

profile...

Diversification has brought to Olin Mathieson a wide interest in the farm market and in food processing

IN CHEMICALS, to stand still is to slip backward. Scientific research is moving along at such a pace that no manufacturer in the agricultural field can afford to do things in 1957 as they were done in 1956.

S. L. ("Sam") Nevins, Olin Mathieson Chemical Corp. vice president, said it this way last month in discussing the expansion and technological progress that has taken place in plant foods: "We can continue as private enterprises only to the extent we serve the American farmer. We cannot long exist as an industry and remain standing on today's plateau."

Olin Mathieson today is one of the nation's major diversified industrial concerns, operating in the three broad fields of chemicals, metals, and packaging. It has annual sales in excess of \$600 million, and more than 45,000 employees in 77 domestic and 14 overseas plants. Like many other diversified corporations, Olin Mathieson has a big stake in the farm market.

Interest in Food Processing

The company's interests in food production and processing range from antibiotics and veterinary medicines to carbon dioxide and dry ice, polyethylene sheeting and other packaging materials to irrigation systems.

Of the corporation's 16 major operating divisions, the one that is almost entirely committed to the service of agriculture is the plant food division. Things are stirring in this division, as a number of recent news items from the company clearly indicate.

The corporation's aim since 1949 when it became a major producer and supplier of chemicals to agriculture has been to expand its position in these areas. Recent shifts appear to have unified and strengthened its distribution and sales units for placing both plant foods and pesticides in the hands of the farmer. The industrial chemicals division continues its role as a supplier of bulk chemicals to mixers and formulators. At the same time, the plant food division has

strengthened its marketing organization for fertilizers and finished pesticides.

Four Points for Agriculture

The division promotes a "four-point program"—fertilizers, pesticides,



The President . . .

Thomas S. Nichols

Support and Encouragement for Research

irrigation systems, and anhydrous ammonia for direct application—but the advertising emphasis nationally is on Ammo-Phos, Mathieson's water-soluble, high-analysis pelletized fertilizer.

The company describes Ammo-Phos as the pioneer high-analysis pelletized fertilizer manufactured in the United States. It is produced from ammonia, phosphoric acid, and sulfuric acid, emerging first as a water-borne slurry of various ammonium chemicals including monoammonium phosphate. Pelletizing is accomplished by repeatedly coating small particles with slurry to build commercially acceptable pellets in such formulas as 11-48-0, 16-20-0, and 13-39-0. Addition of

potash yields complete mixed fertilizers in grades such as 12-24-12 and 10-20-10. The pellets are then screened and bagged.

Numerous grades of Ammo-Phos are turned out at O-M's Pasadena, Texas, plant. Phosphate rock and potash for this operation are shipped in, the phosphate rock coming by water from Florida.

Sulfuric acid is produced at Pasadena for the fertilizer operation. The corporation also produces sulfuric acid at Port Arthur and Beaumont, Tex., North Little Rock, Ark., Bossier City, La., Joliet, Ill., and Baltimore, Md. Recovery of elemental sulfur from sour gas is conducted at McKemie and Magnolia, Ark., and sulfur refining at Houston, Tex.

Nitrogen compounds in various forms are made by Olin Mathieson. The company began production of anhydrous ammonia at Niagara Falls in 1923, and after World War II added units at Lake Charles, La., and Morgantown, W. Va. Lake Charles supplies ammonia to the Pasadena operation, and also produces some sodium nitrate. Some of the Morgantown ammonia is shipped to distributors for direct application. Ammonium sulfate and superphosphate are made at Baltimore.

