

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN OILS AND FATS

International Trade in Oils and Fats. Studies of Principal Agricultural Products on the World Market, No. 4: Oils and Fats: Production and International Trade—Part I. Pp. 350, 8vo. Price 25 lire. No. 5: Oils and Fats: Production and International Trade—Part II. Pp. 430, 8vo. Price 25 lire. (International Institute of Agriculture, Rome), 1939.

A WORLD system of economics is an ideal to which even national politicians paid lip-service in 1933. After the present war has further dissipated the world's resources, it will become more than an ideal; it will become a necessity. Although at the present time it is difficult to be optimistic about the achievement of any sort of world unity, there have been examples of world-wide co-operation within limited spheres of action to offer gleams of hope. The work of the League of Nations on sociological problems has been obscured by its failure in the political sphere; the International Postal Union has been a notable example of co-operation; and most interesting of all, by reason of its potentialities as much as of its achievements, is the International Institute of Agriculture.

The inception of this Institute dates back to 1905. Although it did not develop into the organization envisaged by its rather fantastic founder, it does to a great extent provide the data, on the agricultural side, upon which attempts at a world economy must be based. Essentially it provides a continuous world census of agricultural production. The Institute publishes a monthly "International Review of Agriculture" with crop reports and estimates, reports on incidence of pests, and so on; and an "International Year-Book of Agricultural Statistics". It also deals with such subjects as farm accountancy, agricultural economics, and world agricultural legislation. Among its useful periodical bibliographical summaries the annual "Bibliography of Tropical Agriculture" has been found useful in libraries in India and Ceylon.

The work under review forms volumes 4 and 5 of a series of studies on the principal agricultural products of the world market,

the first of which dealt with cotton, and the second and third with meat products.

World production of oils and fats, at least such production as finds a place in published statistics, is estimated to include ten million metric tons annually from vegetable sources, about four million tons of butter and perhaps two million tons of animal fats (including whale and other marine oils). The task of reviewing this enormous production and still more the corresponding consumption is made more difficult by the lack of adequate statistical material on these subjects, even for countries which have well-developed statistics for other products.

The present work, with its international list of contributors, probably covers the ground as well as possible. In any case the reviewer can obviously not pretend to have gone over in detail the entire contents of such a work, which almost falls into the class of Charles Lamb's *biblia abiblia*.

Treating these two volumes then as works of reference, the reviewer's first task is briefly to indicate their scope. The first section (which comprises the whole of the first volume—volume 4 of the general series of publications) treats of vegetable oils and fats; section two of the fats of land animals (including butter); and section three of oils and fats derived from marine animals.

In the fourth section the production and consumption of oils and fats in the principal importing countries are reviewed. The fifth section deals with industrial uses of oils and fats, and the tendencies of consumption in the various industries, especially margarine. A brief survey of prices concludes the work.

The statistical material is mostly complete to the end of 1936. Since then much has occurred to modify the conclusions drawn regarding tendencies of production and consumption. However one general tendency remains. Technical progress has been increasingly reducing various oils to one level of competition, the outstanding case being of course the method of hydrogenation which enabled whale and other oils increasingly to replace coconut and palm kernel oils in margarine. Some oils however still retain characteristics which enable

them to keep some of their special status. This is particularly true of drying oils such as linseed.

Apart from technical considerations, consuming trends have been considerably modified in recent years by political action in many countries, usually with the object of encouraging the production and marketing of home-produced oils and fats, as in the case of the United States processing tax in 1934. An interesting contribution by Dr. von der Decken in the work under review deals with the German Fat Plan. It is of considerable interest to compare this account with other published studies of the German measures such as Karl Brandt's "*The German Fat Plan and its Economic Setting*" (Stanford University, California, 1938) and R. Saladin's "*Les Matières grasses en Allemagne*" (Paris, 1938).

What modifications have taken place in India's trade in oils and fats up to 1936 may be studied in this volume; but it is not always easy to elicit the underlying causes or to visualise the effect of such changes. A general reduction of Indian exports probably corresponds to considerably increased internal consumption. India is now, for example, a net importer of copra (fortunately for Ceylon), whereas exports of Cochin copra and oil were considerable thirty years ago.

A statistical survey like the present work is perhaps necessarily impersonal and the student of any particular aspect of the subject will naturally supplement it with treatises of a less objective nature. Those interested in the economic significance of the fats must have a working knowledge of their sources and methods of production, their technical uses and their essential rôle

in human and animal nutrition before tackling the data provided by such a work as that being discussed. For this purpose the reviewer cannot do better than recommend the perusal of the excellent little publication of the Food Research Institute at Stanford University, California, "*The Fats and Oils: a General View*" by C. L. Alsberg and A. E. Taylor (1928). With this equipment the economic student would be in a much better position to fit into its proper perspective the material provided by the statistician. There would follow the study of specific monographs on individual subjects. In the case of the student of India, for example, J. C. Bahl's "*The Oilseed Trade of India*" (Bombay, 1938) would provide useful later reading.

