

# Fertilizer outlook

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comment that fertilizer is not imperative for growth of food and thus places the natural gas high on the consumer list and low on the agriculture scene. Thus the real story of supplies might well be determined by the weather this winter.

Speaking before a group of young farmers at a meeting in New Holland on Monday evening; Bob Strong, district representative for Ortho Chemical Company, commented on the natural gas situation. "So much is going to depend on the weather - if we have a long winter, fertilizer may be hurt by natural gas shortages."

"Fertilizer is not a bad buy now but we can't say for the beginning of the year."

Another problem which seems to have foreshadowed the brighter aspect of fertilizer for the bicentennial year is the supplies of potash which are vital to production. Much of the potash (almost 85 percent) is now being imported from Canada. If the raw material continues to flow into this country, the outlook may well stay "rosy" but if a shortage develops or imports cease, a real problem may lie in store.

While the fertilizer market seems to be heading toward a brighter future, the supplies of nitrogen may be of concern, especially in the

spring months. Imports of nitrogen may be below the predicted levels that were voiced at the beginning of the year, for Western Europe suffered a wet spring and applied very little of the commodity. However following a severe drought during the summer, officials are predicting that producers in that portion of the world will be using high applications of nitrogen in the fall.

"We do not foresee the current influx of European nitrogen continuing on into our spring season," commented Wheeler.

"All in all," the fertilizer official noted, "we are heading for a tight nitrogen supply in spring 1976; the now fall supplies will be adequate."

### Phosphates

#### Look Good

One bright note is that the supplies of phosphates look good for the coming season. Local fertilizer officials have stated that phosphates along with other fertilizer components look good at this time. In fact one area producer recently stated, "all fertilizer materials are in over supply at this time."

The surplus of the phosphates have been attributed to the new production, low demands in the spring and a drop in exports of the commodity. As exports of phosphates are

not predicted to increase substantially until early next year, the material should be quite adequate - at least in this country.

With the surplus left over from last year's selling slump coupled with new productions and a good supply of raw materials, we might well see the price of fertilizer drop within the next few months. However depending largely on the natural gas situation during the winter months, prices may increase again after the first of the year. While all advice seems to point to the "buy now" proposition, the winter months ahead will tell the story for spring prices and supplies.

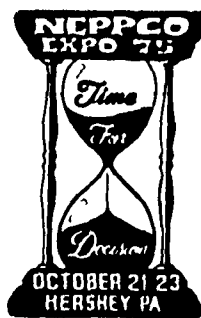
In general, the outlook seems much brighter than the darkened marketing situation which clouded last year's sales. There are still a number of variables to deal with such as the weather, exports, and the imports of raw materials but at least the stockpiles of fertilizer surpluses have offered a cushioning effect.

"While there are some ifs ahead of us," Wheeler commented, "I have little mental reservation on 1976. All signs are go if we manage the opportunities that are surely at hand."

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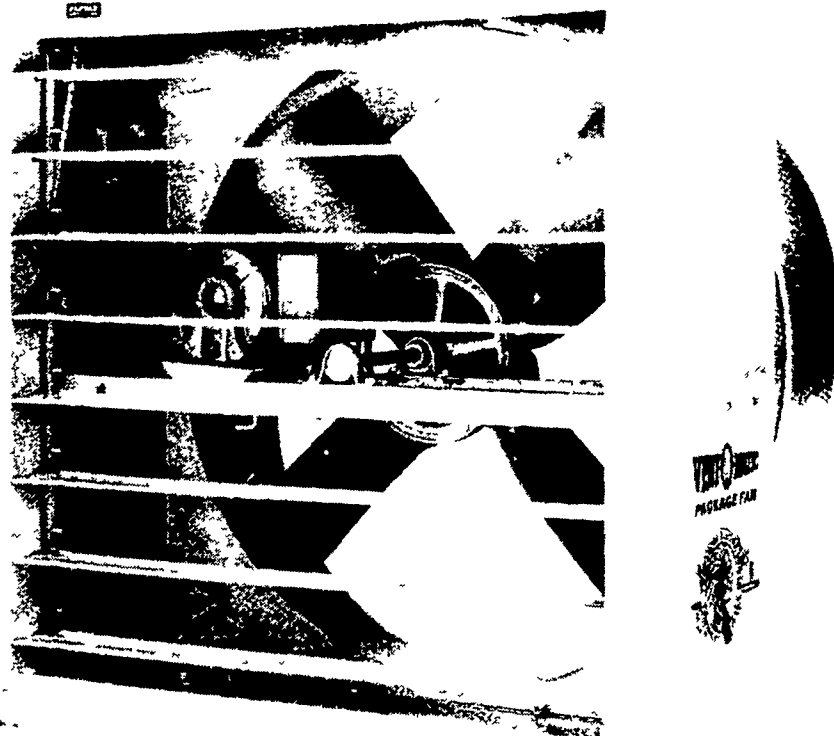
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