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Farm Broadcasters Letter



COMMUNICATIONS

Letter No. 2244

January 9, 1986

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL IN EC

Spain and Portugal became members of the European Community as of Jan. 1. They now have to adopt the customs duties and agricultural policies of the Community. Most of these changes will be phased in over a 7 to 10-year transition period. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the most immediate impact for the U.S. agricultural exports will result from the application of the EC's variable levy system on grain imports by Spain and Portugal, beginning March 1, 1986.

U.S. EXPORTS TO BULGARIA

The total Bulgarian purchases of U.S. agricultural products this year may reach \$50 million, double the 1985 level and the highest since 1982, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The higher level of imports reflects Bulgarian production reduced by drought, particularly last year. For the first time since 1979, Bulgaria has borrowed from Western banks to finance purchases of grain. Bulgaria purchased 141,000 metric tons of U.S. corn in the first three months of fiscal 1986 and another 160,000 tons were sold for future delivery.

EC's GRAIN AND FEED

The European Community's (EC) wheat and flour export licenses through mid-Dec. totaled 8.8 million tons, 2.3 million tons ahead of the previous year's record volume, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The EC's aggressive posture may not only reflect attempts to compete with U.S. export programs, but may also indicate efforts to reduce burdensome stocks.

AUSTRALIAN RAINS

Late rains may have damaged the 1985 Australian wheat harvest, causing as much as 2.5 million tons to be downgraded to feed-quality, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Abundant feed wheat supplies are not expected to change Australia's total wheat export forecast. However, this would add to the already large supplies of feed wheat overhanging the world market.

HIGH ON THE HOG

On Dec. 3, a shipment of 1,950 breeding hogs was sent from the United States to China. This sale had a value of more than \$2 million and, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, constitutes the single largest export shipment of U.S. hogs in history. This is only proper since roast pig originated in China--or so the legend goes.

5.75 MILLION
DOWN ON THE
FARM

Approximately 5 million, 750 thousand people lived on U.S. farms in 1984, about 33,000 less than in 1983, reports the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The decline is not significant and may be due to statistical sampling errors. About 1 of every 41 persons, or 2.4 pct. of the Nation's population, lived on a farm in 1984. The Midwest has the largest share with 44 pct. The South ranked second with 36 pct., followed by the West with 15 pct. and the Northeast with 6 pct. The median age of farm residents was 35½ years. For nonfarm residents, it's 31 years.

FARM FAMILY
INCOME

Farm families generally have lower incomes than those elsewhere. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, their median income of \$18,925 in 1983 was three-fourths of the nonfarm median of \$24,751. Nearly 21 pct. of all farm families had incomes below the poverty level, compared with 12 pct. for nonfarm families. These estimates are based on money income alone and do not include the value of noncash benefits. Sixty-two pct. of farm men worked in agriculture while 71 pct. of farm women had nonagricultural jobs. (For more details, call Judith Kalbacher, 202-786-1534.)

EMERGENCY
FEED

Sec'y of Agriculture John Block announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service will be moving approved Commodity Credit Corporation-owned grain into areas eligible for ASCS's Emergency Feed Assistance program. According to Block, "A combination of an unusually dry summer plus grasshopper infestation drastically reduced summer grass and sharply cut production of winter forage. Then, one of the earliest and most severe winters on record has caused further hardship." Areas designated to date as eligible include portions of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. Grain will be made available as soon as possible to eligible producers.

IMPROVED DIETS

American women and their young children consume less fat and more carbohydrate today than when surveyed in 1977, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These changes conform to recommendations in the 1980 first edition of Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as well as the 1985 second edition, both published by the USDA. In 1985, women reported diets that provided 37 pct. of total calories from fat--down from 41 pct. in 1977.... And 46 pct. of total calories from carbohydrate, up from 41 pct. in 1977. Total calories consumed rose six pct. since 1977.

PRICES RECEIVED
INDEX UP

The December Index of Prices Received by Farmers for All Farm Products increased one point (0.8 pct.) from November to 128 pct. of its Jan.-Dec. 1977 average, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Higher prices for lettuce, hogs, corn, tomatoes and soybeans were partially offset by lower prices for oranges, broilers, cotton, lemons and wheat. The index was 7 points (5.2 pct.) below a year ago.

