

profile...

Diversity of products and steady growth is the formula Miller Chemical applies to its business

IF DIVERSITY is the key to security in chemicals for agriculture, then the continuing success of Miller Chemical & Fertilizer Corp. seems assured. For there are few commercially available fertilizer or pesticide materials that are not included in some way in the roster of products manufactured or formulated by this Baltimore firm.

The product line was not always so extensive. When the company was formed 20 years ago, a few fertilizer mixtures—and no pesticides—represented its stock in trade. Diversification began early, however, and within a few months after opening its doors, Miller had added several insecticides to its line.

The company was founded in 1937 by a small group who had been working for Davison Chemical in Baltimore. They had decided to strike out on their own, and under the leadership of W. Newton Long were soon in business under the Miller name. (The name was suggested by several of the firm's first employees who had previously worked for a Miller Fertilizer Co. The latter firm had been acquired and dissolved by Davison, and its name was no longer in use.) Long served as the new firm's president until a year ago; as chairman of the board of directors he is still active in the business, although officially semiretired.

Waterfront Plant

Having acquired a plant on the Baltimore waterfront, Miller began to mix fertilizers, using raw materials purchased from basic manufacturers—among them, Davison. Next step was the move into insecticides, beginning with formulation of a few simple products based on rotenone, lead arsenate, calcium arsenate, Bordeaux mixture, Paris green, and other materials then (and for the most part, still) in use.

Growth in the pesticides field was moderate, with no spectacular increase

until World War II. The introduction of DDT, followed within a few years by a number of other chlorinated hydrocarbons and more recently by



The President . . .

Lawrence W. Cameron

Looks to Steady Growth

the phosphates, brought on a period of rapid, sometimes almost explosive growth in the pesticide field. Miller was among the early entries into the organic pesticides market, and has continued to add new products to its line virtually as rapidly as they become available to the industry.

As a result of this rapid growth, pesticides soon became as important an aspect of Miller's business as fertilizers. For the past few years, the two classes of materials have run neck and neck in accounting for the company's total sales.

The fertilizer end of the business runs the gamut in types of product, from standard or mineralized (trace element fortified) grades of field ferti-

lizer to soluble powders, starter solutions, and nutrient sprays. In terms of quantity, the plant foods are turned out at every level from bulk carload or truckload down to quarter-pound packages for home use.

A similar range of sizes is available in the pesticide line, with an even greater diversity of formulations. Among the large-volume materials formulated for agricultural use are malathion, parathion, heptachlor, DDT, DDD, chlordan, and several others.

In recent years, Miller has become a basic manufacturer of several pesticide materials including TEPP, sodium arsenite, and lime-sulfur solution. Roughly a tenth of the firm's total business is in these products.

Decision to Go Basic

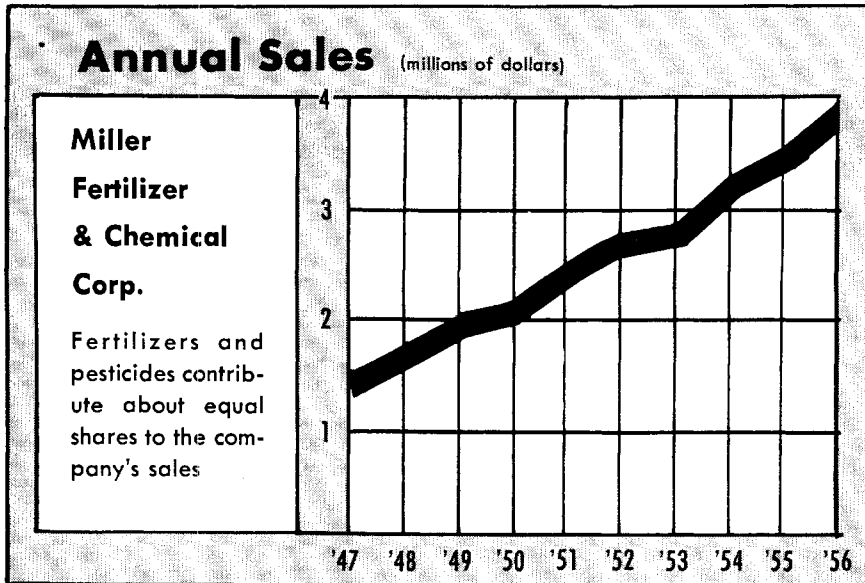
The decision to "go basic" was not a difficult one to make. Decreases in demand, or failure of sufficiently large markets to develop, had caused several large manufacturers to drop products such as these from their respective lines. With its sources of supply cut off, but demand still existing for its formulations—and on a scale sufficient to be economically attractive to the somewhat smaller company—Miller decided to make its own. The company is well satisfied with the results, and is on the watch for further opportunities of a similar nature.

