

**Guest
commentary**

Clean enviroment- utopian desire unrealistic if world is to be fed

By Tad Miller

In recent years there has been tremendous pressure applied to various government agencies to ban the use of some valuable agricultural chemicals used for control of weeds and insects on forest and agricultural lands. Some of these pesticides have already been banned and the use of others, such as 2,4,5-T, have

been severely restricted. Efforts by concerned groups and individuals to further restrict the use of agricultural chemicals is being intensified almost daily.

Most of the concern of these people stems from a sincere desire to live in a clean environment—an environment that would exclude even the remotest possibility of

them, or anyone else, contracting cancer or aborting a pregnancy. This utopian desire, although shared by the majority of the people in the United States, is totally unrealistic at this time. If the agricultural and forest industries are to continue to feed, clothe, and shelter this nation's citizens and a good part of the rest of the world, they

are going to need all of the production and conservation tools available to them, and this includes the use of agricultural chemicals, at least until the time something better comes along.

The dryland wheat country of the Pacific Northwest has long been known for its extreme soil and water erosion problems. Efforts have

gone on for more than 50 years to find a way to curb this problem and conserve the soil. Nothing tried on a large scale has been totally satisfactory but it has been found that crop residue (stubble) left lying or standing on the soil surface tends to help the flow of water into the soil and slow, or even stop, the flow of the water down the hill until the soil has

a chance to absorb it. There are three methods of accomplishing this. The first method is trashy fallow or stubble mulch farming. This has been a long established method of keeping crop residue on the soil surface but has only proven to be moderately successful. The second method, minimum tillage, and the third method, no tillage,

are still very much in the experimental stage. Both methods require varying amounts of agricultural chemicals for the control of weeds, grasses, and volunteer. It is believed, once perfected and new and better chemicals become available, that both methods will prove to be highly effective in controlling soil and water

erosion. But, these methods cannot be used without the use of agricultural chemicals.

The American farmer, in order to continue to supply food for a hungry nation, must learn to take better care of his soil. He is continually doing a better job with the help of new and better tools, new technology, and the use of agricultural chemicals.

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