

## Sorghum offers

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virtually the same program provisions as corn. The supports for sorghum have been set using a relationship to those for corn, usually a cost of production index or the 95-percent feed-value relationship.

**Today's Problems.** "Production in 1984 exceeded 800 million bushels, not too far below the record of 923 million set in 1973," Collins says, citing December USDA estimates. That, plus the 250 million bushels of stocks carried into the season, equal an overall 1984/85 supply of almost 1.1 billion bushels. This season, domestic use and exports are forecast to take only about 710 million bushels. Translated into leftover stocks, this means there will very likely be about 350 million bushels carried over into next season.

Except for 1982, when ending stocks equaled 400 million bushels, such large stocks have not occurred since 1964's 566-million-bushel carryover.

"Today's problem is magnified because, while U.S. acreage and production are up, so are production costs, and domestic and export demand have leveled off," Collins says. Current forecasts indicate that 1984/85 season-average farm prices may be down 20-35 cents a bushel from prices in 1983/84.

These factors will probably result in considerable financial stress for some sorghum producers who have struggled with increasing production costs since 1978. And there's always the issue of government costs which were \$989 million in fiscal 1982 and \$814 million in 1983. Costs were only \$75 million (estimated) in 1984, but fiscal 1985 will probably be another year of large government expenditures on sorghum price supports unless, of course, demand somehow increases.

"Demand may increase some this year," Collins says, "but certainly not enough to take care of the supply that will be available."

Domestic demand has been flat

for several years because the competition among feed grains has been more intense. Recent wheat surpluses have left wheat prices—on a feed-value basis—about equal to prices for sorghum and corn. Consequently, wheat has become a strong competitor with sorghum in cattle feeding, especially in the Plains where wheat is plentiful.

Exports are the industry's hope, but Collins expects only slight increases. Promising signs of global income growth and rising meat consumption are matched against credit and debt problems in less developed nations. Questions also remain about the competitiveness of U.S. prices—partly determined by the U.S. sorghum loan rate and the foreign exchange value of the dollar.

What's next for sorghum? "Like every agricultural commodity, sorghum will be scrutinized during the upcoming debate on the new farm bill," Collins says. Undoubtedly, the large government expenditures on the sorghum program will get some attention.

## Ag schools note sharp drop in enrollments

COLLEGE PARK, Md. - When Don Hegwood says the real farm crisis is academic, he's not just using a figure of speech.

Hegwood, dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Maryland College Park, says that current agricultural problems are creating a decline in collegiate enrollments in agricultural colleges nationwide, with some colleges suffering shortfalls of 50 per cent or more. This decline poses grave problems for the future of agri-business, warns Hegwood.

"This year, almost 8,000 agriculture jobs will go unfilled or will be filled with people who need additional specialized training," says Hegwood, "and the 51,000 jobs that will be filled won't necessarily be filled with the college-educated students that the industry demands."

What Hegwood sees as the most important indicators of the trend away from agriculture education are freshman enrollments in agriculture, down over 10 per cent in the last year, with serious implications for the graduating student market four years hence.

To make matters worse, the colleges of agriculture themselves and research institutions such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture face the prospect of losing 35 per cent of their educators and scientists to retirement within the next decade, with no new crop of young professionals to take their places.

To put it bluntly, says Hegwood, farming and food sciences may be academically bankrupt in the near future.

Job openings in farm production and farm management require only 6,100 of the 59,000 graduates needed annually, according to Hegwood. An almost equal number, 6,000, are required for farm administration and finance. The two largest employment needs are for 15,163 graduates each year to sell and service agricultural products and programs and for 21,125 professionals and scientists. It's here that the greatest shortfall is expected to occur.

Several factors may be responsible for the decline, suggests Hegwood. One prime target: media portrayals of agri-business as an unprofitable relic of a bygone era in the case of small farms, or as commercial conglomerates that ride roughshod over the natural environment and smaller farmers alike in the case of large agriculture firms.

