

Liberals Behind Farm Research Cuts

MANY people are aware of planned cuts in agricultural research budgets that ultimately may affect food production and prices.

Less publicized is the subtle maneuvering of social reformers to redirect funds from agriculture problem solving toward liberal sociological objectives.

President Carter's proposed budget for agricultural research to be conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state agricultural experiment stations calls for a reduction of \$28 million.

If the slash stands, it will take money from on-going research projects at a time when additional funds are needed to offset effects of inflation on salaries, equipment, supplies and operations.

The USDA proposal also calls for \$17.2 million to initiate new research in human nutrition, small-scale farming, integrated pest management, land and water conservation to maintain environmental

quality, and human health and safety.

Integrated pest management means trying to control insects by non-toxic methods, such as importing predators to eat them, or using sex lures and radiation to make them sterile.

The idea of discouraging large efficient farming operations and returning to organic food production on small farms has been advocated by certain idealists for years. Some want to abolish free enterprise, using such slogans as "Food is for people, not for profit."

Rapid application of practical research results in all phases of farm production has enabled farmers to keep our tables supplied with abundant, high quality, reasonably priced food.

Research results are made available from land grant colleges, including Oklahoma State University, through the agricultural extension service to farmers seeking answers to current problems.

Farmers cannot finance needed research on their own. Working cooperatively in commodity groups, they have been able to undertake limited projects on food quality and marketing, but production research has been left to agricultural experiment stations and to commercial firms hoping to develop new equipment, seeds or supplies for a profit.

Farm organizations, land grant college officials and agricultural leaders have appealed to Congress to examine the proposed shift of research emphasis, but results are not yet visible.

The planned realignment of research projects could hardly be regarded as an effective step to combat inflation or to economize. It comes through clearly as a scheme for social reforms.

The net gain in funds that might be saved is small, but the net loss to productive agricultural research could lead to diminished food output and higher prices to be paid by consumers.