

# Business Newsletter . . .

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## Coal Tar Colors Again Under Fire

On Jan. 24, the Food and Drug Administration started proceedings which could result in a **ban on four coal tar colors**, FD&C Yellow Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4. Nos. 3 and 4 are extensively used in coloring butter, oleomargarine, and other food products. While there have been **no reports of injury to humans** from any of the colors, animal experiments indicate that excessive amounts could cause injury. And since the law requires that an approved coal-tar color must be "harmless" regardless of the amount used, says FDA Commissioner George P. Larrick, the agency has no choice but to initiate proceedings to remove them from the list of colors certified for food use. Interested parties are given **30 days in which to file written comments** on the proposed ban.

## Expansions, New Facilities

**Atlas Powder** has broken ground for its **new \$3-million technical center** near Wilmington, Del. The center is an important part of Atlas' plans for intensification of long-range research, applications research, and customer service for food processing, pesticides, and other industries . . . **Hazleton Laboratories, Inc.** has contracted for construction of a new branch laboratory at Palo Alto, Calif. Western operations, expected to begin this spring, will include biological investigations paralleling those at Falls Church, Va., headquarters, with **major emphasis on studies** in the agricultural chemicals field . . . **Diamond Black Leaf** hopes to complete this month a major modernization of its agricultural chemicals plant at Des Moines, **doubling production capacity** and providing new storage, handling, and customer service facilities.

## Realignments, Mergers

**American Potash & Chemical** has consolidated sales of its agricultural chemical products under a **new section, which will handle fertilizers, fumigants, and insecticides. Research is getting new emphasis**, also, with recent opening of new \$200,000 addition to AP&CC's Whittier research laboratory, and tripling of research budget in past few years . . . **Hubbard-Hall Chemical Co.** is the new organization formed by **merger of four New England chemical and fertilizer companies**: Apothecaries Hall, Rogers & Hubbard, Woodruff Fertilizer & Chemical, and Old Deerfield Fertilizer. **Agricultural chemicals as well as fertilizers** will be produced and sold.

## American Design for Fisons Plant

British fertilizer and chemicals manufacturer **Fisons Ltd.** has awarded to **Chemical & Industrial International** a contract for construction of a 250-tons-per-day nitric acid plant at its Stanford-le-Hope site on the Thames Estuary. Designed by C&IL's corporate parent, Chemical & Industrial Corp. of Cincinnati, the **single unit, high pressure plant** is the second of its type furnished recently in Europe, where atmospheric or medium pressure nitric plants have been standard for many years.



- Companies and organizations have been taking public stands in recent weeks on the controversy over changing fertilizer guarantees to the elemental basis (**page 83**)
- Some possible hazards to plant growth are being recognized as caused by soil residues of pesticides, but a vast amount of research must precede evaluation (**page 84**)
- Fertilizer tonnage has taken dips before, but preliminary report is that 1955-56 plant nutrient use failed to set a new record for the first time in 16 years (**page 85**)
- USDA's experts predict farm income to push up in 1957—but farm exports must remain high and Soil Bank program must affect many acres (**page 86**)



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# Research Newsletter . . .

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## Home Grown "Pyrethrum"

A second insecticidal compound, designated "heliopsin," has been isolated from roots of **pyrethrum-like plant** *H. helianthoides* var. *scabra*, **native to the United States**. Extracted from roots in 0.1% yield, the compound is as toxic as pyrethrins to houseflies, and is synergized by most pyrethrin synergists. Previous compound, "scabrin," isolated in 1950 in 0.2% yield, is superior to pyrethrins in knockdown and mortality against houseflies. USDA reports plants are easily grown, and believes **toxicant content may be increased by selective breeding**.

## FDA Budget Enlarged for Fiscal '58

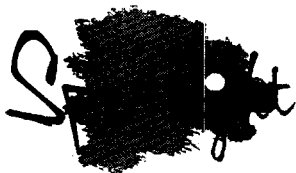
President Eisenhower's proposed budget for 1958 includes a boost to \$10,554,500 for the Food and Drug Administration. A planned **26.3% increase for program work** will mean **greater inspection activity**, with number of establishments inspected increased from 14,100 to 16,700, and number of samples collected for analysis in FDA laboratories increased by about 12%. **Added emphasis on basic research** calls for development of new methods for detecting and measuring residues of pesticides and food additives, additional toxicological studies on such materials, bacteriological studies on precooked and frozen foods, and evaluation of protein quality of foods and effects of heat and radiation processing on nutritional qualities.

## Farm Role for Gibberellic Acid?

In West Coast research, **gibberellic acid** shows signs of assuming a practical role in agriculture sooner than expected. Oregon State researchers have found that some **biennial plants can be made to flower during their first year**; if the effect could be induced in all biennials, it could speed development of new cabbage, carrot, beet, and other vegetable and flower varieties. At University of California, Davis, gibberellic acid treated **tomato plants set two to three weeks earlier**, and set **three times more fruit** than untreated plants. With potatoes, GA treatment promises to break the rest period, giving sprouts in three to five weeks, compared to nine or ten weeks for controls.

## Genetics for Microorganisms

Indications that **cross-breeding of microorganisms** can be controlled to produce new antibiotic yields will be further investigated at Rutgers Institute of Microbiology. Researchers there hope that cross-breeding, by sexual processes similar to those of higher organisms, will lead to strains capable of producing **new "tailor-made" antibiotics** with combinations of desirable properties.



- Production of a phosphate fertilizer by heat treatment, instead of acid treatment, of phosphate rock found to have economic advantages for certain areas (**page 104**)
- Of all the metal ions and fungicides tested, silver is found to be most toxic to fungus spores (**page 116**)
- Infrared spectrophotometer saves time and reduces error in determining contents of DDT and gamma isomer of BHC in cotton dusts (**page 127**)