

From Washington

Drought relief for U.S. farmers

President Ronald Reagan has signed a \$3.9-billion drought-relief package that will provide aid to farmers who have lost more than 35% of this year's harvest. Growers will receive payments up to 65% of predrought expected returns. Producers losing more than 75% of their crops will receive payments equal to 90% of lost income.

As of early August, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said the drought had damaged crops in 43 states, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that more than 40% of the U.S. was suffering from severe to extreme drought conditions. Soybean production was forecast at 1.47 billion bushels, 430 million bushels less than in 1987, and output for some other major crops was expected to be 25-50% lower than last year. Crop losses are forecast in the billions of dollars.

The provisions of the drought relief bill will allow farmers to receive up to \$100,000 for crop losses; however, growers whose gross revenues exceed \$2 million will not be eligible. Any grower who accepts drought disaster payments will have to buy federal crop insurance for 1989. The bill also will allow farmers to plant soybeans and sunflowerseed on 10-25% of their wheat, feed grain, cotton or rice acreage without jeopardizing their crop base.

Suitable cargoes to precede oils

Edible oils should not be shipped in containers that last handled heptene and orange terpenes, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has told the National Institute of Oilseed Products (NIOP). FDA said the two presently are not acceptable as prior cargoes handled before edible oils.

The agency made the judgment in response to an NIOP proposal that lists be made of cargoes suitable to precede edible oils in shipping. NIOP's "A" list named "unacceptable" cargoes, and its "B" list covered materials which "may be unacceptable." Its "C" list—of acceptable prior cargoes—had included heptene and orange terpenes.

Low-erucic acid rapeseed oil (canola), coconut oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, fish oil, molasses, palm kernel oil, palm oil, palm oil stearine, palm olein, hydrogenated rapeseed oil, soybean oil and soybean oil tallow were acceptable as prior cargoes preceding edible oils, according to FDA.

Noting that NIOP's "B" list was not practical for enforcement purposes, FDA suggested that category be changed from "may be unacceptable" to "chemicals which can be removed." The revised list would include chemicals that can be removed through refining or in ship cleaning. FDA suggested the "A" list

should include chemicals that are highly toxic or carcinogenic and chemicals "for which there is insufficient information either on their toxicity or removal during the refining process." Any chemical not included in the "B" or "C" list would automatically be deemed unacceptable, FDA said. Details: *Food Chemical News*, July 18, 1988, pp. 14-16.

Surgeon General says eat less fat

The first *Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health*, released earlier this year, suggests "the disproportional consumption of foods high in fats, often at the expense of foods high in complex carbohydrates and fiber that may be more conducive to health," is the major U.S. dietary problem.

The 712-page report recommends that people reduce their consumption of fat, particularly saturated fats, and cholesterol. It also suggests that food choices include vegetables, fruits, whole grain foods, fish, poultry and other foods with a low fat content. In food preparation, little or no fat should be added. The Surgeon General's report also suggests people get more exercise and adopt a dietary pattern that helps maintain a desirable body weight.

In addition, the report encourages food manufacturers to inform consumers about the nutrient content of their processed foods. Although nutrition labeling is encouraged, the report does not call for mandatory labeling.

According to *Science*, the American Heart Association and the dairy, beef and egg lobbies are pleased with Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's report; other groups, such as the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), call the report "ultracautious" and are unhappy because it does not make specific dietary recommendations. The reason the report offers no specific guidelines on the amounts of dietary fats or fiber is because "the scientific base simply isn't there yet," according to J. Michael McGinnis, deputy assistant secretary for health.

Copies of the complete report may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, for \$22. An 80-page summary is available for \$2.75.

USDA to test NIR equipment

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) this month is expected to begin evaluating near-infrared spectroscopy equipment that might eventually be used in official inspections to determine the amount of oil, protein and moisture in soybeans.

FGIS asked companies wishing to have their equip-

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ment evaluated to submit a request for type evaluation by Sept. 1, 1988, and the equipment by Oct. 1, 1988. Due to the urgency of approving near-infrared spectroscopy instruments, FGIS said the approval process would be a departmental priority until March 1, 1989.

Copies of "Design Criteria and Operational Performance Specifications for Grain Constituent Measuring Instruments Using Near-Infrared Spectroscopy," which contains information on the procedures FGIS will use in equipment approval, can be obtained from the Federal Grain Inspection Service, Standardization Division, Quality Control Branch, PO Box 20285, Kansas City, MO 64195. Details: *Federal Register*, July 18, 1988, p. 27057.

Senate bill on nutrition issues

The U.S. Senate has approved a bill that could establish a coordinated national nutritional-monitoring and related research program. It also calls for the development of a plan to assess the nutritional and dietary status of the U.S. population.

The bill was introduced by Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico. A companion bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Buddy McKay from Florida.

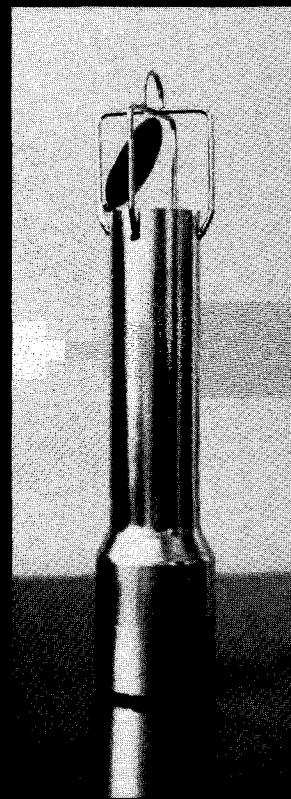
In other actions, U.S. House of Representative Democratic leaders have released a report charging that the Reagan Administration "has shown a chilling disregard for food safety concerns." The report by the ad hoc Task Force on Safety, which is chaired by Kansas Democrat Dan Glickman, said the administration's "laissez-faire attitude" toward safety has led to the "deregulation of safety." The task force particularly cited the reduction in the number of food inspectors and the resistance by the administration to more specific food labeling.

FDA approvals D&C Red 36

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given final approval for the general use of the color additive D&C Red 36 in drugs and cosmetics, except for use in the eye area. The decision became effective Sept. 2, 1988. Details: *Federal Register*, Aug. 2, 1988, pp. 29024-29032.

In other action, FDA gave final approval to zeolite Na-A as a pigment extender in the manufacture of paper and paperboard for food contact. The petition was filed by PQ Corp. Details: *Federal Register*, July 29, 1988, pp. 28635-28636.

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