

## Agriculture by Sue Atkinson

### Eating food is now passé

*The USDA says there's too much food around, so we should make it into fuel, adhesives, and plastics substitutes.*

**Y**ou would think that the U.S. Department of Agriculture would have the goal of promoting crop production to improve the human diet. Look again. In addition to the USDA's many schemes to convert cropland to non-food use, for example, the Conservation Reserve Program and the new Wetlands Reserve Program, the department has recently established an Alternative Agriculture Research and Commercialization Board, for the purpose of taking crops and putting them to non-food and non-feed uses!

The chairman of this commission is none other than Martin Andreas, chairman and senior vice president of the cartel company Archer Daniels Midland—the world's largest soybean-processing and -marketing company. For years, ADM has specialized in getting government sweetheart subsidies for non-food use of corn and soybeans, such as in production of ethanol. Over the past four decades, changes in state and federal regulations governing corn- and soybean-based butter substitutes, such as margarine, were made to boost profits for ADM and Cargill.

Now these cartel interests want even more loot, and to get it, they are using the lie that there are food surpluses.

On May 12, the first of eight regional hearings by the Alternative Agriculture board was held in Des Moines, Iowa, chaired by Andreas. At this and other hearings, the agenda included the various possible non-food uses for crops: starch, adhesives, fuel, and plastics substitutes.

At the Des Moines hearing, a representative of seed producer Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., Carrol D. Bolen, testified that without the development of alternative uses for crops, "We would be buried in surplus corn production and/or millions of additional crop acres would need to be kept out of production." He urged the use of joint ventures or "strategic alliances with major commercial partners," to discover new uses and markets for crops.

Bolen also suggested that the industry "encourage Congress to provide tax incentives for new use initiatives."

A farmer testifying for the Iowa Farm Bureau said that the bureau supports the concept of "regional research centers" as the best way to help farmers by identifying specific, local needs. This idea was expanded upon by Purdue University specialist Jim BeMiller, who suggested that regional centers would explore specific products and be "materially based and not commodity based." BeMiller said this means establishing one center to look at oils, another to specialize in proteins or starches, and so on. While the word "zoning" was not used, that is what this really means.

This would put the multinational companies, which would be receiving tax incentives from Congress for their work, in control of production in each of these regions—in a corporatist set-up worthy of Mussolini's fascism.

Farmer Ann Jorgensen testified that farmers in her county are growing 5,000 acres of contract-specific crops.

Their crop is a tofu-like soybean being grown under contract for a special market.

What such contracting involves is a form of top-down control. Typically, the lender to the farmer can stipulate that the farmer can receive operating loans *only* if he agrees to produce on contract to a cartel company. Much of the loan money, controlled by the stated price in the contract, goes to the lender as the labor of the producer becomes enslaved. This is exactly the same principle as the use of the labor of Third World countries to produce for export in order to pay on the foreign debt.

Already in Iowa, pork production is coming under dictatorial contract arrangement, and the Alternative Agriculture Commission would enlarge this for crops for non-food use.

The commission's argument, that these cartel-serving schemes are worthwhile because there are vast crop surpluses, is especially wicked. According to the April "Food Outlook" report by the Rome-based U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, worldwide "cereal production in 1991 has fallen below consumption for the fourth time in the last five years." U.S. stocks of wheat are at early 1970s levels.

It is an evil irony that the Alternative Agriculture Commission started its round of hearings on how to cut the food supply in Iowa, once the premier beef and crop-producing state of the nation. However, Iowa is also the location of the first project in the nation using \$32 million of federal money to establish an 8,654-acre wildlife refuge, which would take more than 5,000 acres of prime agricultural land out of production. Federal officials plan to reconstruct a native tallgrass prairie, and wetland and woodland habitats, complete with roaming bison, elk, and other species, for "educational purposes."