

## Organic Beef Production Raises Concerns

The word organic is a badly misused term. For years, the consumer public has been bombarded with misinformation concerning the value of foods organically grown and all-natural products of various kinds. Now the USDA has scheduled hearings for the establishment of specifications for organically grown beef.

The media and the people with a so-called organic product to sell have implied that anything organic is good to eat and



**Bob Long**

good for you. Actually the word organic refers to the chemical nature of a substance and simply describes those compounds that contain the element carbon. Organic compounds are usually those derived from living organisms both plant and animal. This origin, however, certainly does not guarantee wholesomeness.

For example, petroleum products are organic yet no one cares to drink gasoline.

Likewise strychnine, an

organic poisonous alkaloid, is produced by certain plants. Also, dicumoral, the active ingredient in D-Con rat poison, is organic and found in moldy sweetclover. Conversely while used to destroy rodents, the medical profession uses dicumoral to save lives in the treatment of blood clots.

Just as organic compounds have been represented to the public as healthful, those substances termed inorganic have been branded as pollutants to be avoided at all costs. Not so—inorganic substances are simply those that do not contain carbon. As in the case of organic compounds some are beneficial and some are not.

Salt, a simple inorganic compound composed of sodium and chlorine is essential for all animals, yet at certain levels can be detrimental, even deadly. Further, mineral deficiencies in both humans and other animals are corrected by the addition of proper amounts of inorganic compounds containing the deficient element.

Inorganic fertilizers are considered toxic by the proponents of organic gardening, yet the major portion of the nutrients utilized by so-called organically grown plants are taken from the soil in inorganic form.

The truth is, America's food supply is the safest in the world — thanks to the scientific community and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the federal government.

Unfortunately, FDA is sometimes pressured into unwise decisions by aggressive groups such as radical environmentalists who mean well but act through ignorance.

A typical example is found in the infamous Delaney Clause which was passed in 1958 and which states that "No food additive shall be deemed safe if it is found to induce cancer when ingested by man or animal." This gave rise to the policy of zero tolerance. Unfortunately, what was zero tolerance in 1958 is much different at the present time because of increased sensitivity of analytical procedures. This has resulted in the

banning of several useful and safe compounds which appear in foods in such small amounts that a person would have to consume a trainload of the product daily to have any effect whatsoever.

Another example of how ignorance contributes to consumer opinion is the current flap about the use of Bovine Somatotropin (BST). This bovine growth hormone greatly increases milk production when injected daily in dairy cattle. Many consumers have urged that it be banned for fear of drinking milk from cows so treated.

These fears are unfounded since BST is produced naturally by all cows. Even if it did occur in the milk, it's destroyed in the digestive tract when consumed. Fortunately, FDA has relied on scientific data and has approved BST for use.

Directly affecting the beef production industry was the banning of Diethylstilbestrol (DES). This estrogen-like compound was effective as either an implant or in the feed, and was economical, predictable in its response and quite safe. It was never found in beef carcasses, except in the liver, and then in such small amounts that one would have to consume several pounds of beef liver daily to experience any physiological effect.

Those people clamoring for the organic production of food, both animal and vegetable, are not only ignorant of the physiological facts involved but have failed to realize the economic and environmental impact of such practices.

If commercial fertilizers, feed additives and insecticides currently approved were eliminated, food production would be cut in half according to a recent report issued by the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST). This decrease in productivity would result in tremendous increases in food prices and require the cultivation of marginal farmland and forest clearing just to feed America.

Beef producers should take advantage of available technology. Use those products, the value of which is supported by credible research, but use them according to label instructions for both level and withdrawal time.

American agriculture is the most efficient in the world and its products the safest. Take pride in it.