

USDA Plans Pilot Study To Reduce Pesticide Use

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been discussing a proposed plan with agencies of North Carolina that would implement a cooperative experiment in reducing the amount of pesticides used during next year's growing season. State officials have been receptive to the plan.

This pilot test, being proposed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service, would be in cooperation with the Federal Extension Service, State Extension Service, State Department of Agriculture and the University of North Carolina.

The test will key pesticide use by farmers to real needs for pest control, as determined by trained scouts who will survey tobacco fields and possibly other crops for threats by insects, weeds, and plant disease. Many farmers now simply apply pesticides, particularly insecticides, on pre-determined schedules that are known to keep pests under control.

"We expect scouting not only to reduce the uses of pesticides, but the costs of pest control," Dr. Francis J. Mulhern, ARS associate administrator, said. "Farm use of this technique in

cotton-producing areas of Arizona, Arkansas, and Alabama has demonstrated that reduced use of pesticides, which lessens the chance of contaminating the environment, and the savings in pesticide and application costs, are greater than the added costs for scouting services."

If the test results are promising, the Department expects to work with other States and farmers growing other crops to develop similar programs. This approach to pesticide use management could become a stand-

ard agricultural practice, USDA experts believe.

Tobacco was selected for this first test because it is a crop that is intensively farmed, has required high use of pesticides, and is usually grown in small acreages that do not usually lend themselves to scouting.

This experiment was recommended by a State Federal committee on pesticide use management appointed by Secretary Hardin, which said that the present system provides no supervision and control of the use of pesticides beyond the formula-

tor level. The committee also recognized that considerable misuse of these agricultural production tools occurs at the farmer level. This misuse is rarely deliberate, but results primarily from the lack of the necessary expert advice readily available to the farmer.

The committee felt that the major misuse was in using pesticides when they were not needed. The pilot test, therefore, will involve using scouts to determine pest populations in the field and so provide a basis for specific control recommendations to the farmer. This would eliminate pesticide use when economically unnecessary and insure that the farmer knows the proper pesticide to use for particular pest species.

Plastic Milk Bags

The Associated Press recently reported the use of unbreakable, see-through plastic bags for selling milk.

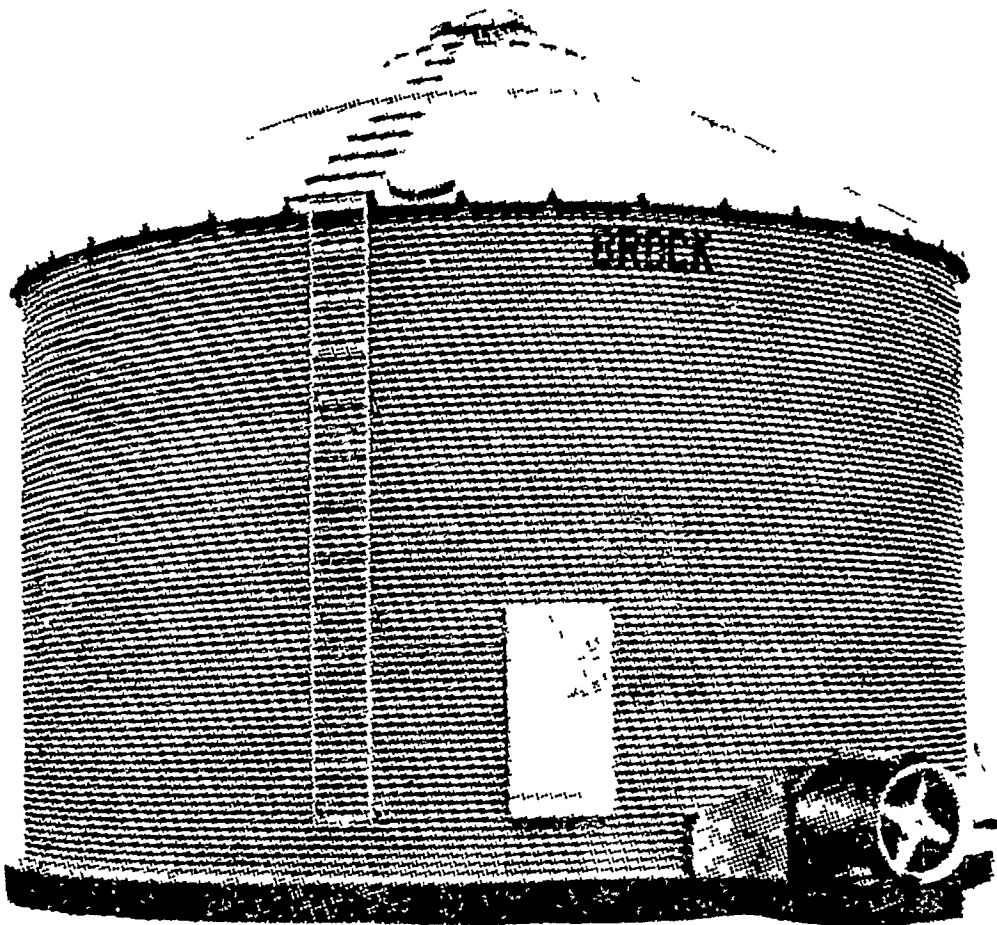
Bagging milk is reported to be a simple process involving two machines that cost \$12,000 with less than a penny each for the bags.

According to Richard Hoffman, a Montgomery County dairyman using the procedure, "We are convinced that bagging is going to become the accepted procedure in the future."

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