

Rise in bank rate

The Bank of Canada has increased its bank rate by half a percentage point to a record 9.25 per cent. The increase is the third since April 9, 1973, when it was increased to 5.25 per cent from 4.75 per cent. The last increase, of half a point, was on May 13. The bank-rate increase follows a half-point increase in the prime lending rate at two chartered banks — the Bank of Montreal on June 26 and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce on July 22 — to a record 11.5 per cent.

New crop test speeds inoculant search

The search for suitable inoculant strains for Canadian legume crops is gaining momentum as a result of new methods developed at the Agriculture Canada Research Station at Ste Foy, Quebec.

Lucien Bordeleau, a microbiologist at the station, has come up with a new selection method for bacteria used as alfalfa inoculants. Dr. Bordeleau's test is more flexible and faster than the usual procedures.

Legume inoculants consist of bacteria called Rhizobium, which work with the plant roots to form nodules capable of taking nitrogen from the air and converting it to a type of natural fertilizer. However, several strains of the bacteria are available. Researchers are always looking for the best strains to do the job.

The standby method for selection has been to inoculate seed with the bacteria, plant the seed, wait for the crop to mature, and check the bacteria's effectiveness by measuring crop yields.

"To select from a group of 1,000 bacteria would take four to six months

and require test plots about half the size of this Quebec City suburb," says the Ste Foy scientist about the standby method.

"Our new method depends upon the bacteria alone for initial selections. It cuts out the lengthy field trials in the early stages."

The test takes only about 15 minutes after the bacteria reach four days of development. A field test takes from four to six months.

A second find rounds out the method. The scientists discovered that bacteria which produce acids when living alone are poor team-mates for the legumes.

The goal is increased alfalfa yields. Better inoculants will mean better nitrogen fixation from the air, better growth and less need for fertilizer.

Dr. Bordeleau says a hardy, efficient Rhizobium helps the plant reach a healthy biochemical balance, increase disease resistance and escape winter-kill.

There is no question about the yield increases from using a suitable Rhizobium strain. One strain selected from a group of 50 by the standard field tests at Ste Foy increased alfalfa yields by 50 to 200 per cent; other strains increased yields of soybeans by 100 to 200 per cent, and of beans by 66 to 100 per cent.

Dr. Bordeleau still has more than 1,000 lines to test. He expects his new screening methods will speed up his work in the search for better legume inoculants.

Golf for all seasons

Comp-U-Golf, an electronic golf machine invented by Winnipeg businessman Lloyd McSorley, is attracting international interest. Although they are not yet on the market in Canada, 30 machines have been purchased by a Japanese trading corporation to test the Japanese market and a contract has been signed with a British agent to supply European Common Market countries a minimum of 1,300 machines in the next four years — an export sale in the range of \$3 million. Mr. McSorley holds international patents on the product.

The Comp-U-Golf Driving Range is the first such unit to use a captive ball. "The ball is the secret," Mr. McSorley says, explaining that it took

many years of research to find a urethane material that could simulate the "feel" and "sound" of an actual golf stroke and take the wear and tear of up to 200,000 hits.

When a player strikes the ball with a driver the machine records the path of the shot, whether it slices or hooks, and its distance. This is shown by a dot of light (the ball) which travels from the tee to the fairway depicted on a panel about eight feet in front of the player. The total distance of a series of nine drives is recorded for a single player or separately for two players.

The machine can be used as a teaching device or for recreational purposes. Because it is capable of measuring both direction and distance it is an ideal teaching aid. Distance is measured accurately within one and one-half feet. The use of a captive ball eliminates the need for a net which is usually required on indoor ranges.

Mr. McSorley says the potential for recreational applications is almost unlimited. "Because of the space required for a driving range, it is almost impossible to have one near a densely populated area but a Comp-U-Golf machine can be set up anywhere there are people, either indoors or out," he says. Clubs, hotels, shopping centres, commercial showrooms and waiting rooms are all good prospects.

Consumer price movements

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Consumer price movements, reclassified by goods and services, offer another view of the incidence of price change. From May to June, the total goods index advanced 1.5 per cent with the main impetus coming from non-durable goods, which rose 1.4 per cent mainly in response to higher prices for food, gasoline and fuel oil. The index for durable goods rose 1.7 per cent mainly because of higher quotations for automobiles, appliances, furniture and recreation equipment, and the component for semi-durable goods increased 1 per cent in response to higher prices for home furnishings, clothing and phonograph records. A rise of 1.0 per cent was recorded in the services index following increases in the shelter, clothing and education elements. In the 12 months from last June the total goods index advanced 13.3 per cent and that for services 7.8 per cent.

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