

Both members and non-members of the cranberry association are involved in the lots in question.

In view of the findings on the 1959 Northwestern crop, and the previous history of the 1957 crop, we believe it reasonable to assume that the 1958 crop may also be contaminated.

Because of the implications of this incident in its relation to the safety of our food supply, I am prompted to make the following additional comment.

As the cranberry episode illustrates, the Food and Drug Administration has declined to set any tolerance for any amount of a chemical in foods if the chemical produces cancer when fed to test animals. This principle is set down in the Food Additives Amendment, enacted last year, in a specific provision prohibiting the Food and Drug Administration from setting any tolerance for any such chemical. Even though the earlier Pesticide Amendment, which is applicable to the cranberries, does not contain such a specific prohibition, the same principle has been applied.



The application of this principle is necessary in our opinion because while in theory there may be a minute quantity of a carcinogen which is safe in foods, in actuality our scientists do not know whether this is true or how to establish a safe tolerance.

Therefore, we would oppose any attempt to take the cancer clause out of the Food Additives Amendment, and we will support the inclusion of such a clause in the color bill which is now before the Congress.

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Very little checking has been done by the Food and Drug Administration on the 1958 crop, and we are informed that the cranberry association also did little or no checking of that crop. It was believed that the withholding of 3 million pounds of the 1957 crop from the market, plus the warnings being issued by the association to its members, would prevent any further misuse of the weed killer unless and until a tolerance was established. The 1958 crop was grown, harvested, and marketed while the toxicity studies on the chemical were being conducted by the American Cyanamid Company and the Amchem Company.

In May of this year evaluation of experimental data submitted by the manufacturer was completed, and the conclusion was reached that aminotriazole is a carcinogen. The Food and Drug Administration then began checking on grower spray practices and perfecting the analytical method for detecting residues of the chemical. The national cranberry association likewise again instituted its own system of inspecting growers and holding for analysis all lots from growers where there was any reason to suspect misuse of the weed killer.

Commendable though the association's program is, it is apparently not fully effective.

Examination of the first series of samples from the newly harvested 1959 Northwestern crop has just been completed. Two interstate shipments out of 7 examined so far have been found definitely contaminated. Seizure is being recommended to the Department of Justice on one of these shipments. The other lot containing residues has already been distributed. Preliminary results on 10 other lots not yet shipped, and evidence that some growers have again failed to follow good agricultural practice in use of the weed killer, indicate that we are likely to find additional contaminated lots in the 1959 crop.



Commissioner Larrick tells me that so far there is no information to implicate 1958 and 1959 cranberries grown in Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, the other principal growing areas. An investigation is nevertheless under way in these areas, Mr. Larrick said, and if evidence of contamination is found, appropriate action will be taken.

In view of what has resulted from the improper use of aminotriazole on cranberry bogs, it is obviously imperative that this chemical not be used on any other crops in a way that will leave a residue in or on the produce. Growers should follow meticulously the directions for use on the pesticide label registered with the Department of Agriculture.

The Food and Drug Administration is looking into the situation to determine whether any other crops are contaminated. If residues are found, the information will immediately be made public and appropriate legal action will be taken.

The story on cranberries from the beginning is as follows:

in 1958

The weed killer, aminotriazole, was registered by the Department of Agriculture for use on cranberry bogs a few days after harvest. Unfortunately, many cranberry growers used the weed killer prior to harvest of the 1957 crop. As a matter of fact, I understand that some growers used the pesticide even before the Department of Agriculture had approved directions for its use on cranberry bogs. As a result of the misuse of the chemical, plants took up the aminotriazole and some of it got into the berries.

The contaminated production from the 1957 cranberry crop was voluntarily withheld from the market by the growers, after the Food and Drug Administration refused to establish a tolerance for residues of the weed killer because no tests had been conducted to show what, if any, amount of the chemical would be safe.

Statement*

By

Arthur S. Flemming
Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare



The Food and Drug Administration today urged that no further sales be made of cranberries and cranberry products produced in Washington and Oregon in 1958 and 1959 because of their possible contamination by a chemical weed killer, aminotriazole, which causes cancer in the thyroid of rats when it is contained in their diet, until the cranberry industry has submitted a workable plan to separate the contaminated berries from those that are not contaminated.

The Food and Drug Administration has already discovered contamination of some of the 1959 crop and is undertaking a check of the 1958 crop.

The Food and Drug Administration will use its normal procedures of investigation and seizure in coping with this problem. In addition, we have the pledge of the national cranberry association (known as Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.) to cooperate in every way it can with the Food and Drug Administration to protect consumers. This organization controls about 75 percent of the crop.

Over 3 million pounds of cranberries from the 1957 Northwest crop and a small amount from the 1957 Massachusetts crop are now being destroyed because of contamination by the weed killer. This action is being taken voluntarily by the national cranberry association, with the supervisory cooperation of the Food and Drug Administration.

These contaminated berries, about one-third of the Northwestern crop for 1957, are being buried with the use of bulldozers at Albany and Coquille, Oregon, and Centralia and Markham, Washington. It will take until about Christmas to complete the job.

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Secretary Flemming's statement on
cranberries.

Charles B. Saunders, Jr.

HOLD THIS

Trouble Making

