

# From Washington

## U.S. considers possible responses if EC approves tax on fats, oils

The United States has formed an interagency panel to study possible responses to a proposed European Common Market tax on fats and oils. Deputy Under-Secretary of Agriculture Alan Tracy told a House subcommittee that "the immediate impact of the proposed oils tax on U.S. exporters of oilseeds and products would be relatively minor, felt in reduced demand. But by establishing a principle of unilaterally abrogating GATT agreements, it would give the EC a foot in the door to add restriction on restriction in the years ahead with devastating results for U.S. exports." Tracy estimated that U.S. fats and oils exports affected by the proposals would total about \$4.2 billion in value. EC estimates are below \$2 billion. U.S. commodity groups oppose the proposal, which would levy a tax of about \$64 per metric ton on oils and fats (except butter). The Common Market commission estimates the tax would yield about \$512 million annually, which would be used to help finance the system's agricultural subsidy program. *Oil World*, the German weekly newsletter on fats and oils markets, said that although the proposal will be talked about, it "will finally be declined."

## Spanish oil contaminants to be tested for toxicity

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control will test oleic and palmitic chloropropanediol diesters on rabbits to determine if they are toxic. The two fatty acid esters were identified by FDA's Bureau of Foods in concentrations up to 3800 parts per million in several Spanish oil samples associated with the fatal contamination of cooking oil in Spain a few years ago. The specific cause of the deaths and illnesses in Spain has not been identified yet. Details: *Food Chemical News*, Oct. 10, 1983, p. 3.

## EPA orders halt to use of nematicide EDB

The Environmental Protection Agency issued a 30-day cancellation notice and an emergency suspension notice for pesticide products containing ethylene dibromide (EDB) after evidence showed EDB seriously contaminates water supplies, fruits and vegetables, and is highly carcinogenic to humans. EDB had been used mostly as a soil fumigant to help control nematodes on various crops and as a post-harvest quarantine fumigant. Over 20 million pounds of EDB were used annually for pesticide applications in the U.S. The EPA said annual losses to growers by banning EDB as a soil fumigant on soybeans, vegetables, cotton, peanuts, tobacco and potatoes could total \$23.2-\$27 million, depending on the selection of alternative nematicides. Details: *Federal Register*, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 1983, pp. 46228-46248; *Food Institute Report*, Sept. 17, 1983, pp. 3-4.

## FDA affirms GRAS status of linoleic in foods

The Food and Drug Administration has proposed affirming the generally recognized as safe (GRAS) status of linoleic acid as a direct food ingredient in conventional foods and infant formula when used under current good manufacturing practice. Since no food-grade specifications exist for linoleic acid, FDA said it will work with the Committee on Food Chemicals Codex of the National Academy of Sciences to develop acceptable specifications. In the interim, the ingredient must be of a suitable purity for its intended use. The proposal does not affect the GRAS status of linoleic acid in dietary supplements. Details: *Federal Register*, Monday, Oct. 3, 1983, pp. 45121-45123; *Food Chemical News*, Oct. 10, 1983, pp. 14-16.