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Swift's plant food division, under Bill Price, is geared toward high output and low operating cost, while keeping pace with growing fertilizer markets

FOR MORE than half of the 60 years that Swift & Co. has been in the fertilizer business, William F. Price has contributed to the development of a plant food program designed for high production and efficient operation. Since joining Swift in 1925 when he was fresh out of college, Price has been part of the fertilizer industry, advancing from plant foreman to salesman and to general manager of Swift's plant food division.

Shortly after beginning his career by selling Vigoro, Price was sent to the West Coast to develop a full product line for Swift in that area. This was during the early thirties—the problem period for agriculture and for all industries. His success in the venture is evidenced by Swift's three fertilizer plants established at Los Angeles and Hayward, Calif., and Portland, Ore. During his stay on the Pacific coast, Price was active in the California Fertilizer Association. In 1941 he returned to Chicago as assistant sales manager, rising to general sales manager of the plant food division in 1949. A year ago, he became general manager of plant food division.

It was during and since World War II that Swift enlarged its far-reaching program for product and production development—a program unmatched in total scope by any others in Price's opinion. Development and expansion of Swift's fertilizer line has been championed by him. Perhaps best known in the fertilizer business for his merchandising abilities, Price also subscribes to the philosophy of research designed to improve both production and products.

Current plant food programs in the industry include the manufacture of mixed goods, Swift's primary interest, direct application of ammonia, and the development of liquids. Mixed goods, even after the appearance of liquids and the direct application of ammonia, continue to hold their own and still represent close to 75% of the total consumption. The growing agricultural industry still utilizes the same proportion of mixed fertilizer goods as it did a decade ago. Maintaining a prominent position in a highly competitive and constantly growing industry

necessitates company growth in proportion to immediate opportunity and future potential, says Price. In this respect, Swift's plant food division under Price is in a strategic position. Today, Swift is among the largest of mixed goods producers with 25 plants in operation. Soon to go into production are two additional manufacturing units, one in Florida and the other at St. Joseph, Mo. The latter will be a modern granulating plant of approximately 50,000 tons annual capacity.

Believes in Plant Modernization

Along with plant expansion, Price heads a vigorous program for modernizing existing plants and equipment. Although Swift has been in the fertilizer business over half a century, it does not have a single old factory, says Price. In recent years, some of the earlier plants have been torn down and rebuilt, notably at Albany and Atlanta, Ga., and at East St. Louis, Ill. Price believes that outmoded plants and equipment are deterrents to the manufacture of a quality product at low cost. Plant construction and modernization coupled with the company's phosphate mining operations in Florida put Swift in a favorable position to keep pace with expanding fertilizer markets.

Swift is "basic" in phosphates, operating two mines and a triple superphosphate factory, all in Florida. Swift, a traditional mixed goods operator, has shunned ammonia production because Swift plants are scattered from coast to coast. An agricultural chemical line for both the ornamental and farm fields is also being pursued under Price's direction. This line is not too large a factor in Swift's operations, but it is attaining widespread use in cotton and other crop dusts, plus weed controls. Close to Price's heart is the development of Golden Vigoro, a complete lawn food containing no organic fertilizer and a result of about 20 years of research.

Rapid development of the plant food industry and its important place in today's economy is due to the sound thinking and tireless efforts of men like Bill Price. The farmer is the basic



William F. Price

General Manager, Plant Food Division, Swift & Co. Born 1903, Streator, Ill.; University of Illinois, B.A., 1925; salesman, Plant Food Division, Swift & Co., 1925-40; assistant sales manager, 1941-48; general sales manager, 1949-54; chairman, California Fertilizer Association, 1938.

supplier of raw materials to the food industry, says Price. A company in Swift's position, being primarily a food processor, has a great interest in the quality of materials flowing from producer to processor. Of necessity, if for no other reason, the company must maintain a high interest in pasture and grain quality and improvement. This in turn depends on plant foods to a great extent for both quality and quantity. Fertilizer use has proved to be sound economics for the farmer, and anything that helps farm economy helps Swift. In short, it's a mutual service proposition.

Encompassing a view beyond the producer-processor relationship, Price feels that a determined effort must be made to increase available food supplies. He foresees the day when there will be fewer problems in connection with crop surpluses, because of the nation's rapidly increasing population. With an increasing population in prospect, and a prospective decrease in the number of farmers laboring to produce more food comes the responsibility for all concerned to produce more efficiently. New markets will develop, calling for new facilities of all kinds. We are, says Price, in a growth era in every direction. The success of an economical plant food program, Swift's or anyone else's, hinges on one thing—highest crop yields at lowest possible cost to the farmer. With his experience and foresight, William Price is right up front in developing just such a program.