



OPINION

No "Nuked" Food

American consumers would likely purchase irradiated food products but are not sold on the safety of the technology and would not hesitate to change their minds if news accounts suggest irradiation is unsafe, a recent survey by CMF&Z and the International Food Safety Council, a restaurant and foodservice industry coalition, shows.

Sixty-five percent of consumers surveyed said they are aware of irradiation, up 20 percentage points from a year ago and up 34 percentage points from 1996.

Seventy-one percent of the consumers who are aware of irradiation said they were likely to purchase irradiated meat and 69 percent said they were likely to purchase irradiated produce. Both percentages are slightly greater than a year ago when 64 percent of consumers surveyed said they were likely to purchase irradiated meat and 66 percent said they were likely to purchase irradiated produce.

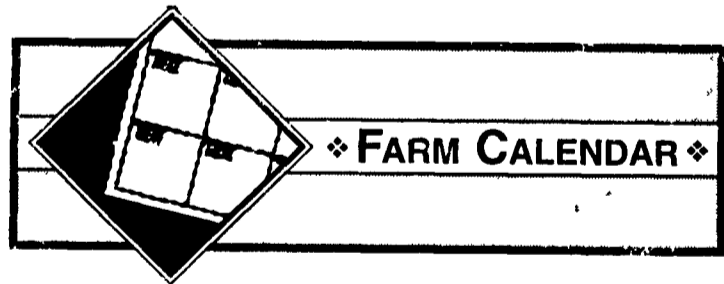
However, fewer than one-half of the consumers questioned in the survey — 46 percent — said they believe irradiation is a "very effective" tool in improving the safety of meat and 43 percent said they believe the technology is a "very effective" tool in improving the safety of produce.

While irradiation ranks below E-coli, salmonella and hepatitis as an issue of concern to consumers, 64 percent of those surveyed identified irradiation as a food issue concern, and 60 percent said they would refrain from purchasing irradiated foods on the basis of negative media stories.

"The survey results show that irradiation proponents have done a good job in building public awareness of the technology. However, consumer willingness to purchase irradiated products is fragile and could evaporate in the wake of negative media reports on irradiation," says Bill Brewer, public relations counsel for CMF&Z's Food Practice Group. "Irradiation proponents clearly have more work to do to seek credible, third-party allies to build a case for the safety of this technology."

The CMF&Z-Food Safety Council survey showed a large gap between consumers and editors on the likelihood of consumers to react to negative media reports. Only 25 percent of the editors surveyed said their readers would take action in response to negative stories about irradiation, while 60 percent of consumers said negative stories about irradiation, while 60 percent of consumers said negative media reports on irradiation would cause them to refrain from consuming irradiated food.

To begin the wide use of irradiation to compensate for bad food handling practice would be a mistake. Agriculture has enough problems with negative publicity without giving our opponents the opportunity to say the food we put on the national dinner table has been "nuked."



Saturday, October 17
 Southeastern Pa. 4-H Leaders Forum, Montgomery County 4-H Center, Creamery, 9 a.m.-2:15 p.m.
 Maryland's First Limousin Club Calf Sale, Four States Livestock Sale Grounds, Hagerstown, Md., 7 p.m.
 Blue Mountain Antique Gas and Steam Engine Association Annual Fall Harvest and Sawmill Show, Jacktown Community Center, Bangor, thru Oct. 18.
 Pasture Tour For Southern Maryland Graziers, contact St. Mary's County extension office.
 Northwest Pa. Nursery Tour, Johnston's Evergreen Nursery, Erie, 9 a.m.-noon.
Sunday, October 18
 Horse Show For Riders With Disabilities, Thormcroft, Malvern.

21st Annual Mule Show, Club on Ben Davis Rd., Powellville, Md., 10 a.m.
 Somerset County Beef Producers' Picnic and Quality Assurance Meeting, Error Hill Farm, 1 p.m.
Monday, October 19
 No-Till Symposium, held on opening day of ASA, CSSA, and SSA meetings, Baltimore, Md. and Va. Milk Producers Meeting, Union Bridge Fire Hall, Union Bridge, Md., 7 p.m.
Tuesday, October 20
 Dillsburg Community Fair, Dillsburg, thru Oct. 24.
 Chester County Holstein Club Annual Meeting and Banquet, West Fallowfield Christian School, Atglen, 6:45 p.m.
 Md. and Va. Milk Producers Meeting, Ruritan Building, New London, Va., noon.
 Md. and Va. Milk Producers Meet-

Now Is The Time
 By John Schwartz
 Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Know Soil Fertility

A soil test for each field is good sound management when it comes to crop production, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. A soil test is one tool which will allow farmers to minimize fertilizer purchases while meeting the fertility needs of the crop. A soil test will measure the amount of nutrients available from soil reserves. Also, soil testing labs run by college of agriculture in each state is best able to make recommendation on additional nutrients needed to produce the crop and projected yield.

The agricultural colleges have many years of yield response data to base their recommendations. Because yield response varies from different areas, the college in the state where the farm is located is usually best able to make good recommendations.

To Do Soil Tests

Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, reminds us that fall is perhaps the best time to test soils for fertility. Taking soil samples at this time of year allows ample time for laboratory analysis, interpretation of results and developing a nutrient management strategy for the use of manure and purchased fertilizer.