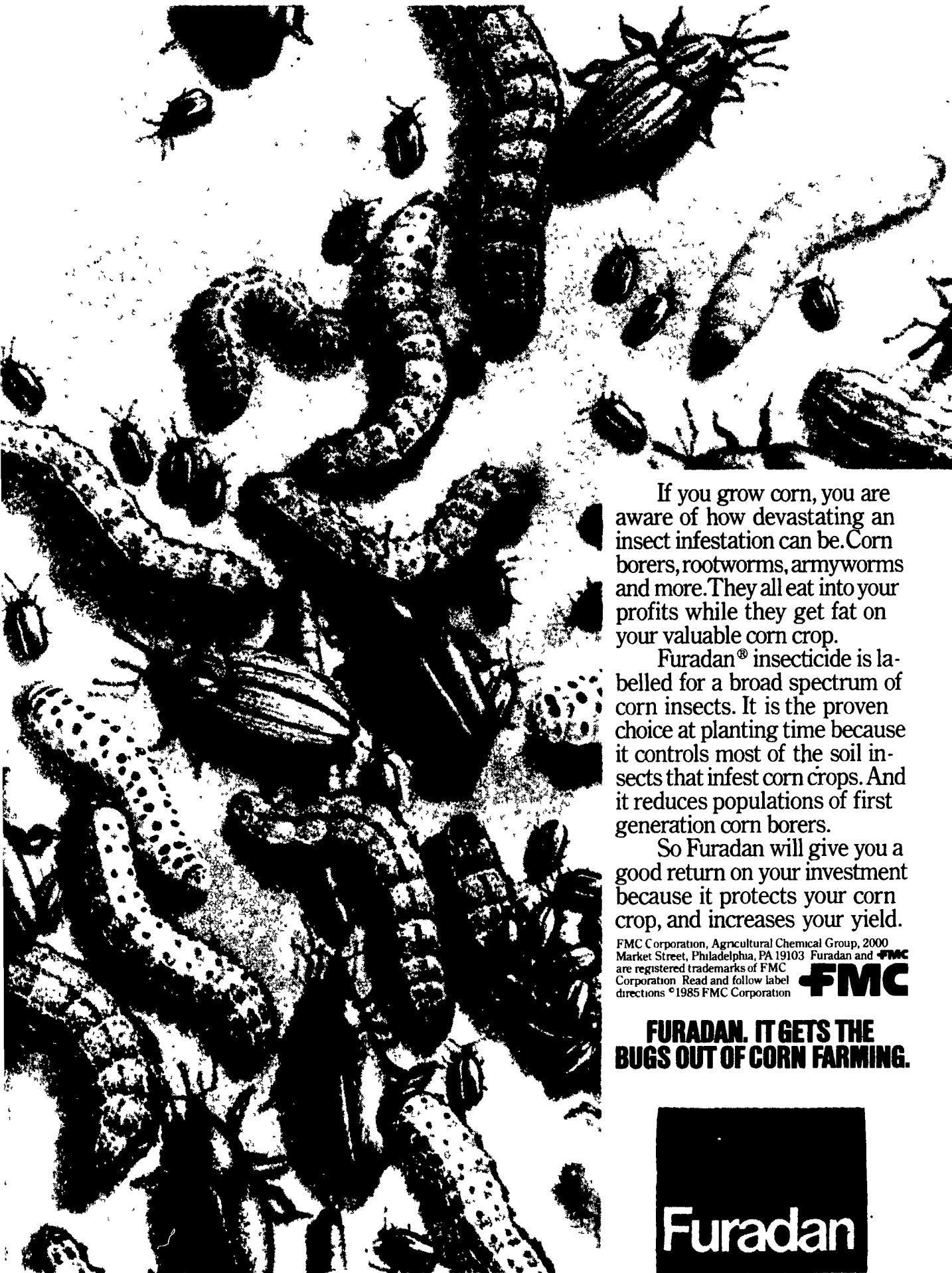
"These negative media portrayals of family farming and agri-business are at least partly responsible for the current decline in agricultural enrollments," says Hegwood. "To paraphrase the old son, 'How do you keep them down on the farm after they've seen the morning paper?'"

Also at fault are outdated agricultural curricula, obsolete teaching facilities caused by financial neglect, and excessive delays in incorporating new knowledge gained through research into the curriculum, the University dean says.

"Research and scientific expertise are the underpinnings of American agriculture," says Hegwood, "and that expertise evolves from our undergraduate curriculum."

"It's encouraging to know that several states have made major commitments of resources to support agricultural education," notes Hegwood, "but ag colleges did not arrive at this situation alone and most certainly won't be able to extricate themselves and upgrade their curricula without assistance from both state and federal governments."

"Our failure to recognize upcoming shortages of food science and agricultural science expertise will surely weaken the future of U.S. agriculture, a decline that begins in the undergraduate classroom of today," Hegwood says.



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