

In Search of Better Soybeans

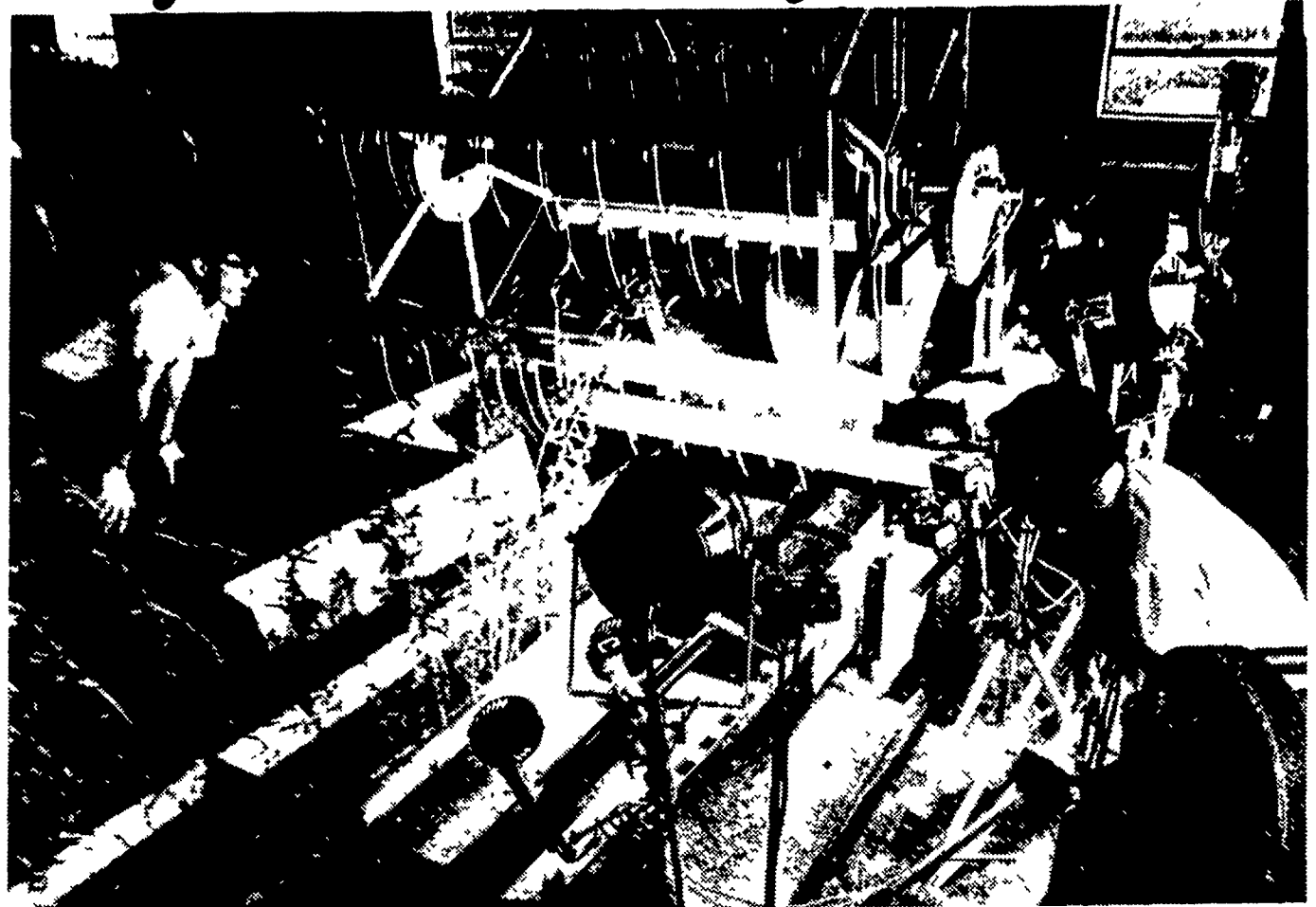
More than 4,000 years ago, the soybean was one of the five sacred crops of China. In the United States, less than half a century ago it was hardly known outside of Illinois, and farmers considered it little more than a forage and green-manure crop.

Today, it is well on its way to becoming "sacred" in the United States. In acreage, today's soybean crop nearly equals that of wheat. And for two years the soybean has been our No. 1 cash crop with a 1973 value of \$8.1 billion.

This zoom to fame began with farmers discovering that soybeans were a source

of high protein animal feed. By the 1960's soybeans had become the chief poultry feed in the U. S., as well as a cattle and hog feed, and an important source of vegetable oil here and abroad. Food processors found soy protein could be substituted for many foods—beef, bacon, pork and poultry, to name a few. Scientists are taking a closer look at soybeans, and, among other things, are finding they have much to offer as human food.

Soybeans have about 38 percent crude protein which makes it a valuable protein supplement in animal feed



A high-speed motion picture camera records the feeding of soybean stalks into a harvester reel and experimental cutterbar mounted on a laboratory test stand. When analyzed in slow motion, the film

record will enable USDA's agricultural engineer W. Ralph Nave to determine reasons for harvest losses and, hopefully, lead to better designs for harvesters.

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Once the flower bud is formed in this experimental strain of soybeans, the plants stop increasing in height — hence reducing the tendency to lodge. ARS scientists are attempting to develop new semi-dwarf varieties incorporating this characteristic, which is called determinate growth habit.

rations. Beef and fish contain about 18 percent protein.

As the demand for protein grows, a continuing strain is placed on soybean producers. Soybean production techniques are currently under study by scientists at the U. S. Regional Soybean Laboratory, Urbana, (Ill.), in cooperation with the Illinois Agricultural Experiment

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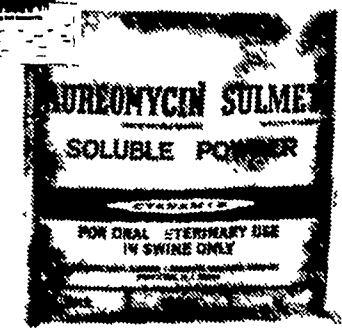
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