Virtually all of Miller's products are sold through distributors or dealers not affiliated with the company. The single major exception is Miller Chemical of New Jersey, a principal distributor for the company in the Garden State. Primary marketing area for Miller products is in the Atlantic seaboard states from New York to North Carolina. Normal growth is beginning to extend the area toward the Midwest, however, with some sales already developing in Ohio. A small but growing export business, chiefly in pesticide formulations, currently accounts for some 5% of total sales.

Fleet of Trucks

Domestic shipments are handled largely—probably 95%—by truck. Miller maintains a small fleet of its own, but well over half of its shipments move in customers' trucks. A sizable fraction of incoming raw materials arrives by rail, but only a very small percentage of finished products is shipped out in this way.

Recent technological developments in both fertilizers and agricultural chemicals have attracted the interest of Miller's management, and several are under consideration as possible ad-



ditions to current operations. Granulation of fertilizers, for example, is becoming increasingly popular; Miller has not yet installed granulation equipment, but grants that company thinking tends in that direction. Granulation may well lie in the firm's near future. In the agricultural chemicals field, the gibberellins are among several recent developments that have piqued curiosity at headquarters, but

again matters are in the thinking stage only.

For the future Miller looks to continuing steady growth, rather than revolutionary technical or marketing developments, as its avenue of progress. Company president Lawrence W. Cameron, elected to his position last year after 15 years of service, says no specific plans are afoot for major expansions or for entry into new fields.

"Normal growth," however, has already resulted in the building or purchasing of several additional mixing or manufacturing plants, and more of the same is not an unreasonable expectation. Besides its original fertilizer and pesticides installations at Baltimore, the company now has a pesticides plant—chiefly for bulk agricultural chemicals—at Salisbury, Md., and fertilizer mixing plants at Whiteford and Gaithersburg, Md., and Hanover and Ephrata, Pa. Some eight to 10 warehouses are strategically located throughout the firm's marketing area.

Low Rate of Turnover

Miller employs a total of about 140, with a very low rate of turnover. Many of the employees can claim 10, 15, or even more years of continuous service with the company.

Among the employees are a number of technologists with backgrounds in chemistry, agronomy, and entomology, whose chief task is to keep Miller abreast of current developments in agriculture as well as agricultural chemistry. With a modest but firm research program, and with a business eye peeled for new opportunities, Miller should have no difficulty in progressing at a rate that matches—perhaps exceeds—that of the industry.

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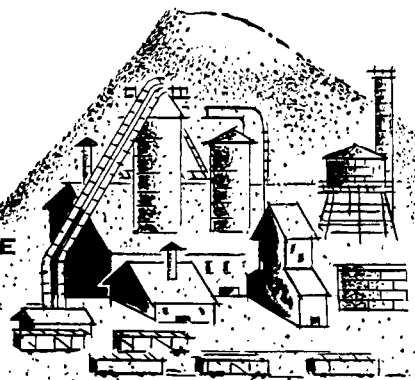
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