



## Expand the Market Base

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THE TECHNICAL REVOLUTIONS in agriculture and in the fertilizer industry are continuing apace. In the fertilizer industry, with respect to both technical aspects and volume of production, we can hardly identify what we now have with what we had before World War II. Granulation, liquid ammonia, neutral solutions, fertilizer-pesticide mixtures, and a great many new innovations are being taken up rapidly. Increase in production is remarkable and it looks as though the farmer may be growing away from the traditional relationship between fertilizer expenditures and farm income of the preceding year. The technology used by the fertilizer manufacturers is changing and improving rapidly. The first inclination is to say that nothing new is left—but this is an old story.

There is concern at the moment over excess capacity for fertilizer during the coming year and there is even more concern, both economic and political, over surplus foodstuffs produced in the United States. So much has been said about the growth of population in the next quarter century that it has come to sound trite, and the figures no longer are as impressive as they once were. But think of moving all of the population of Australia and of Canada into the U. S., and you will have a more concrete idea of the population we can expect in this country by 1975. Some recent crystal gazing, with extensive reservations, by our census specialists led to the suggestion that the U. S. population might pass well beyond 300 million people by the year 2000 if our present pattern continues.

The big question, worth a lot more than \$64,000, is which will move faster—population growth or capacity to feed the population. We do not have a ready answer but we do have a few thoughts pertinent to the matter. We are enjoying a national economy of a kind the world hasn't seen before. It is a consumption economy. Our big problem is to get people to consume what we can produce. In other economies the problem has been to save out enough from the country's consumption to develop capital to be used to produce more. Our big push now is to increase consumption (for which there is more capacity) to make it practical for us to produce more.

Under such conditions the drive to sell is very hard. One aspect of sales always has been to emphasize the superior qualities of a product. Today the selling approach is leaning heavily on the benefits of technical advancement. Change, and pressure for more change, is very high. The sense of value of research is getting

stronger and stronger. This means more than ever before that if a company is to hold or improve its position, it must be successfully alert in research. Already we see the pressure for announcement of new findings rising. Industry and experiment stations are aggressive in their efforts to keep up with their colleagues and each other, and the advanced farmer is knocking at the door of both for news of more progress.

What does this mean to the fertilizer industry? There is concern, some based on facts and some related to the proximity of the next election, over the buying power of the farmer. But the price of land continues to rise in most parts of the country, particularly in those areas where there is greatest agricultural potential. Certainly there is an indication of faith in the future of agriculture. It is still true that there is a great undeveloped potential for the profitable use of fertilizer. And on those farms where the value of fertilizer already is appreciated, progress remains to be made with the results from research.

What can be done to take advantage of these opportunities? There is still vast potential in more broad education in the value of fertilizers designed to increase their general acceptance. Such a program should be as aggressive as an advertising campaign to put over a new brand name. Teach and convince the farmer who is not now using fertilizer and the ground work is laid for exercising the specific sales approach. It is in an atmosphere developed by education that fertilizers can be sold properly and effectively. Technical development now is making the array of available plant foods so complex that there is danger of confusion and poor results from willy-nilly use of fertilizer.

The farmer who is well along technically is alert to the values of using fertilizer and now is eagerly looking for new and better materials and techniques for nourishing his crops. It is in service to this type of farmer that the future lies in research. More such farmers can be developed, by education, to support such research.

The day of the simple, straightforward peddler is just about gone. He must be replaced by farsighted educational approaches and vigorous research programs.