

The U.S.D.A. Foreign Utilization Research Program

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS the Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service has been actively engaged in developing a program for research studies in foreign scientific institutions, leading to new or improved uses for agricultural commodities of United States origin. Such studies will be undertaken through grants or contracts and will be financed by foreign currencies accruing from the sale of surplus agricultural commodities under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 (Public Law 480, 83rd Congress).

This foreign research program is designed to complement the program of studies on the constitution and utilization of agricultural commodities that has been conducted in the utilization research and development divisions of the Agricultural Research Service since their establishment about 18 years ago (as the regional research laboratories of the Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry) under funds regularly appropriated by Congress. Careful preparations have been made to ensure that both programs will be closely coordinated.

The selection of research projects for conduct by foreign institutions will be guided by several primary considerations. The results of the work should be of mutual benefit to the United States and the other country concerned and indeed to agricultural science generally. While applied studies will be undertaken, fundamental research will be emphasized since it is in this area that foreign scientific workers traditionally have made their most noteworthy contributions. Whether the work is fundamental or applied, its relation to possible expansion of markets for agricultural commodities should be clearly demonstrable. Special consideration will be given to problems which could be prosecuted abroad more rapidly or efficiently than in the United States by virtue of specialized experience, facilities, or trained personnel available at a given foreign institution.

Research projects will be activated by means of grants where the work is predominantly fundamental in character. Applied research, and that which is largely analytical or testing in character, may be performed under contracts.

THE FOREIGN utilization research program is under the general direction of G. W. Irving Jr., deputy administrator of the Agricultural Research Service. Its active supervision is in the hands of G. E. Hilbert, assistant administrator, with the assistance of S. B. Detwiler Jr., special assistant to the administrator. Both Dr. Irving and Mr. Detwiler are members of the American Oil Chemists' Society.

In activating the foreign utilization research program, first consideration has been given to several countries of Europe and the Near East that are of particular interest not only because of the availability of institutions equipped to conduct utilization research but also because of the potential availability of Public Law 480 funds in these countries. From the middle of January to the middle of May, 1958, Dr. Hilbert visited the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Israel, and Finland to survey the utilization research potential of institutions in these countries and to acquaint key research leaders with the nature of the program.

As a result of the interest aroused by Dr. Hilbert's visits, several score of research proposals, including many in the field of oils and fats, have been received from institutions in the countries mentioned. These proposals are being subjected to intensive review and evaluation while concurrent steps are being taken to obtain allocation of P. L. 480 currencies to finance the work. As of the end of June several grants had been approved, and several others were ready for approval as soon as additional funds became available. In the fiscal year 1959 it is expected that several million dollars worth of grants can be activated.

During the next few months a small overseas office, staffed by two scientists, an administrative officer, and facilitating personnel, will be established in one of the foreign capitals, probably Rome. This office will serve to supervise the conduct of work under approved grants and contracts and to receive and screen new research proposals before forwarding them to the Department in Washington for approval.

After the European program is well established, attention will be given to the establishment of similar programs in Asia and South America.

The foreign utilization research program has been developed with the close collaboration of the Department's Foreign Agricultural Service.