Nitrogen fertilizers are now a common commodity in the world's markets. In these sodium nitrate and by-product sulfate of ammonia held undisputed sway for more than a half a century. How this supremacy was challenged and overcome is by this time an old story. Population pressure and the rising tide of competition from North and South America, from Australia, and from various tropical lands forced Western Europe to revise its agricultural policies. Intensification of production, higher yields per acre, lower unit costs, and the transition to secondary types of farming were the measures whereby older agricultural regions sought to offset the gains made by mechanized farming of fertile plains and swelling exports of sugars and fats from regions where the sun works longer and where human labor is cheap.

The early years of the present century showed the way to the technical fixation of atmospheric nitrogen on a large scale. Cyanamide and calcium nitrate made their entry into the fertilizer markets. Then came the stimulus of a world-wide conflict and of an insistent demand for explosives. Synthetic ammonia showed itself

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