

RENEWAL

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guest editorial

Editor's note: During recent months, the question of non-farm fertilizer usage has come under fire from all sides, including the media. The following is a reprint of a letter written by Tom A. Bayley of The Bishop Company, Lebanon, Pa.

The recent study by the American Plant Food Control Officials, a body composed of fertilizer regulatory officials in each state, shows that only about 3.5% of total U. S. fertilizer used goes for non-farm purposes. Based on last year's 47 million tons total consumption, this would mean only 1.6 million tons went for all non-farm purposes. These non-farm uses include everything from airport runway de-icing to vegetable gardens, public parks, highway shoulder stabilization and golf courses.

In terms of world wide fertilizer use, U. S. non-farm consumption was only $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of the estimated world nutrient tons consumed. A nutrient ton expresses a fertilizer ton

for its nitrogen, phosphate and potash value only. Thus the 1.6 million fertilizer tons in U.S. non-farm use is expressed as 600,000 nutrient tons or $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of the 80 million world nutrient tons used.

It should also be kept in mind that U. S. non-farm fertilizer statistics included tons of dried sewerage sludge, dried manure, bone meal and nitrogen in a water insoluble form not practical for farm use.

No one in his right mind can contest the priority of feeding people. However, effective problem solving requires a reasonable examination of problem cause-effect and solution cost-benefit.

The diversion of $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of world fertilizer does not seem to be a significant area for finding the solution to the world's need. Especially when non-farm fertilizers cost much more than farm type products due to their specialized formulating processes.

The economics of the situation are expressed in a statement by Robert W. Steiner, fertilizer coordinator for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. He said, "It is unrealistic to

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- 11,000 golf courses require nutrients to maintain playing surfaces.
- Green belts and home lawns in metro-areas contribute to cooler summers and purer air. The average home lawn absorbs enough carbon dioxide (a pollutant) and releases oxygen to provide enough for 8 persons.
- Home vegetable gardens are said to number 57 million by recent Gallup Poll. An important contribution to good diet and lower cost meals.

It is hard to understand why the focus of attention has turned to such

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a small factor in an attempt to solve a complex problem of world food supply.

Sacred cows in India wander the countryside; a religious phenomena that ignores the protein available and the food stuffs consumed in sacrosanct survival.

In the long run reason will prevail and objective analysis will seek out the balanced solutions to man's most basic needs. Must the short term irrationality always create dislocations that cause more damage than good.

GUEST EDITORIAL

(from page 23)

talk about fertilizer being taken from the golf courses in America to supply farmers in developing nations. What is needed is funds from the wealthier countries to secure fertilizer deliveries and to help pay shipping charges to the users."

Recent commentaries on non-farmer fertilizer use have tended to imply that their usage is frivolous and entirely dispensable.

Briefly the benefits and implications are more important to our environment and life style than have been implied:

1. Over 30,000 retail outlets receive 15% of their business income from these products.