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THE FERTILIZER INDUSTRY OF IRAQ

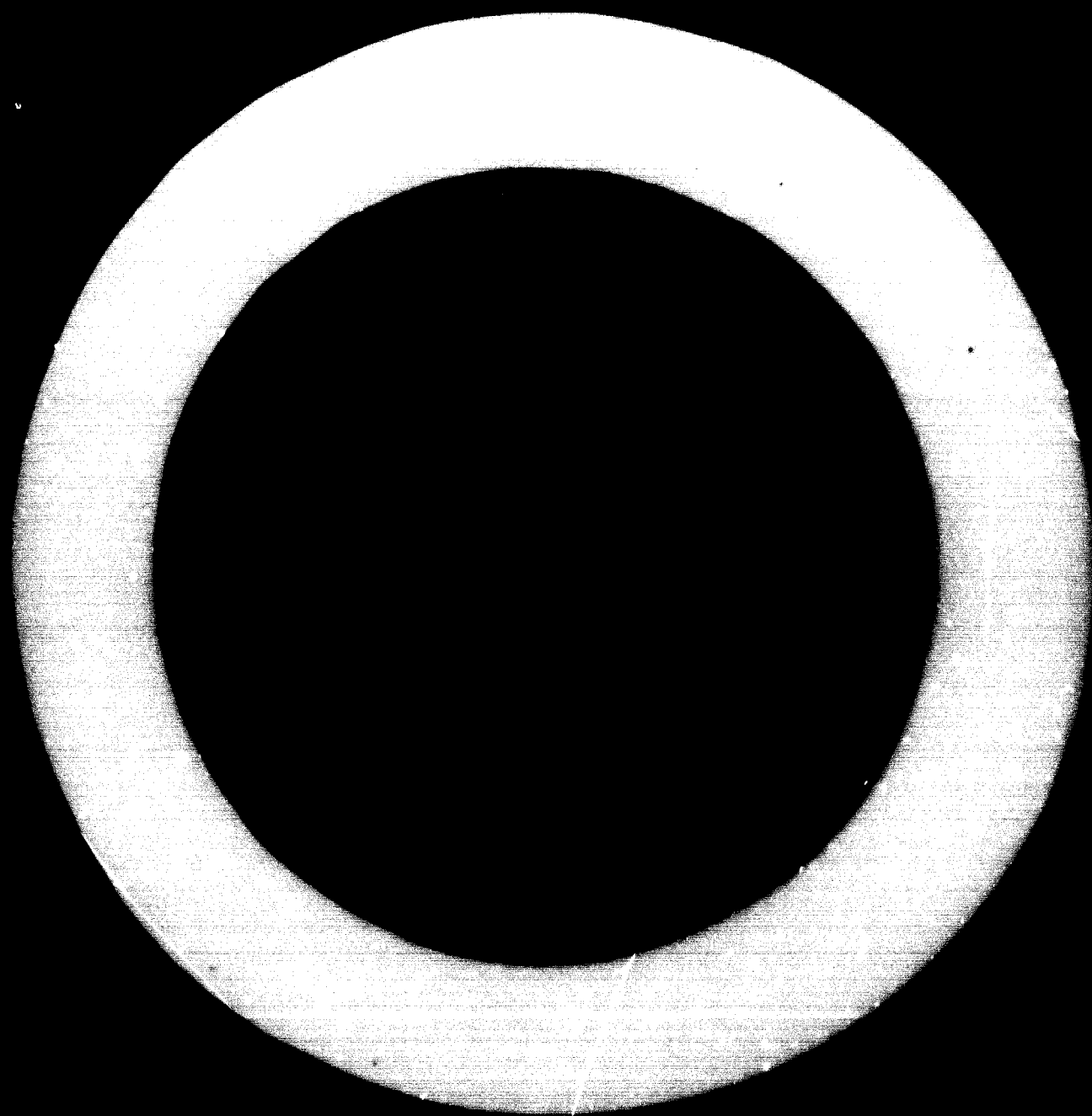
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The fertilizer industry in Iraq is quite a new experience to the country due to the fact that the application of fertilizer itself was not practiced by Iraqi farmers until very recently (the attempt started seriously in 1955 with a total consumption of 30-35 thousand tons yearly and increased to about 65,000 tons in 1969-1970, 50,000 of which was ammonium sulphate).

In spite that Iraq has planned to construct a nitrogenous fertilizer plant since 1955 based on natural gas and sulphur as main raw-materials produced locally, yet it was executed in late 1967 when the Government of Iraq signed a contract with IHI of Japan to construct a fertilizer plant in Basrah, the southern main port of Iraq where a great amount of sweet natural gas is available from the oil fields in that region.

The plant was designed to produce 420 tons of ammonium sulphate and 160 tons of urea per year. Ammonia and sulphuric acid required for production are produced within the plant at a capacity of 200 tons and 325 tons per day respectively.

The plant has been completed now and a trial operation started successfully to demonstrate the guarantees. A normal operation shall start from June 15th, 1971.

It is true that Iraq is a potential country to consume a great deal of fertilizers due to the fact that the statistics show that about 10 millions acres of cultivated land is available, three of which only are utilized now, and application of fertilizers is used only on a small portion of the utilized cultivated land.

It is however needless to say that without an intensive effort and well organized programme to educate the farmers and train them how to use the fertilizers and how much they may benefit out of this experiment, and without studying all possible methods to have these materials within the reach of the farmers, the determination of government policy in this respect will be difficult.

It is difficult and rather premature to realize the prospect of this industry for the future, but nevertheless a study and an attempt are being done now in two directions, one is to extend the application of the fertilizers by education of farmers, to subsidize some of the cost and increase the agricultural land by cultivation, drainage and irrigation. On the other hand, the concerned government department for industry is studying the possibility of extension of the present plant and / or to build new ones (nitrogen and phosphate or both).

As for the international market for export, obviously it is not encouraging to make a forecast due to the present low price and demand, compared with the steady market price while the cost of production continues to rise all over the world, including raw materials, chemicals, labour, spare-parts and cost of machinery, equipment and know-how.





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