

Moshav enters beauty business

ARISTOTLE reputedly persuaded Alexander the Great to conquer an entire island in order to get some of it; soon, Israeli women will be able to buy cosmetics containing this locally grown special ingredient.

Aloe vera, a gel contained in the leaves of a plant being grown in Ein Yahav, an Arava moshav, is used to treat blisters, fungi, itching and burns. Aristotle wanted Alexander the Great to get the gel for rubbing on his soldiers' wounds. It can also serve as a base for lotions, creams, shampoos and soaps.

According to the May issue of the *Israel Economist*, the moshav - the only place in Israel to grow aloe vera on a commercial basis - has just started providing the cosmetics industry with the gel. Until now, it has been selling only the leaves and potted plants. It already markets tissues and towelettes soaked in the gel, and within a year expects to make its own gel-based cosmetics. Aloe vera drinks, including a tea, are also planned.

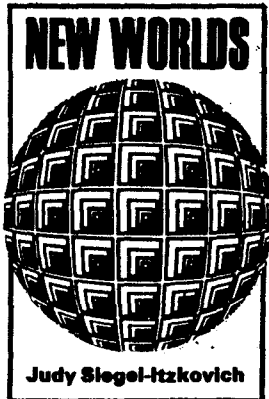
The moshav, with its hot, dry and sunny climate, is a natural habitat for these plants; those used to start the plantation were imported from Texas. Today, 100 dunams are planted with aloe vera, 10 of them ready for harvesting, and 150 more dunams are about to be planted. Every 10 dunams of aloe vera yield up to 15 to 20 tons of gel.

Although it is 90 per cent water, the gel is an unusual mixture of antibiotics, astringents, coagulating agents, pain inhibitors and growth stimulators, says the *Israel Economist*. It even contains a hormone that accelerates the healing process.

Enriched food for the needy

A NEW food that can ease the plight of the starving is the subject of another report in the *Israel Economist*. It is produced by the Israeli company that recently came out with partially baked rolls and pitta that can be stored for months on the shelf and then heated.

Ma'adanei Bar of Einat, a kib-



scientist of the Egyptian Agriculture Ministry recently visited the kibbutz and expressed interest in establishing a joint venture to build a factory in Egypt that would use Israeli expertise to produce the enriched food for Africa's starving.

Pocket-machine for copying

THE TINIEST photostat machine, amazingly small enough to hold in the palm of the hand, has just appeared on the Israeli market. Called "Copy Jack," it should interest businessmen, journalists and detectives. To make a copy of a document or any other piece of paper, one merely has to pass the machine over it while pressing a button. The copier produces an accurate copy 45 millimetres wide and of unlimited length.

The importer, Electis, is selling it for NIS 500 plus VAT. It also claims that there is no need to heat up the machine, as with conventional copiers, or call in a technician for periodic cleaning.

The end of yet another mystery?

Some Tel Aviv nightclubs are installing a new Israeli-designed high-tech sound system that improves the musical quality and allows the neighbours to sleep, writes SIMSON L. GARFINKEL

Keeping one's noise to oneself

SOME NIGHTCLUBS may soon be bothering their neighbours less and providing their customers with better music as a result of an innovative sound system. The system, designed by Acoustics Israel, a Herzliya-based consulting firm, will also allow people sitting at adjacent tables to listen to different music without interfering with one another.

A little over a year ago, residents and hotels around the Kikar Namir atrium filed several complaints with the Tel Aviv municipality protesting the excessive noise coming from nightclubs in the area. The noise was coming from television sets which the nightclubs were using to show rock videos.

"All the shops need video and TVs to provide entertainment," said Tuvia Lavi, general manager of Sherutav Service Company which manages the nightclub properties. "Two to three shops always compete. Each one puts on higher and higher sound." The nightclubs received several summonses to court because of the noise, said Lavi. Some of the clubs were fined.

Besides the volume competition, the layout of the nightclubs encourages the proprietors to play their television sets loudly. The Kikar Namir nightclubs have large-screen televisions in counter windows that face outside tables and chairs. In order for people far away from the televisions to hear, the volume has to be turned up very high.

For the patrons of the nightclubs, the loud televisions are also bothersome. People in the rear still can't hear, even when the sets are turned up loud. And the people in the front are blasted.

The problem, according to Dr. Michael Strumpf, president of Acoustics Israel, is that the television speakers were never designed to deliver quality sound to people sitting 10 metres away. Most give good



Dr. Michael Strumpf of Acoustics Israel displays his company's sound-level metre. (Simson L. Garfinkel)

sound to people sitting two or three metres away. When TVs are forced to produce intelligible sound over greater distances, the noise can be heard in houses and hotels within several hundred metres.

