

High Time to Learn About **Our Soils and Our Health**

BY WM. A. ALBRECHT

We are beginning to be concerned about our national needs for food, fiber, and shelter. No longer taking our resources for granted, they are being catalogued as consumable, renewable, scarce, abundant, etc. We see our population mounting at geometric rates, while resources per person are becoming less and less.

Little attention is given to the possible long-time deficiencies insiduously leading up to these shortages recognizable only when they approach disaster. Food, as it has been losing its nutritional quality while agriculture becomes a fixed one in place of one that was nomadic, has not yet come in for consideration of its nutritional deceptiveness. Nor has the fertility of the soil growing our foods and our feeds been considered as significant in the health of ourselves and our animals. We have been content with postmortems. We have been satisfied to work backward from the grave and the morgue in our search for health. We are slowly coming to approach health from the ground up, from the quality of the food as the soil growing it guarantees the inorganic elements, the vitamins, and the proteins as tissue builders as well as the carbohydrates for only calories and fuel values.

The pioneer farmed to feed himself and his family from the farm and not from the grocery store or the drugstore. For him "to be well-fed was to be healthy", not highly fattened. Modern farmers farm for economic reasons, for profits, for dollar values, and not for nutritional values. Modern agriculture views itself through the eyes of the industrialist who converts and transforms materials. These he assumes to be available. While agriculture may convert its products, it is not mainly a technology and that alone. It is first biology and technology second. It deals not in lifeless materials. It is concerned with living matters. It promotes the processes of creation, all originating in the soil. Soil depletion, by taking the

soil for granted as if agriculture were only a mining industry, has brought us face to face with present shortages of the proteins.

Quality of food and feed are declining under the criterion of agricultural production mainly for sale. With yields per acre measured only in bushels and tons, we have dropped out more of the protein-producing crops and have brought in the carbohydrate producers. Starches, sugars, fibers have increased but proteins and all the other body-building, and body-protecting qualities have decreased. Juggling the crops with substitutes for those starved out on declining soil fertility has given us those which are "hay crops but not seed crops". We are accepting those which can't make seed to reproduce themselves. Going to a grass agriculture appears as an escape from seed production but casts doubt on the possibility of the cow's surviving by it.

We are worshipping calories, while the proteins are still too crude to be complete nutrition. Supplements of protein are slipping out too. Corn is deficient in the essential amino acids, namely tryptophane, lysine and methionine, but its yields per acre for sale were pushed up by hybrid vigor. Its proteins slumped tremendously.

Failing reproduction goes with proteins failing in quantity and failing in quality. Missouri's pig crop marketed is only 60% of those given us by sows in their litters. The Missouri dairy calf crop at weaning time is only 60% of the conceptions. Putting the blame on "diseases" and killing the cow to escape them, seems an absurd approach by legal minded veterinarians to troubles in cows' or pigs' health going back to the soil fertility for prevention.

The animals have survived in spite of us and not because of us. We are keeping livestock because we keep them close to their birthdays when resistance to starvation and disease is higher. We call it baby beef, ton litters and cheap

Dr. Albrecht has long been outspoken on his convictions that the only way to have nutritious foods, healthy livestock and healthy people is to have fertile soils. We would like your reactions to his thought-provoking statements—Editor.

gains. It is correspondingly cheap health too.

Preventative measures have been disregarded but curatives were accepted. We have curtailed the consumption of the proteins and fresh foods under poor economics for health. We have taken to the hypodermic needle for health introduction into the bloodstream directly when health should be introduced into the body via the alimentary tract in the form of complete foods. Animals, too, are given limited proteins mainly as purchased supplements.

The problem ahead looms large now that we are internationally entangled, and with our food generosity taken for granted by the rest of the world. It is slowly dawning on us that soil fertility is a readily exhaustible resource. We may perhaps realize that more hospitals, more nurses, and more doctors are not the solution for failing health. Perhaps this realization will not come until half the crowd is in the rapidly multiplying hospital beds, and the other half of the crowd is trying to care for them. It is high time to learn that our national health lies in our soil and the guarantee against failing health lies in the wise management of the soil for production of nutritious foods. Fertile soils are the first requisites if we are to be well fed and to be healthy and thereby to remain a strong nation.

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