



November 1959 Volume 7, No. 11

APPLIED JOURNALS, ACS
1155 Sixteenth St., N.W.
Washington 6, D. C.

Director of Publications: C. B. Larrabee
Editorial Director: Walter J. Murphy
Executive Editor: James M. Crowe
Assistant to the Director of Publications:
Joseph H. Kurey

AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD CHEMISTRY
Editor: Rodney N. Hader

EDITORIAL HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.
1155 Sixteenth St., N.W.
Phone REpublic 7-3337 Teletype WA 23

Associate Editors: G. Gladys Gordon,
Stella Anderson, Katherine I. Biggs,
Margaret S. McDonald

Assistant Editors: Robert J. Riley,
Robert J. Kelley, Ruth M. Howorth,
Eugenia Keller, Sue M. Soliday,
Malvina B. Preiss, Ruth Reynard

Editorial Assistants: Katherine H.
Ginnane, Virginia E. Stewart, S. S.
Rogers, Lorraine M. Bertuzzi

Layout and Production: Melvin D. Buckner
(Art); Betty V. Kieffer, Leroy Corcoran,
John V. Sinnett

BRANCH EDITORIAL OFFICES

CHICAGO 3, ILL.
Room 926
36 South Wabash Ave.
Phone STate 2-5148 Teletype CG 725

Associate Editors: Howard J. Sanders,
Chester Placek

Assistant Editor: James H. Krieger

HOUSTON 2, TEX.
718 Melrose Bldg.
Phone FAirfax 3-7107 Teletype HO 72

Associate Editor: Bruce F. Greek

Assistant Editor: Earl V. Anderson

NEW YORK 16, N. Y.
2 Park Ave.
Phone ORegon 9-1646 Teletype NY 1-4726

Associate Editors: William G. Hull,
Harry Stenerson, David M. Kiefer, D.
Gray Weaver, Walter S. Fedor, Laurence
J. White

Assistant Editor: Louis A. Agnello

SAN FRANCISCO 4, CALIF.
703 Mechanics' Institute Bldg.
57 Post St.
Phone EXbrook 2-2895 Teletype SF 549

Associate Editor: Richard G. Newhall

Assistant Editor: Joseph Sturchio

EASTON, PA.
20th and Northampton Sts.
Phone BLackburn 8-9111
Teletype ESTN Pa 7048

Associate Editor: Charlotte C. Sayre

Assistant Editor: Joyce A. Richards

Editorial Assistants: Elizabeth R. Rufe,
Barbara A. Conover

EUROPEAN OFFICE
Bush House, Aldwych, London
Phone Temple Bar 3605 Cable JIECHEM
Associate Editor: Albert S. Hester

Advisory Board: Raoul Allstetter, Everette
M. Burdiak, George K. Davis, George C.
Decker, Leo R. Gardner, Joseph W. E.
Harrison, Lloyd W. Hazleton, William L.
Hill, Allen B. Lemmon, Maurice H.
Lockwood, Louis Lykken, George L.
McNew, Olaf Mickelsen, Harvey K. Murer,
Joseph A. Noone, J. D. Romaine, Warren
C. Shaw, A. V. Slack, Hazel K. Stiebeling,
John C. Sylvester

Advertising Management
REINHOLD PUBLISHING CORP.
(For List of Offices see page 797)

How Well Do You Farm?

SURELY EVERY FERTILIZER MAN must have heard by now some version of the well-worn story about a certain crusty old farmer. This plodder refused to listen to up-to-date advice from his county agent, or to attend fertilizer demonstrations and lectures; there was no point in studying better farming methods, in his view, because "I don't farm half as well as I know how, right now."

That farmer has been the subject of condescending chuckles for years, and he's a favorite object of scorn in the fertilizer field. But could it be that his more sophisticated counterpart exists and drags his feet in just about every fertilizer company in the country? We are becoming convinced that he does.

There are at least three items in this issue of *AG & FOOD* which could be cited in support of this argument. Two of them are closely related, and deal with granulation technology. The first of these is the feature article by Hector J. Koch of African Explosives and Chemical Industries, beginning on page 748; the second is our staff-written personal profile on John O. Hardesty of USDA, on page 800. Both articles present strong implications that the U. S. fertilizer industry is not granulating half so well as it knows (or should know) how.

It seems quite ironic that most U. S. fertilizer producers should fall so far short of the ideal in producing granular fertilizers, when the pertinent technology was initially developed here, and information on how best to do the job has been freely available to any who would study and use it. In fertilizer granulation, it appears, U. S. chemists and engineers made the kick-off but it was fertilizer manufacturers abroad who grabbed the ball and ran with it.

Fortunately, there is nothing to prevent U. S. industry from closing whatever gap exists, and either regaining the initiative or sharing it with the fertilizer industries of the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. But to do so, it will be necessary to recognize that not everything that is made in America is the best made anywhere.

For years it has been generally acknowledged that Europe has led in basic research, while the United States has been a star performer in engineering—putting basic research findings to work on a practical basis. But it is becoming increasingly clear that first-rate engineering is not the private domain of American industry. We like very much Mr. Koch's suggestion that American fertilizer producers urge their technical men to travel, and to acquire knowledge of fertilizer production practice in Europe and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Koch wrote his article, we should point out, at our specific request. In the course of our conversations with him during his visit to America last spring, we were impressed by his observations on fertilizer technology and practice not merely within his own company, but in plants he has visited throughout the world. We asked him to write frankly about his observations, even those which might seem to place American granulation practice in a bad light, in the belief that objective comparison and constructive criticism could be of immense practical value to fertilizer manufacturers wherever they might be.

There is a third item in this issue which suggests that at least some fertilizer manufacturers have their heads in the sand. This third article is an interpretive report on quality control for fertilizer, beginning on page 741. In it, we report at some length the comments of a prominent member of our domestic fertilizer industry, Nelson White of International Minerals & Chemical. Here again, the industry has been indicted for failing to do—or to do adequately—something it has been shown repeatedly how to do, and something it should know by now is in its own best interests.

As Mr. White says, the fertilizer industry preaches quality but practices pricing. Having been severely burned in the pricing fire, the industry surely knows better. And having been shown that quality control more than repays its own cost, the industry as a whole should be using quality control to the limit of its effectiveness.

Does the American fertilizer industry farm half as well as it knows how?