The Interior Ministry establishes the maximum noise a company may make in a residential area, explained Strumpf. During the day, it is illegal to make a noise for more than three hours which exceeds 55 dbA in the centre of a room with the windows open. Fifty-five dbA "is about as loud as a quiet air-conditioner," said Strumpf. But during night-time hours, which Tel Aviv defines as 11 p.m.-6 a.m., it is illegal to make a noise that exceeds 40 dbA in the centre of a room in a residential area. Forty dbA is as quiet as a whisper, Strumpf continued.

SHERUTAV and the nightclubs were informed by a Tel Aviv municipal judge that if they did not solve their noise pollution problem, they would be forced to close. "I looked for something," said Lavi, "to let the shops stay open, rather than have an

empty [project] or a white elephant." That's when Lavi turned to Acoustics Israel.

Since the television speakers were the cause of the noise problem, the first thing Strumpf did was remove them. The speakers inside the TVs have been replaced with small, highly directional speakers mounted behind the nightclubs' outside tables. Each speaker supplies sound to three or four tables. Sitting at the tables, the sound from the speakers is far superior to the sound which came from the televisions. Standing behind the speakers - and at the nearby hotels and residences - nothing can be heard.

At the larger clubs, it is now possible to show different videos on different televisions without sounds from two programmes interfering with one another. It is also possible to supply different music to different clientele: quieter, slower-paced music to the clubs' older patrons, for example.

The speakers are controlled by a constant volume amplifier, designed specifically for installation by Dr.

Strumpf and built by an Israeli electronics firm. The amplifier "listens" to the level of the speakers through strategically placed microphones and adjusts the volume accordingly, turning it down during loud sections and up during the quiet parts. It works "like an automatic recording control in a tape recorder," said Strumpf.

Initially, the system is being installed in five of the 12 nightclubs in the area. If it proves successful, Lavi hopes to have the rest of the nightclub operators install similar equipment.

Early reactions to the system by the nightclub managers has been enthusiastic. In one large club "when you sat in the front near the TV you couldn't hear - too loud. In the back, they didn't hear either. Now, every place they hear the same sound," said Baruch Holland from the Sunset.

In addition to controlling the level of the sound, the new system also monitors the volume of music and records this information, along with the time and day, in the main office of Sherutav. In the past, when complaints were made, it was not possible to determine which nightclub was responsible for the noise: each nightclub said that another was the source. Now, if one nightclub turns its music up too loud, that information will be recorded for the management - and the courts - to see.

The only problem with the system is the cost: the base unit, consisting of a speaker and the constant volume amplifier, costs between \$4,000 and \$5,000, said Strumpf. Most of the nightclubs end up spending \$10,000 to \$15,000, said Lavi. "It's an expense that you have to take into account," said Strumpf. "You just can't pollute."

"This is the only way [the operators] could keep the cafes open," said Lavi. "I think this can be very good for all kinds of shops and also for weddings and bar mitzvas."

BRIEFLY

Israel develops oyster mushroom

A NEWLY cultivated variety of mushroom, the oyster mushroom, is now being sold in Israeli supermarket chains.

Dr. Dan Levanon, of the Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture and Migal, an R & D company belonging to Jewish settlements in the Upper Galilee, has perfected methods for its cultivation in Israel, in collaboration with two faculty professors and other graduates. The mushrooms are now grown indoors on a bed of compost, wheat and cotton straw in the Upper Galilee kibbutzim of Kfar Blum, Sasa and Manara, who market them under the commercial label of Jordan Forest Mushrooms (*piriot ya'ar yarden*).

The oyster mushroom (genus *Pleurotus*) is sturdier and easier to grow than the familiar cultivated champignon. It can similarly be prepared in a variety of ways, but it is also delicious, say the growers. Breaded and fried like schnitzel.

The researchers at the Faculty of Agriculture and Migal hope to expand cultivation for both local consumption and export.

Australia's odd export

AUSTRALIAN scientist Peter Room flew to Sri Lanka recently with 4,000 tiny black weevils in his hand luggage. They have become a unique Australian export and are currently going about their business in Asia and Africa, as well as Australia.

The two-millimetre long weevil, an aquatic beetle the size of a match head has an insatiable appetite for salvinia, a fast-spreading water weed which can have devastating effects on fishing, food gathering and water transport. Prevalent throughout the tropics and subtropics, salvinia can double in volume every eight days.

Four years ago a similar mission under the auspices of the UN took Room to Papua New Guinea. A thousand weevils released there in the salvinia-choked Sepik river system grew to a population of one billion and reduced the amount of salvinia from 250 square km. to about 200 sq.m., according to Room.

Since then India and a number of Southeast Asian countries have

Controversial baldness drug

William Kronholm Washington

MILLIONS OF balding men - and thousands of stock-market speculators - are anxiously awaiting word from the government on whether a safe and effective treatment for bald-

ness stated the effectiveness of Minoxidil and understated its risks. Upjohn stock dropped sharply after the FDA's announcement, closing Friday at \$22.50.

