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# Questions

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GEOPHYSICS—Where is the North Pole 150 miles in the atmosphere? p. 27. MEDICINE—How can bodies of crash victims be identified? p. 22. PSYCHOLOGY—How could recurring strikes be halted? p. 20. Photographs: Cover, Westinghouse Electric Corporation; p. 19, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; p. 21, F. C. Livingstone; p. 23, University of Illinois; p. 26, Fremont Davis; p. 32, Eastman Chemical Products, Inc.

BIOPHYSICS

### **Cut Crop Intake** Of Radiostrontium

➤ A POSSIBLE MEANS of controlling crop absorption of a dangerous by-product of nuclear fission is indicated in the research of Wallace H. Fuller, associate biochemist and associate professor of agricultural chemistry at the University of Arizona.

Radioactive strontium, the most biologically hazardous product of an atomic explosion, will not contaminate food crops if the soil contains enough exchangeable cal-

The more exchangeable calcium there is in the soil, the less strontium will be absorbed, Dr. Fuller's investigations show. Dr. Fuller emphasizes, however, that the total amount of calcium in the soil has nothing to do with this radiostrontium uptake. What does count is the presence of exchangeable calcium available to plants.

Radioactive strontium 90 is considered exceedingly dangerous to plants and animals because it accumulates easily in tissues and because it has a half-life of 25 years. Concentrations of radiostrontium in food crops will poison persons eating the contaminated foods. Accumulation of strontium in bones can cause bone tumors and possible injury to blood-forming organs.

Crops investigated were clover, beans, barley, wheat, lettuce, tomatoes, spinach, radish and rye grass.

Dr. Fuller also found that radiostrontium applied to leaves of plants was not trans-

ferred to other parts of the plants.
"This lack of translocation is very important," Dr. Fuller points out. "It means that under many circumstances contaminated crops that otherwise would have to be discarded or removed from the land could be used for the food provided by their uncontaminated parts, without danger of radioactivity.'

Science News Letter, July 14, 1956