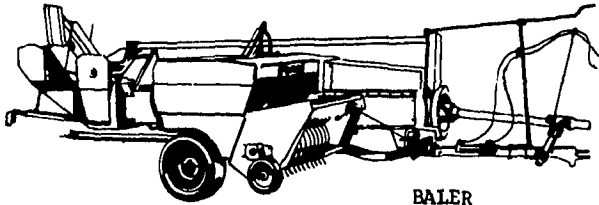


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Automatic Mushroom Harvester Developed

Devices for automatic cutting and gathering of commercially grown mushrooms have been developed by agricultural engineers at Pennsylvania State University. The equipment includes an oscillating saw or cutterhead and airstreams and an air suction chamber to pick up the cut mushrooms and move them to a storage bin.

Using the innovations, a harvester—the first of its type—has been built and tested by Dr. Sverker Persson and associates at Penn State. Engineer in charge of the project, Dr. Persson says the equipment can be a vital step toward complete mechanization of mushroom production. Harvesting, he claims, is the only major phase of mushroom production still lacking suitable mechanized equipment.

These developments at Penn State's Agricultural Experiment Station are the latest phases of a

long-time program to improve mushroom production. Research to date has helped Pennsylvania mushroom growers produce a crop valued at over 55 million dollars annually—the largest source of cash income from crop production in the Commonwealth. This amounts to about two-thirds of the nation's supply of mushrooms and one-third of total world production each year.

The harvesting machine, patented recently, can be used where mushroom trays are brought by fork lift truck to a harvesting center in the mushroom plant. The oscillating saw or cutterhead works through a one-foot wide row of mushrooms in the four-foot long tray in about 20 seconds, Dr. Persson says. The present cutterhead must pass back and forth over the beds four times to harvest a tray. When fully developed, the machine will

feature four cutterheads harvesting the full tray in one pass.

Most machine-harvested mushrooms have the same quality as hand-picked mushrooms, Dr. Persson affirms. The ideal mushroom strains for mechanical harvesting should have fairly long stems and should not form clusters. Practically all mushrooms from one sprouting or "flush" should reach suitable size for harvesting in one or two days.

The machine will harvest less than ideal mushrooms but with reduced capacity and increased losses. Additional research is needed, Dr. Persson points out, before the harvesting techniques are perfected. Above all, studies are needed of the economic consequences of a wide variation in mushroom size. Further analysis must be made of the possibility of using mushrooms with slight damage.

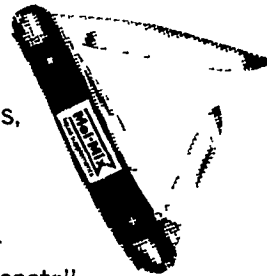
Recreation Field Needs Specialists

Young people who haven't decided on a career may want to consider the rapidly developing leisure industry. People are needed to work in our parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, camps, ski areas and other recreational facilities, reports Joe Cardenuto, Extension recreation specialist at Pennsylvania State University. Those interested in serving others or interested in our environment and natural resources might do well to examine the parks and recreation field as a career. Job opportunities range from planning and management to teaching and leading activities, says Cardenuto.

Cattlemen: Cut Your Feeding Costs

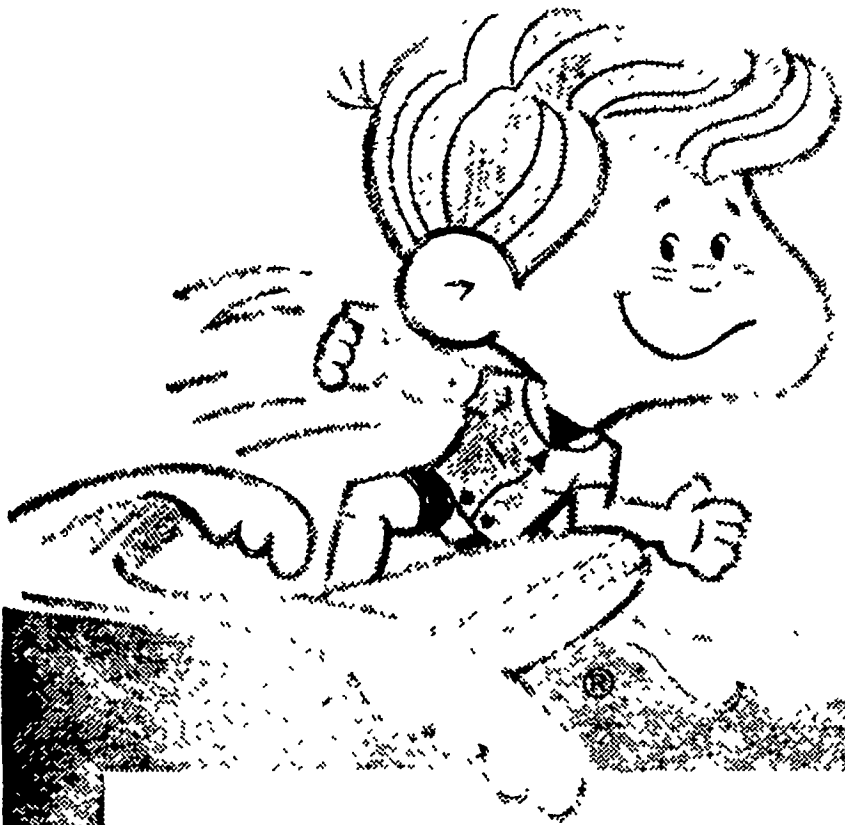
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