

from 20% to 100%, and in simulated altitudes up to 25,000 feet.

Stated technically, the tunnel will be used to compile data on the acceleration of heat loss due to windchill. Of particular interest, is a study concerning the best shape of an object to minimize heat loss. This, from the military point of view, can be translated into savings of fuel in cold climates, such as northern Alaska.

The throat of the tunnel measures only one square foot, but this is large enough

for testing small objects mounted on its half-inch steel floor. A pictorial record of the air current can be made by mounting a camera in an aperture on one side of the throat, and a light source similarly on the other. Smoke introduced at the blower will result in a shadowgraph showing concentrations of smoke particles where the air currents are most dense. Heat transfer from the object will be recorded electrically.

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AGRICULTURE

World Agriculture Census

► **SOME TIME** after 1950, we are going to know more about rice in Siam and farming in the rest of the world than has ever been learned before. This will be the result of a comprehensive census of world agriculture slated for next year, under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

More than 65 nations, most of them FAO members, have indicated that they will cooperate in the census.

Here in this country it will be nothing new. The facts on farming will be compiled along with all the rest of the census information on the U. S. in the regular 1950 census.

Conspicuous as usual by her absence is the U.S.S.R. which has not taken any interest in the project. But Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, all FAO members now under Communist influence, are expected to cooperate in the greatest farm-fact-collecting undertaking ever planned.

Two previous world agriculture surveys have been made, but FAO hopes it can produce more accurate and complete figures. The earlier surveys were conducted under the leadership of the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome in 1930 and

1940. The latter census was of course abandoned by many countries because of World War II.

Compared with the comprehensive statistics compiled by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the questions which will be asked farmers around the world seem pretty brief. But it will be the first time that many farmers in some lands have ever been quizzed on the extent of their operations.

Six groups of information will be sought. These will involve the size and kind of farm; how the land is used; how many people are on the farm; area harvested of various crops; use of animal or mechanical power; and livestock population.

In addition to this minimum question sheet, more detailed surveys are being planned which it is hoped can be used in many countries.

One of the biggest problems, which is being tackled now, is training personnel to conduct the survey, particularly in backward areas.

When the census is completed, FAO hopes it can give the world the best picture of the world food situation it has ever had.

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MEDICINE

Acid from Sweat Aids Skin

► **PATIENTS** with psoriasis and another stubborn itchy skin disease, neurodermatitis, may get help from pills containing a fatty acid found in sweat.

"Definite improvement in the psoriasis" in 17 patients and "improvement or disappearance of the lesions and itching" in eight patients with neurodermatitis following treatment with the new remedy are reported by Dr. Henry Harris Perlman of Philadelphia in the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* (Feb. 12).

Calling the new medicine "an interesting approach to the control" of these two diseases, the editor of the *A.M.A. Journal* warns, however, that the method "is still in the stage of experimental investigation and must be so regarded until further evi-

dence is accumulated. Under no circumstances should it be accepted at this time as the most effective and only treatment."

Dr. Perlman himself points out that more time and study of a larger number of patients are needed to determine the true value of the remedy.

Its technical name is undecylenic acid. Made into a powder and an ointment, it was found by Navy medical officers to be good for preventing and treating athlete's foot. Dr. Perlman was led to its use by reports from other scientists of its killing action on the fungus that causes ringworm of the scalp.

He had some of it made up in capsules to be swallowed and gave it to four children with ringworm of the scalp. It helped but

did not cure them. But it did cause a profuse peeling of the scalp, which led Dr. Perlman to think it might help in psoriasis.

The psoriasis patients had had their skin trouble for from two months to 27 years. The psoriasis spots began to disappear in three and four days after treatment in some cases, while others took two weeks or more. Relief of itching came in some cases in two days after starting the medicine, while in others the itching was at first worse and then gradually got better. In three patients there was complete disappearance of the psoriasis. In six patients there was 75% disappearance and in the others there was 50% disappearance.

Dr. Perlman thinks, though there has not been enough time to be sure of this, that the recurrence of the disease can be prevented by the treatment.

Patients took the capsules three times a day. The best size of dose has not yet been determined. Many patients complained of a bitter taste after the medicine. Belching was another unpleasant symptom. Some also had stomach distress and nausea. Putting the chemical into capsules which do not dissolve until they get into the intestines probably would eliminate the stomach distress and nausea but it is not yet available in this form. Carbonated waters, soft drinks or soda bicarbonate, Dr. Perlman found, relieve the stomach distress and nausea.

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MARINE BIOLOGY

"Hot Water Fish" Added To U. S. National Museum

► **MORE** than 5,000 fish and other sea animals from probably the hottest body of salt water in the world have been brought back to the U. S. National Museum in Washington from the Persian Gulf.

The Gulf is a shallow body of water connected to the Indian Ocean by a narrow channel. In midsummer, water temperatures reach over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. It has less sea life than cooler waters, and fish and animals found there have been able to adapt themselves to the warm water.

Strangest of the fishes collected by Donald S. Erdman of the staff of the Smithsonian Institution are "sea moths," "fool fishes" and highly poisonous jellyfish. The "sea moths" are little brown creatures with large fins, that live on the surface of the water. "Fool fish" are simply stupid, sluggish fish which make no effort to escape capture even when a bright light is shone on them. The poisonous jellyfish, dreaded by Arabian fishermen, are coffee-colored organisms with small bodies but dangerous tentacles from two to three feet long.

Mr. Erdman's survey was carried out under the sponsorship of the Arabian-American Oil Company.

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