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FARM TRENDS by Dick Wanner

How Short Is Fertilizer?

A recent Wall Street Journal report on the fertilizer situation has very little to comfort any farmer who hasn't already locked in his supply for the coming year. Some producers, according to the report, say the U.S. will be short about five percent of its total needs.

The Fertilizer Institute in Washington, the producer's trade group, says the shortage will be more like 15 percent, or three million tons. Corn yields, alone, it says, will fall 20 million to 25 million tons short of requirements as a result. On the other hand the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief economist, Don A. Paarlberg, while agreeing that production of nitrogen fertilizer "is running full out," accuses the fertilizer industry and farmers of "magnifying their estimates of need." He says, "Crop production won't be crippled this year."

The reason for the fertilizer problem is twofold. First, there was an oversupply of fertilizer until a year ago, as a result construction of new fertilizer plants virtually halted. Second, now that it has become apparent that new fertilizer production is needed, the industry says it can't build new plants because it isn't able to get long-term guarantees of supplies of natural gas, a raw material essential for the production of nitrogen fertilizer.

Because of the fertilizer situation, crop forecasts for 1974 may be far off, the fertilizer industry warns. The Agriculture Department predicts corn production this year of 6.7 billion bushels, up from 5.6 billion bushels last year. It predicts wheat production of 2.1 billion bushels, up from 1.7 billion. Edwin Wheeler, president of the Fertilizer Institute, says there is simply no way to meet the corn-production estimates (corn uses 55 percent of U.S. nitrogen-fertilizer production). He says the wheat and cotton estimates are also doubtful.

The corn outlook is worse than the wheat outlook, Mr. Wheeler says. One reason is that when farmers planted their winter wheat last fall "they got the first lick at our nitrogen-fertilizer supplies and have almost preempted the corn farmer," Mr. Wheeler says, "Wheat has already soaked up a lot of our nitrogen-

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Agricultural Fuel Outlook is Cloudy

Will you be able to get enough fuel to plant and harvest your 1974 crops? The best answer we could get to this question after two days on the phone this week is a qualified "Probably."

The Federal Energy Office has decreed that farmers and related agribusiness pursuits are to get all the fuel they need. Dealers locally say they're only too aware of the regulations, and will be happy to comply - if they have the fuel available.

Most farmers we talked to reported they were having no trouble yet in getting fuel. There were some indications of trouble, though, particularly in operations which were expanded recently.

A farmer in the southern end of the County said he had just added more than 200 acres of cropland to his operation. "I'm not quite out of gas. We've got some storage capacity on the home farm, but we're going to be working that pretty hard after we start planting. We've been trying to get another storage tank, but that hasn't come yet."

"Our problem is that we're down to about a two-day supply once we start plowing. Other years, that might not be a problem, because we could call up our dealer and he'd be out here in anywhere from one to 12 hours. They're not delivering that fast anymore." And, he says he's running out of gas."

In trying to contact this man's dealer, we discovered that his phone had been disconnected. We were able to reach a number of dealers, and we were unable to reach others. There is a lot of pressure on oil dealers, from farmers and others who buy fuel, which is just about everybody. Oil dealers, these days, are a harried lot and some aren't answering their phones.

"The Federal Energy Office is telling farmers they're supposed to be able to buy fuel through their regular channels," one dealer told us. "Well, we're a regular channel, and we don't know where we're going to get the gas. So how's the farmer supposed to get it from us?"

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Double-Crop Beans For Higher Profit

"Lancaster County farmers could double or triple returns from their small grain fields by double-cropping soybeans," John Yocum told a Crops and Soils Day audience on Tuesday at the Farm and Home Center. "This is a livestock county," Yocum explained, "so you need straw for bedding and you've got to grow a small grain to get it. But you don't have to let the field idle after you cut the grain." Yocum is director of Penn State's Southeast Research Center at Landisville.

Many small grain fields in the area lie idle from the

time the crop is harvested in June until the following spring, when they are usually planted to alfalfa. "Instead of leaving the land idle, why not put it to work?" Yocum asked. "We figure that a break even point in soybean production is a 12-bushel-per-acre yield, or 16 bushels if you have to buy fertilizer. Average yield is 25 bushels; and at \$5 a bushel, you can see why double-cropping makes good sense."

Yocum recommends planting as early as possible, preferably before June 10,

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Organic Living Column Begins

A new weekly column dealing with organic gardening, natural foods and pollution control begins this week on page 16. "Organic Living" is written by Robert Rodale, editor of Organic Gardening and Farming magazine, and publisher of Prevention, a health magazine, and Environment Action Bulletin.

Wentink Named NCEN Chairman

Hendrick "Henk" Wentink, assistant to the president of Lancaster's Pennfield Corp., was named chairman of the National Commission on Egg Nutrition at a meeting of that group last Monday in Park Ridge, Illinois.

Wentink is a new member of the commission, and represents the Northeastern Poultry Producers Council. He succeeds Blanton Smith, Nashville, Tenn., as chairman.

Other members of the commission are Smith, who represents the American Egg Board; Gerald Bookey, Seattle, Wash., representing the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association; Maurice Pickler, New London, N. C., representing Southeastern Poultry and Egg



Henk Wentink

Association, and Norman Hecht, Walden, N. Y., representing United Egg Producers.

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Garden Spot Young Farmer Group Meets

Monroe Good, East Earl RD1, was given the Outstanding Farmer of the Year award by the Garden Spot Young Farmers Association at their annual banquet last Friday evening at the Blue Ball Fire Hall. Donald Robinson, the group's advisor, presented the award to

Good. The Outstanding Dairy Achievement award went to Robert Book, 11 Hershey Road, Leola. The Book herd scored a production record of 15,874 pounds of milk and 610 pounds of fat.

First place corn silage award went to Earl S.

Weaver, New Holland RD1, for his production record of 14,725 pounds of TDN per acre. Andrew Stoltzfus, Morgantown RD1, placed second with 13,244 pounds of TDN, Carl Sauder, East Earl RD1, was third with 13,200 pounds and Glenn C. Her-

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