which may have the idea of getting into a rich market to skim off the cream and get out are ill-advised. But today there are companies that have proved themselves sound in both science and business and are taking an interest in long range development of agricultural chemicals. They are investing in laboratory research and development; they are doing market research and development; they are learning to handle the marketing and distribution of their products with careful control. These are the companies which are likely to remain in the business, build themselves a good position, and to be the keystones in a sound and profitable industry a few years hence.

The agricultural chemicals industry should become and must become one of the most scientifically managed of our



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industries, for care and control must be exercised from the concept of a research idea through the final application of the marketed product. Every step must be watched over by experts whether it be the scientific or business aspect of the operation. That there are companies capable of doing this and willing to do it gives reason to believe in the future of agricultural chemicals, and provides a basis for an optimistic opinion that these producers will accept the opportunity and meet the responsibility that lies in their future.

## Spencer Award

A NEW AWARD, the first in the field of agricultural and food chemistry, is to be made by the Kansas City Section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY (see page 196). It has been founded by Kenneth A. Spencer, president of Spencer Chemical Co., honoring his father. It is to be called the "Charles F. Spencer Award." Charles Spencer was a Midwestern leader described by the famous editor William Allen White as a "competent businessman who knew that modern chemistry holds the key to the brave new world opening out into the latter part of this century."

The award is to be conferred for meritorious contributions to the advancement of agricultural chemistry (which shall be deemed to include food chemistry) through education, industry, or research. We salute Kenneth Spencer and the Kansas City Section for their establishment of an award well-designed to encourage and recognize scientific contributions of broad benefit and significance.

## Spring ACS Meeting

THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY will hold its spring meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, March 29 to April 7 (page 198). The Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry will hold meetings March 30 through April 1. In addition to programs specifically in the fields of pesticides and fermentation, there will be a symposium, March 30, sponsored jointly with the Division of Chemical Literature, on the literature of agricultural chemicals. It will deal not only with scientific research in pest control, but also with toxicology, legal regulations, and marketing and economics.

Other areas of interest in agricultural and food chemistry will be found in the Divisions of Biological Chemistry, Carbohydrate Chemistry, Medicinal Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry, as well as others.

Not least of the attractions of the meeting will be the opportunities for direct contact and exchange of information with scientific colleagues and professional friends.

We'll see you in Cincinnati.