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## Letters

### Too hot, too cold . . . or just right?

"Waiting for the Warming: The Catch 22 of CO<sub>2</sub>" (SN: 9/14/85, p. 170) lists many problems of the earth getting too warm. On the next page, "Nuclear Winter: Shutting Down the Farm?" lists the problems of the earth getting too cold.

Can scientists do something other than try to scare us about the future?

James F. Jackson  
Carlisle, Ind.

Many people have been concerned about the possible increase in CO<sub>2</sub> content of the atmosphere and its effect on the temperature and the atmosphere. Yet no one has concerned themselves with other environmental effects of increased CO<sub>2</sub>. It is high time they started working this into their studies, because there will definitely be other effects, not all bad.

Many biology departments in many universities know that when the CO<sub>2</sub> content of the surrounding atmosphere increases, the rate at which plants grow increases. The effect on the rate of plant growth is not only significant, it is in a sense astounding. Whenever plants grow, they extract CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, combine

it with hydrogen taken from water and release oxygen also taken from the water; this is the well-known growth process. So, when CO<sub>2</sub> is released into the atmosphere, it may turn out to be a great boon to mankind rather than a danger.

R. W. Lillie  
Granada Hills, Calif.

Scientists have been well aware of the potentially positive effects increased CO<sub>2</sub> might have on agriculture (SN: 4/14/79, p. 244). In fact, the Department of Energy has been sponsoring research on the response to increased CO<sub>2</sub> of everything from sweet potatoes and cowpeas to forests and insect herbivores. Increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations are bound to have many other effects as well. Some scientists speculate that agriculture in some areas might suffer by CO<sub>2</sub>-induced droughts, while other areas that are normally arid could receive more rainfall as a result of CO<sub>2</sub> increases. The point of the article is that we may have to face all of these effects—good and bad—long before we understand how, or even whether, to control them. —S. Weisburd

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