

AGRICULTURE

Hybrid Corn Being Exported to Europe

➤ A FARM revolution is one of this country's most important exports to Europe, the Near East and Northern Africa—the hybrid corn that adds millions to farm income.

Working through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, U. S. experts and seed companies have cooperated to send many varieties of hybrid seed to Europe for testing and development.

The best of 45 American hybrids produced, on an average, 60% more corn than the best local, open-pollinated variety in 141 tests in 13 countries.

Use of hybrids increased production by 273,000 tons, valued at \$24,000,000, in 1952 in Belgium, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. Experts estimate that the 30,000,000 acres of corn land in Europe planted to hybrids would increase production equivalent to an additional 18,000,000 acres.

Results with American hybrids have stimulated the development of inbred lines and hybrids especially adapted to the widely differing purposes and climatic regions of Europe and the Mediterranean area. Dr. R. W. Jugenheimer of the University of Illinois, a consultant on hybrid corn for the Food and Agriculture Organization, has estimated that enough hybrid seed for all of Europe's corn production could be available by 1957.

Use of hybrid seeds, mechanization and fertilizers has enabled American farmers to produce more corn on fewer acres of land. In this country, corn is used for more than 500 different purposes including food, glue, feed and industrial uses.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1954

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Chameleon

➤ ONCE UPON a time, so the story goes, there was a luckless chameleon. One day, with characteristic misfortune, it crawled onto a Scotch plaid tartan. In its frantic efforts to blend into this multi-colored background, the poor creature died.

Now this is the kind of fable that men of science scoff at, but laymen, having no means of disproof, remember, half skeptical but not completely unconvinced. One scientist, who was enough of a layman at heart to appreciate the fascination of the chameleon tale, decided to do something constructive. He prepared a box littered with patches of different-colored paper, and watched what happened when a chameleon was placed on it.

The colors he chose were green, gray, brown and black, which are woodland if not Highland colors. When he placed an American chameleon into the box, the little animal curiously explored its new home, but just went on being a dusty brown, the color usually assumed during the bright daylight hours. As a demonstration of the chameleon's alleged eagerness to take on the colors of its surroundings—to the death if necessary—the experiment was a bust.

This and other experiments show that the stimulus to change color does not come from the coloration of the background. The factors which seem to do the trick are light, temperature and emotion. In the sun the darker colors emerge, and in the shade the lighter. If a chameleon is placed so that the one end is in sun and the other in shadow, the creature will look like a pair of two-toned sport shoes. Dr. Raymond-Ditmars has reported a case of a chameleon that was basking in the sun underneath a course wire grating. When it moved, against the dark brown body the design of the grating could be seen, marked in pale yellow.

The emotional element is seen to operate when two American chameleon males, properly habited in daylight brown, suddenly encounter each other. They take on

an ashgray color, and the elastic throat pouch puffs out, suddenly appearing a brilliant vermilion. After a brief but furious scuffle, you can tell victor from vanquished by the color scheme. The loser, frequently minus a tail which in time will grow back, is now a dull yellow, while the winner is a bright green. These fighting colors soon subside into dull brown once more.

Strictly speaking the name chameleon belongs to a family of African lizards, some species of which are found in Madagascar, Arabia, India, and along the Mediterranean shore from Spain to Asia Minor. However, many lizards can change color rapidly.

The American "chameleon" is also a lizard but of a different family from the true chameleons. It is found in Florida and other southern states, and in Cuba. It is more agile and less sluggish than its European cousin, but the latter is highly accomplished at flicking out its long sticky tongue to snag flies and other insects. The marksmanship is terrific. The flies do not have a chance.

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VETERINARY MEDICINE

Mosquitoes Spread Sheep Virus Disease

➤ MOSQUITOES, WHICH spread the germs of such human diseases as malaria and yellow fever, can also spread the virus that causes a serious sheep disease known as "blue tongue."

Discovery of the blue tongue virus in mosquitoes trapped at the height of last season's outbreak in Texas is announced by Drs. D. A. Price and W. T. Hardy of the Agricultural Experiment Station, Sonora, Tex., in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*.

Blue tongue disease is a South African disease first noticed in this country six years ago. In typical outbreaks, sheep lose weight rapidly, become lame, their muzzles become inflamed and their tongues get a bluish tinge, giving the condition its name.

Veterinary research workers are seeking a vaccine that will be effective against the various strains of blue tongue virus identified in the United States, but none is available yet.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1954

YOUR HAIR

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By Herman Goodman, M.D.

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