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Pesticides

by Stanley Rachesky Entomologist — University of Illinois

How would you like to pay \$1.00 per pound for a head of cabbage instead of 12¢; or \$14.00 per pound for broccoli instead of 60¢; 68¢ per pound for tomatoes instead of 25¢?

These figures are not unrealistic when vegetables are grown without the aid of pesticides. This warning comes from findings of a farming experiment conducted last summer in Arcola, Illinois and just duplicated with the same results in St. Charles, Illinois.

The proof was an Environmental Test Plot developed by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service just south of U.S. 38 on Randall Road, St. Charles.

Insects and weeds are the two main reasons why consumers face higher prices without the use of chemicals.

The St. Charles plot was designed to produce vegetables under environmental conditions to see what it actually takes to produce vegetables. For example, snap beans were just recently harvested. The beans which were fertilized produced only thirty per cent more than those not fertilized under the same growing conditions.

Those beans which were sprayed with chemicals for elimination of weeds and insects produced almost 40% more beans than those not sprayed under identical conditions. Other consumer crops being grown are sweet corn, tomatoes, cucumbers and cabbage.

Many people feel that farmers could cut down on the use of chemicals (fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides), use more land and still produce the same crop volume. In Illinois, 3 million additional acres would have to be put into production to achieve this goal. However, these acres would have to be taken away from wildlife sources, including pasture and timber, and this would add costs to the consumer.

Cultivation of 3 million extra acres would include approximately 22 million gallons of petroleum, 293 million pounds of nitrogen, 117 million pounds of phosphorus and 146 million pounds of potassium.

Machinery repair and depreciation costs would cost over 37 million and added engine emissions would result. Natural resources would be unnecessarily used to manufacture the machines and parts.

In the U.S. today, the average farmer produces enough food to feed himself and 48 other people. This is due to our vast technological advancement — which includes pesticides.

All the statistics that have been shown in the past and those which will be accumulated in the future tell one story; pesticides play a very important part in today's world. The world population needs food and there's no getting around the fact that pesticides are essential to large scale food production.

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