

THE JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

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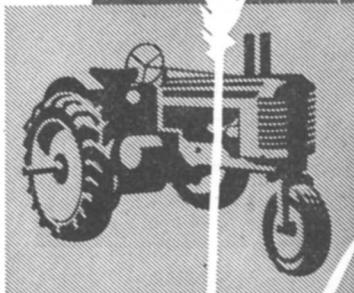
Oil speeds the plough

THERE WAS a ploughing match in England last October, and one of the competitors was a woman. She was doing good time and straight furrows till, ten yards short of the finishing post, her tractor stalled. It had run out of fuel. She was disqualified. She took it hard, insisting that her fuel had been siphoned down by a rival. The sad story made front page news in the papers.

Today the tractor has replaced the horse on the farm. The occasional disadvantages of fuel-saboteurs with siphons are heavily outweighed by the advantages of speed, labour-saving and economy. Ten fewer draught animals to feed mean twenty-five more acres now producing human food. In Europe in the last thirty years 10 million acres have been gained in this way.

Petroleum products are the life-blood of the modern farm. Kerosine drives the tractors, heats the incubators, warms the orchards against frost. Petrol feeds the cars and the engines. Oil plays a part in egg-preservation. The wax that makes modern poultry-plucking a quick, clean, easy job is a petroleum product. Ammonia fertilisers; revolutionary new insecticides; anti-nematode soil treatments; chemical sprays for pests. . . . The old pig liked to lean up against the rubbing post and have a good scratch. The irritation and exercise were good for slimming, but bad for profits. Put an oil-based anti-itch emollient on the rubbing post and you soon have a better-mannered, better-upholstered, better-priced pig.

At Denver in Colorado, Modesto, California and Woodstock in Kent there are Shell experimental farms and agricultural research stations. Shell Research evolves and Shell refineries distil the essential products for the new agriculture. The man who works the Good Earth in the nineteen fifties is a mechanic and a scientist.



research is arming the farmer

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