

Rural Change Leads to Environmental Conflict, Dean Says

Until recent years, most agricultural wastes were used constructively by recycling into farm soils.

Farms and food processing plants were generally isolated from people. But today's closer intermingling of farms, factories, and people is creating new problems from environmental conflicts, according to Dr. Russell E. Larson, Penn State University Dean of the College of Agriculture.

"A collision course has developed gradually between fulfillment of the basic needs of people and the enhancement of the environment in which they live," Dr. Larson wrote recently in a special issue of "Science in Agriculture," the quarterly magazine of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Penn State. The issue devotes all 24 pages to environmental quality.

The problems, Dean Larson said, include (1) population growth, (2) residential developments in rural areas, (3) development of intensified animal and poultry production units beyond the capacity of available land for recycling wastes, and (4) the

growth of food processing plants in proportion to the population. Large numbers of people require goods and services which alter the biosphere, he pointed out. These changes demand corrective systems as dynamic as the growth pattern itself, he affirmed, if people are to live in a quality environment.

"Quite frankly, close proximity to markets has been good for food producer, processor, and consumer. Until the last decade, the number and seriousness of environmental conflicts have not been sufficiently critical to stimulate society into willingness to pay the costs associated with large populations."

Now, however, the social and economic factors have become more intimately related. Suburbia is going to expand and so are farming and processing plants for food and fiber.

"We recognize a responsibility to utilize or recover all of the ingredients surrounding the main products or services required by society," he said. Future research projects in the College of Agriculture, he

said, will contain an integral objective of by-product usage or disposal in such manner as to improve the environment.

Dr. Larson indicated that pollutants related to agriculture cover factors other than organic wastes. Of equal concern are sedimentation, pesticide residues, misdirected plant nutrients, and various inorganic salt and mineral accumulations.

Free copies of the special 24 page issue of "Science in Agriculture," which covers progress reports on experiments dealing with pollutants, wastes, toxins, and contaminants, are available

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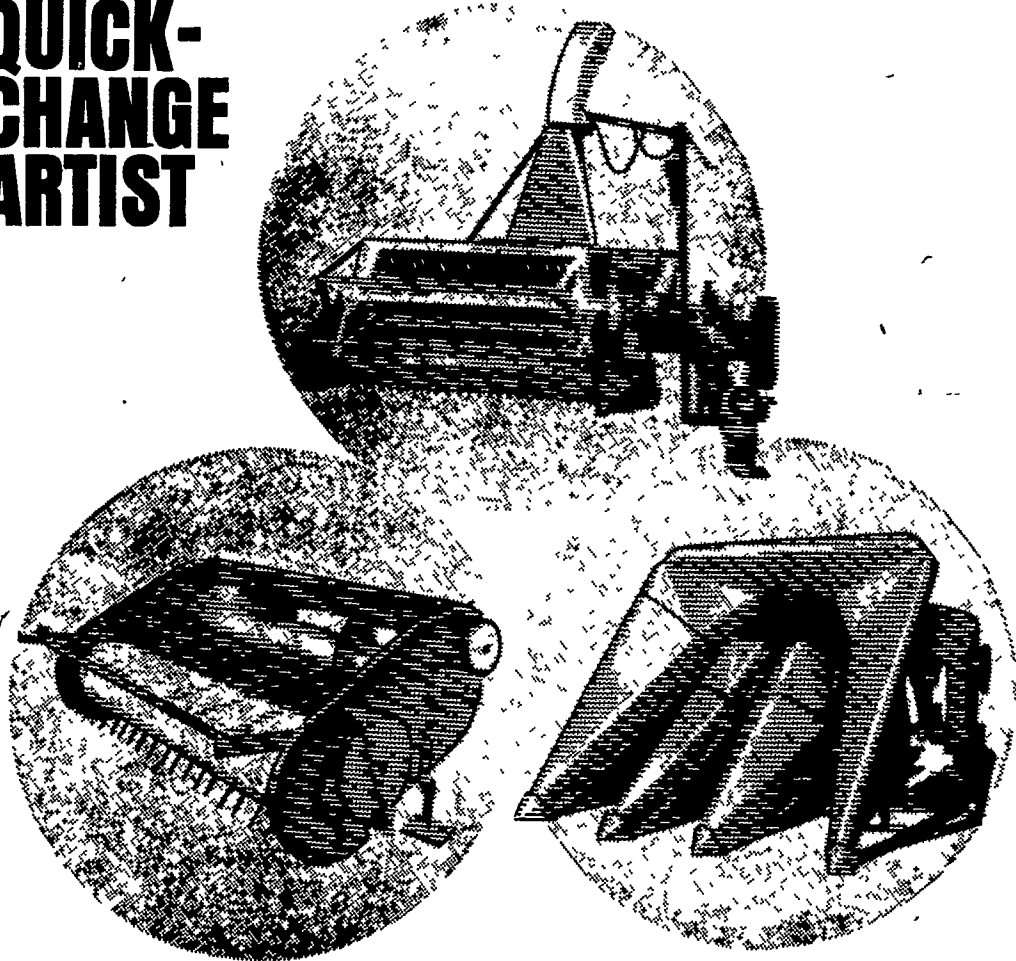
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