A few simple guidelines for taking soil samples are: 1. Take cores from at least 15 to 20 random spots throughout the field; 2. Any one composite sample should not represent more than 30 acres of land which has been managed as a unit; 3. Sampling areas should be based on soil type and management history; 4. Areas within a field which have drastically different yield potentials should be sampled separately; 5. Avoid taking cores from problem areas within a field; 6. Take samples to the normal plow depth used in the field; and 7. No till field samples should be separated into two composite samples (0 to

ing, Stone's Cafeteria, Christiansburg, Va., 7 p.m.
Wednesday, October 21
 Commercial Vegetable Growers Meeting, Walker Grange Hall, Port Royal, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
 Cambria County Extension annual meeting, St. John Vianney Church, Johnstown, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, October 22
 Ephrata Area Young Farmers meeting, Ephrata High School, 7 p.m.
 Beef Quality Assurance Meeting, Middleburg Livestock Auction, 7 p.m.
 Md. and Va. Milk Producers Meeting, Middletown Fire Hall, Middletown 7 p.m.

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2 inches and 2 inches to 8 inches). The shallow sample is most important as it relates to acidity. After drying and mixing the composite samples send them to a reputable laboratory for analysis. To monitor the impact recommendations have on soil fertility levels, use the same laboratory over a period of time.

To Avoid Lead in Drinking Water

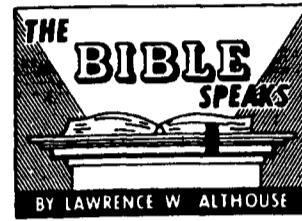
If your drinking water is contaminated with lead, this can have serious health implications, according to Leon Ressler, Lancaster County Extension Environmental Agent. Excessive levels in blood contribute to various health problems including mental retardation, interference with kidney and neurological functions and hearing loss in children. Children are especially sensitive to lead.

Although lead occurs naturally in some water supplies, its pres-

ence can also be attributed to plumbing. Soft, acidic water passing through lead pipe or contacting a lead soldered joint for a period of hours can dissolve enough lead to cause concern. Homeowners should use lead free solder when making repairs.

The amount of lead dissolved in water from lead pipes or solder is the highest when the water has been held in the pipe for several hours. Therefore, it is best not to drink the first water from the tap each morning since the water has been held in the pipe for several hours. Run the tap for 3 to 5 minutes before drinking or using it for cooking. Also, since hot water dissolves lead rapidly, do not use it for cooking or preparing infant formula.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "It is a funny thing about life. If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it."



THE ARROGANCE OF POWER

October 18, 198

Background Scripture:
 I Kings 12
Devotional Reading:
 Matthew 27:15-26

It is tempting for us to assume that Rehoboam and Jeroboam were simply evil men doing what evil men do best: evil! But to put their thoughts and actions into perspective, we must realize that probably neither of these men thought of themselves as evil. Like us and leaders in our own time, they probably both honestly believed in the rightness of their actions. Most evil people do not start out to be evil, but simply become evil in the arrogant way in which they exercise power.

Actually, I am more fearful of the person who is unreservedly certain that he is doing the smart thing than the one who knowingly sets out to do evil. The former is, I think, the most dangerous, because he or she does not realize and acknowledge the human capacity to be and do wrong. One of my seminary professors, Reinhold Niebuhr has written that, "Power always thinks that it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak; and that it is doing God's service when it is violating all His laws" (*The Irony of American History*). I can imagine that both Rehoboam and Jeroboam entertained the assumption that they were "doing God's service" as Niebuhr put it.

THEY HAD CHOICES

It is also significant to me that neither of these men were forced to make the choices that proved so disastrous. Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon, was assured of the support of the entire 12 tribes of Israel if he would but "lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke upon us . . ." (12:4). Nor could Rehoboam blame his bad decision on his court, for he had a choice between the wise counsel of his elder advisors and the harsh words recommended by his young advisors.

Note the arrogance of their reply: ". . . this you shall say to them: My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. And now, whereas my father laid upon you a heavy yoke, I will add to your

yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (12:11). Did these men really believe words such as these would bring the nation under Rehoboam's control. Apparently they did. As harsh as those words sound, they are possibly no more cynical than the advice some advisors and consultants give to political figures in our own time.

The case of Jeroboam was different. None of the tribes, except that of Judah (and Benjamin), would submit to Rehoboam, who had practically handed the rest of Israel to Jeroboam on a silver platter. And he made a good start: warned by a prophet not to raise an army to conquer Rehoboam and the men of Judah, he canceled his invasion plans. So far, so good.

POLITICAL GROUNDS

But Jeroboam soured a good beginning with a disastrous ending. Assured of the support of the 10 tribes of Israel, Jeroboam made a religious decision on political grounds and it proved to be disastrous. Fearing that if his people returned to Jerusalem to worship as they had since the time of David, they would want to defect to Rehoboam, he decided to keep them from Jerusalem by setting up places of worship in both Dan and Bethel. Cocky with power, he also decided not to use the God-appointed Levites as priests and replaced traditional worship with obeisance to calves of gold. I'll bet he thought that was a really clever idea!

William J. Gaynor, a mayor of New York City, has said, "We have more to fear from the growth of arbitrary power in officials than from all other vices and crimes combined." Power is a drug that numbs our sensibilities and befuddles our brains. Among antitrust lawyers there is a saying: "Show me the power and I will show you its abuse." Why, because, necessary as it is to lead and govern, power tends to corrupt human nature.

Whether practiced in the state house, the White House or your house, it can be dangerously intoxicating.

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