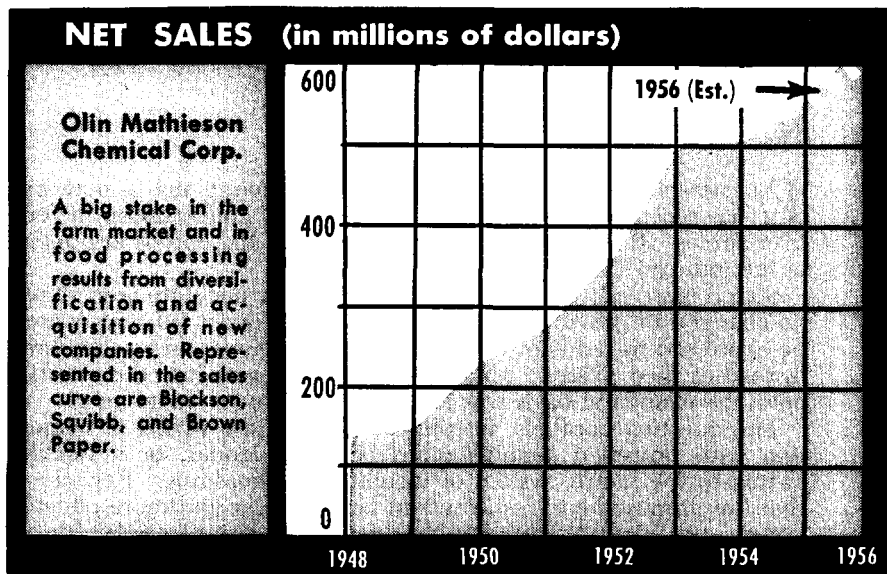
As production at Pasadena has expanded—it has doubled in five years—distribution facilities also have had to grow. The plant food division has district sales offices at eight strategic points: Phoenix, Ariz., Omaha, Neb., St. Louis, Mo., Houston, Tex., Jackson, Miss., North Little Rock, Ark., Williamston, N. C., and Baltimore, Md.

The Omaha district, serving parts of the rich corn and wheat belts, is barely a year old but it recently had to seek larger quarters. The eastern points, Williamston and Baltimore, once operated independently. They recently have been given the status of sales districts and consolidated with other sales operations.

A network of major warehouses helps the division provide local service. The company finds it economical to ship high analysis fertilizer to most points in the nation, using barge transportation to East Coast and Midwestern river ports to cut shipping costs.

Edward Block, as executive vice president, administers the plant food division, along with the Blockson Chemical Division at Joliet, and the Baltimore plant. Sam Nevins operates the plant food division with headquarters at Little Rock.

Finished pesticides are handled by the plant food division under the Mathieson label. Bulk sales to formulators classified by the corporation as



“wholesale” are made under the “Powco” label by the insecticides department of the industrial chemical division. The name is a hold-over from the John Powell operations which were acquired some years ago.

Olin Mathieson handles a complete line of pesticides, and pursues a very active research program for these products at its laboratories near Port Jefferson, L. I. A major objective is

developing proprietary trade names. Terraclor, a soil fungicide which has shown strength in the market, represents a development from the company’s own laboratories.

One New Product a Week

Research in general for Olin Mathieson chemicals is an activity that has expanded with the full support

and encouragement of the company’s president, Thomas S. Nichols. With over 2000 scientists and technicians at work in 19 divisional laboratories over the nation, the company estimates that successful new products are being developed for the market at the rate of more than one a week.

The company’s pioneering developments in the manufacture of high analysis fertilizer are credited to Sam Nevins, as are a number of other chemical accomplishments (AG AND FOOD, April, 1955). The idea goes back many years to the time when he was with Southern Acid & Sulphur Co.

Nevins is also noted for some of his pioneering efforts in other matters. Recently, for instance, he took a stand in favor of changing the basis for designation of fertilizer ingredients from oxides to elements, a change that is opposed by many other industry leaders.

He has two motivations for this stand. He believes, first, that the greatest expansion and technological progress of the plant food industry are yet to be realized. Also, he is convinced that the agricultural scientists who are not directly connected with industry—those who proposed the oxides-elements change—will lead the way in this development.

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