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They're Shocking Corn To Get Higher Yields

Electromagnetic treatment of field-crop seeds may have the potential of influencing plant germination, growth and yield, according to a Western Illinois University agricultural engineer.

"First-year research raises enough interest to continue the study of this phenomenon and its potential for increasing food production," reported Dr. Safwat M.A. Moustafa, associate professor and head of the engineering-mechanization section of the department of agriculture here at WIU.

While cautioning against scientific reliance on a single year of testing data and the need for more research before reaching concrete conclusions, he offered some "general observations and conclusions" indicating that electromagnetic energy may have the potential of influencing plant germination, growth and yield.

Using both climate control chambers and field replications of corn and soybeans, Moustafa's data indicated some trends that suggest the following: 1) an accelerated rate of germination, 2) improved percentage of germination on lower quality seeds, and 3) larger total leaf

area for plants which had been enagized, especially at earlier stages of growth when subjected to the favorable growing conditions.

Averages of yield data obtained during this first year of testing seem to indicate higher yield in corn and soybeans as a result of the seed exposure to the magnetic field, he said.

Observations also revealed a trend toward lower moisture content in corn which could suggest early maturity. (Soybean plots were harvested late and all plots were at low 12 to 12.4 percent moisture levels.)

Moustafa and his assistants are conducting continuing research on a considerably broader scale on the 1972 field crops. Electromagnetic seed treatment is being applied by an equipment

commercially known as the "seed energizer," invented by R. D. Amburn of Sterling Heights, Mich., and distributed by Agra-Tronix, Inc., 7630 Hickman Road, Des Moines, Iowa. Patented, and later improved, the Seed Energizer is currently in commercial use on several hundred U.S. farms

The equipment permits the control of intensity of the magnetic field. Moustafa's tests covered a wider range of intensities ranging up to 700 gauss. His research is supported by a grant from Agra-Tronix, Inc.

Details regarding the research procedures and data on the first-year studies may be obtained from Moustafa at Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois 61455.

Rural Areas Harbor Bulk of Poor Housing

Rural America has less than one-third of the country's houses but two-thirds of all those in poor condition, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The 1970 Census of Housing showed the Nation had 63.4 million occupied housing units. USDA's Economic Research Service determined that of the 19.6 million units located outside of our metropolitan centers, 12 percent didn't have sufficient plumbing, which classified them as of poor quality. About 3 percent of the metropolitan houses were in this condition.

Half of the Nation's 4.7 million housing units, without sufficient plumbing were in the South, about a fourth were in the North Central, and less than a tenth in the West. About 3.8 million of these dwellings were occupied.

Of the Nation's 6.3 million houses lived in by Negroes, 17 percent lacked the necessary plumbing. Among the 57 million white households, 4.7 percent were listed in poor condition. Nearly half of the Negro-occupied housing in the non-metro areas of the South did not have complete plumbing.

The country has some 5.2 million vacant houses, many potentially useable if necessary

repairs and improvements are made. More than half these empty units are in rural areas

Researchers found the median value of all owner-occupied homes was \$17,000 in 1970, in rural areas it was \$12,400, against \$19,100 in urban sectors. A further breakdown revealed 6 percent of all units were valued at less than \$5,000, with over three-fourths of these outside the larger cities

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