Behind compiled statistics of production and consumption there stand the individual producer and consumer, and it is a useful exercise in imagination to attempt the translation of a statistical table into human terms. It is one thing to read that castor seed from Brazil has replaced that from India by so many thousand tons; it is another to envisage what this has meant to cultivators in Hyderabad. Technical advances such as hydrogenation which have added large resources of new material to the world's supply of edible fats, may be regarded as advantageous increases of man's control over nature. The Ceylon coconut small-holder may be pardoned if he is unappreciative.

This review may thus end where it began by regarding its subject, or rather the organization responsible for the present study of its subject, as a small hopeful pointer towards a better organization of world economy by means of which scientific progress may contribute to the well-being of all.

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THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MILITARY MEDICINE AND PHARMACY

THE Congress was opened on May 7th, 1939 in the city of Washington D.C., and later held in the New York City, where it terminated on May 19th, 1939. More than thirty nations were represented at the Congress. Col. A. C. Munro, of the Indian Medical Service, was one of the delegates to the Congress.

In his address, the President of the Congress complimented the delegates from thirty-two distant countries, who had come there to lay the resources of medicine before the people of all nations, who are or who may be exposed to the greatest enemy, viz., war. Medicine has no social, national or military boundaries and it has no military enemies. The President briefly referred to the triumphs of military medicine and surgery during the last War and the many problems, which still remained unsolved. He said, "In spite of the inhumanity of war, which is the most debased act of civilised man, some of the by-products of war have been beneficial. A war gives the first notice to the nation of the physical unfitness of a large proportion of its youth, much of it due to remediable defects. It serves as a warning to the nation to take an account of its state of health". He continued, "Medicine is not war-minded. Rather it ministers to the peace of mind, body and soul; if in the course of events the forces of mass brutality prevail over the gentle mandates of the prince of peace, medicine shall be ready to rescue from the wreckage of human folly."

A symposium was held under the joint auspices of the *Association of Military Surgeons of the United States* and the *Tenth International Congress of Military Medicine and Pharmacy*. The subject of the symposium was "The rôle of aviation medicine in the development of aviation". The report of this symposium is the most informative reading in the *Proceedings*. In it, we find a historical sketch of all the interesting researches made on the medical aspects of aviation—the symptoms produced at high altitudes, the adaptability of the physiological functions of the body to high altitudes, the attempts made to overcome the ill-effects of altitude and other important questions relating to aviation medicine.

Modern aviation is only slightly over thirty-six years old. While much work has been carried out on the mechanics of aviation, it is only recently that attention is being given to the pilot. In most of the progressive countries, minimum standards for military pilots have been drawn up and also a special medical ser-

vice for aviators has been established. All the principal countries engaged in the Great War had medical departments which were integral parts of their air services. Post-War aviation medicine progressed with the development of civil airways, including passenger air transportation and air mail service. Thanks to the progress of aeronautics and the proper selection of pilots, air transportation to-day is as comfortable as that of land travel. The establishment of civil aviation created the need for civil flight surgeons. Aviation medicine is now an important and well established branch of general medicine. Owing to the phenomenal growth of air transport and the rapidly expanding military air force, Aviation Medicine is bound to occupy a prominent place as a special subject in medicine.

The various subjects discussed at the symposium were:—(1) The organisation and function of the medical services in colonial expeditions, (2) Probable casualties in war and methods of calculation, (3) Practical procedures for anæsthesia and analgesia in war surgery, (4) Organisation and function of the Military Chemico-Pharmaceutical service, (5) Emergency treatment and primary apparatus for fractures of the jaws in the war, (6) Technical specialisation of administrative officers in the medical service, and (7) Oxygen therapy and its practical use with troops on active duty.

On the tenth day of the session, held at New York City, several interesting papers, e.g., "World War experiences in Turkey," "Surgical practice in Panama," "Surgical anæsthesia," "The influenza epidemic," "International agreements relating to hospital ships," "Biopsy of the lung with broncho-catheter," were read and discussed.

The delegates were treated to lavish banquets, and taken round to various places of interest, including the New York World's Fair.

All the delegates carried away with them splendid recollections of American hospitality. Col. Thomann submitted the formal invitation of his government to hold the next International Congress in Switzerland in 1941. The acceptance of the invitation by the International Committee was unanimously approved by the Congress, which expressed its thanks to the Swiss Government through its representative, Col. Thomann. Capt. Bambridge was presented with a medal in appreciation of his work in connection with the *International Congress*, since its foundation in 1921.

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