

# Organic farming funds opposed

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A spokesman for the nation's fertilizer industry has urged a Senate subcommittee that Congress not wrap a \$10.5 million request for organic farming research in the cloak of soil and water conservation or under the cover of improving agricultural productivity.

Gary D. Myers, president, The Fertilizer Institute, said such an effort is misleading. He emphasized that his industry encourages agricultural research, promotes soil and water conservation, and industry products have been a major contributor to

the envied agricultural productivity of the U.S. "Unfortunately," he said, "the research money requested under the Agricultural Productivity Act of 1983 (S.1128) would provide inconclusive results, at best, and — at worst — would be a \$10.5 million waste."

The bill, now under consideration by the Senate subcommittee on rural development, would set up 24 "paired" farms for a five-year comparison between use of mainly "organic" farming methods and conventional farming, it was noted.

Myers said that his industry could not support the bill because

the proposal contains a number of unjustified presumptions. Among these, he said, are that current U.S. farm productivity is insufficient; that today's agricultural systems are unprofitable and wasteful; that current agricultural research is inadequate to address agriculture's needs; and that funding of new "alternative farming" methods would produce responses to these concerns.

However, Myers said his industry could support a section of the bill which calls for a thorough information study of completed research and of that underway, which would address the concerns under the legislation. "We would support funding for such an effort, so that decisions on further research needs — or implementation — could be made on a well-studied, intelligent basis.

"Although this bill does not use the term 'organic farming' as such," Myers said, "it has become known as an organic farming research bill...with all the mystique and misconceptions which that term often brings to mind.

"It has been popular in some circles to promote use of so-called 'organics' as healthier for plants, resulting in more nutritious foods, and other catch phrases," Myers

said. The fact is, he added, plants cannot use nutrients in organic forms. The essential plant nutrients which man applies to crops as fertilizers enter the plant as inorganic ions, regardless of whether the application is animal manure, sewage sludge, green legume crops, plant residues, or commercial fertilizers. "Commercial fertilizers are nutrient materials designed to maximize efficient use by providing those nutrients in forms readily available to plants," Myers said.

"Even though these facts have been known for more than a century — and used to great advantage by the farmer in supplying abundant food and fiber — the misconception still is nurtured by

some that use of 'organics' results in more nutritious crops, more productive soils, and embrace the 'natural' way to farm. These are false concepts," stated Myers.

Myers concluded with examples of the vast quantities of organic wastes that would be necessary to even begin to supply today's agriculture with plant nutrients. "To supply the equivalent of 200 pounds of nitrogen, now a common application rate per acre for productive corn land, a realistic estimate is that application of 20 to 40 tons of animal manure per acre would be needed." Clearly, he said, such an option is unrealistic in view of the quantum increase in livestock that would be needed to supply such wastes.

## Bicarb benefit

(Continued from Page D12)

we've found that the need for buffering goes beyond these problem areas," Peterson says.

Results of the California field trials fill a previously-existing gap in knowledge of sodium bicarbonate's role in alfalfa-based dairy rations, Bath adds.

"In California we feed a lot of alfalfa and most is fed in dry hay form. When a cow eats dry roughage and chews more, more natural buffer is introduced in the form of sodium bicarbonate in saliva," he explains.

The field trials demonstrate that sodium bicarbonate does have a place in dairy rations, even when large amounts of alfalfa hay are fed.

"Results are most likely when cows are fed rations with low or borderline fiber levels, and in early lactation when dry matter intake is low, milk production is high and large amounts of concentrates are fed," Bath says.

A total of 1,200 cows were involved in the two trials, 479 at BJ Dairy and 801 at 6T Ranch.

## Lancaster Pomona picnic

QUARRYVILLE — Lancaster County Pomona Grange No. 71 will hold its picnic today at 7 p.m. at Huffnagle Park, Quarryville. Colerain Grange No. 1667 will provide rolls, butter and beverage. All members of Lancaster Co. Subordinate Granges are invited and should bring a meat dish, another dish and their own place

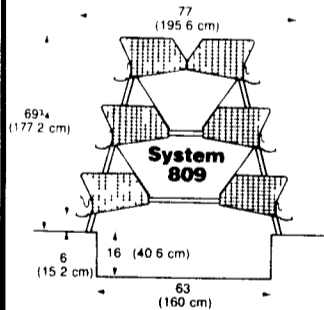
settings. Following the meal the Master, Clifford W. Holloway Jr., will conduct a short business meeting. Serving on the resolution committee will be Robert T. Coates, Emma Rhoades, Joseph G. Hess and Kenneth Myer. The Lecturer, Dorothy Berry, will conduct games.

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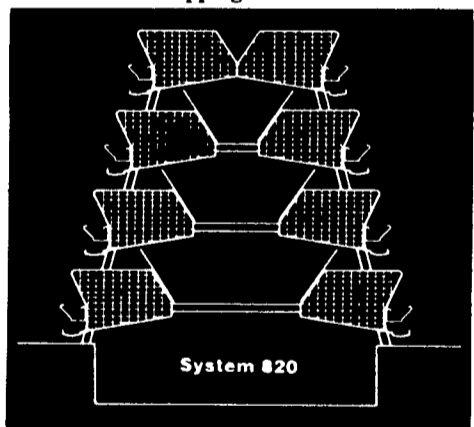
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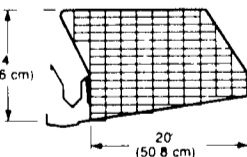
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