

Imitation Milk

The introduction of imitation milk in major markets throughout the United States has been widely publicized in dairy industry magazines. The seriousness of the situation may be exaggerated by some, but there is little question that imitation milk poses a real and formidable threat to dairy farmers — a threat it would be foolhardy to underestimate.

American Dairy Association had tried to keep the problem of imitations in perspective by keeping close tabs on what can only be described as a confused, fast-changing situation. For your information here is a brief summary of pertinent facts as gleaned from a variety of sources.

Definition

There are two types of imitation milk being sold. First, filled milk, in which

low cost vegetable fat, usually coconut oil, is used to replace the butterfat in milk, but which otherwise contains the nonfat milk solids present in regular milk.

Second, is a relative newcomer, the non-dairy product imitation made of vegetable fat (coconut oil), corn syrup solids, stabilizers, emulsifiers, coloring, and protein sources such as sodium caseinate or soy protein.

Legal Status

Filled milk is currently legal in only 12 states, but federal law prohibits interstate shipment.

Synthetic milk is legal in about 35 states and can move freely across state lines.

There are no federal or state standards governing the composition of imitation milks. Labeling regulations vary: In some states these products must be labeled "imitation milk." Others

permit or require a fanciful name (Melloream, for example); still others require a combination fanciful, imitation, and non-dairy product label.

Distribution

Filled or imitation milk is being sold in about 17 states (it changes almost daily) by about 50 different companies, most of them regional or national dairies like Borden, Carnation, Foremost, Deans, Meadow Gold, Hawthorn-Melody, etc. Local dairies and some dairy cooperatives also make and sell imitations, purchasing formulas and ingredient mixes.

Cost

USDA computed the cost per gallon of imitation milk containing non-fat dry milk and coconut oil in one market area. The computed cost was 26.06c, or an advantage of 5 to 6 cents a quart over real milk. Processing and handling is essentially the same as with fluid milk. No special equipment is needed. Imitation milk generally sells

for about 10c a half gallon less than regular milk.

Sales Volume

Reliable figures on sales of synthetic milk aren't available, but USDA estimates that total sales of imitation milk probably represent less than one percent of fluid milk sales nationally.

In the Central Arizona Federal Order, the scene of a major market test, imitation milk sales in March were 7.8% (2,779,000 lbs.) of Class I, up from 3.2% (989,000 lbs.) in July 1967. In California sales have risen from .08% (343,000 lbs.) of Class I last July to .9% (4 million lbs.) this February.

Nutritional Value

Low protein content (1% or less vs 3 to 3½% in real milk), and lack of minerals (especially calcium), and lack of composition standards make the non-dairy product imitation milk nutritionally inferior to whole milk. Some doctors consider it a hazard to young children and those on special diets if used to replace real milk. The American Medical Association says synthe-

tic milks "should not be considered as nutritionally equivalent to whole milk."

Health claims for the filled milk (no animal fat, low cholesterol, high protein) are misleading. Hydrogenated coconut oil used in such products is a highly saturated fat, and scientifically has been found to be nutritionally inferior to milk fat.

While it is possible to make imitation milk chemically equal to whole milk there is no clinical evidence that current products are reliable as nutritional replacements.

Consumer Reaction

An Arizona survey by ADA revealed high consumer awareness, trial, and repeat buying of imitation milk. Half of those who tried it said they liked the taste; two-thirds thought the nutritional value was the same as real milk; two-thirds thought it was less fattening; one-half thought it had more protein. Many considered it a better value.

In western New York 56% of (Continued on Page 18)

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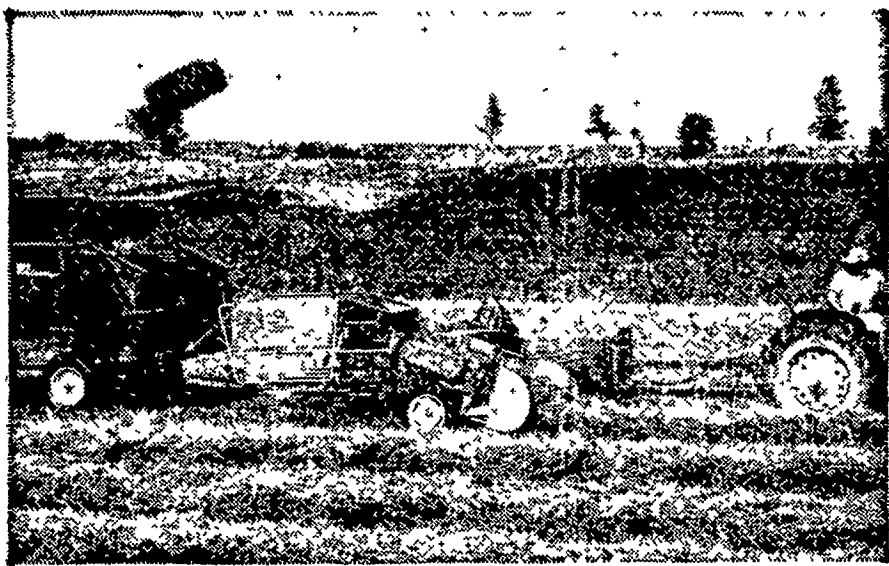
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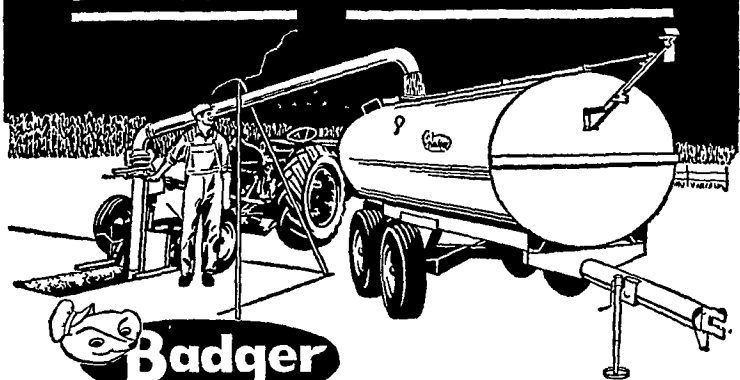
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