CCC INTEREST
RATE - 7-3/4%

The commodity loans disbursed in Jan. by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 7-3/4 pct. interest rate. The new rate is down from 7-7/8 pct.

FROM OUR
TELEVISION
SERVICE

SECRETARY JOHN BLOCK RESIGNS... Secretary of Agriculture John Block recently submitted his resignation of the cabinet office to President Reagan and in this interview he reviews his five-year tenure as Secretary of Agriculture with his major objective being to secure passage of the new farm bill. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (551)

FOOD SECURITY ACT OF 1985 - I... USDA analyst Tom Fulton examines those portions of the 1985 Farm Bill that pertain to exports, including the Export Bonus program, PL-480 and the cargo preference issue. Vic Powell interviews. (552)

FOOD SECURITY ACT OF 1985 - II... USDA analyst Tom Fulton continues his discussion of the 1985 Farm Bill, focusing on the Conservation Reserve portion of the bill and how it affects the farmer. Vic Powell interviews. (553)

FARM CENSUS REPORT UPDATE... The U.S. Census Bureau will conduct nationwide test in the following months to strive for the clearest and least burdensome form to use in the 1987 Census of Agriculture. Bud Pautler, Bureau of the Census, talks about this test and how it will be used. Jim Johnson interviews. (554)

GENETIC ENGINEERING RESEARCH... Jack Widholm, University of Illinois, describes research taking place at the University of Illinois to unlock the secrets of the genetic make-up of crop plants. Gary Beaumont interviews. (555)



FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1492... (Weekly 13½ min documentary) On January 7, 1986, Secretary of Agriculture John Block announced his resignation. On this edition of Agriculture USA, Brenda Curtis takes a look at the history of events during his time in office.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1782... (Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; Prevention of erodible land cultivation, Emergency feed assistance program; Secretary Block resigns from USDA cabinet post; Soviet grain complaints.

CONSUMER TIME #975... (Weekly reel of news features) Starting an avalanche; No-no to spray waxes; The price of beef; Healthy teenage girls; Swearing off junk foods.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE... Wed, Jan. 15, Milk production; Tues, Jan. 21, Catfish, Weekly crop and weather report; Fri, Jan. 24, Cattle on feed, Livestock slaughter. Dial the USDA National News Line 202-488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.

OFF MIKE

Two powerful media events in just over two weeks makes for interesting times. President Reagan's visit to USDA to participate in one of our Satellite Television Press Conferences with Secretary Block was a first and created considerable media attention before, during and after. Then this week Sec'y Block announced his resignation at a regular press conference. We tried to get as many farm broadcasters involved as possible, and we apologize for not getting everyone on ... Thruston Doan (Agri Radio Net, Little Rock, AR) reports that Kathleen Lonergan will be joining his staff toward the end of the month ... Glen James joined the Progressive Farmer Network staff in Starkville, MS, replacing Jeff Wilson who left to work in an agribusiness industry ... Greg Chance (Arkansas State Univ, Jonesboro, AR) won the broadcast division of Arkansas Farm Bureau's "Tell the Farming Story" competition. Our congratulations!! ... Not so long ago we relayed a story about Krit Stubblefield (Kentucky Agri-Net, Louisville, KY) taking on the role of tour guide when a group of out-of-staters were busing about the state and learning about crops Krit knew about but they didn't. As it turns out, a Texan read about Krit's tour episode and called him for advice on a tour he (the Texan) is setting up. We always figured Krit would find his niche in life ... Speaking of awards, Ed Slusarczyk (WTLB/Ag Radio Net, Utica NY) recently presented awards to nine winners in the 1985-86 Northeast Chapter of NAMA media awards. Ed serves as the chapter vice-president and awards committee chairman ... Also speaking of awards, Fortunato "Lucky" Teho (Radio/TV specialist emeritus, Univ of Hawaii) received the annual community service award from the Hawaii Island Media Advisory Council recently. Again our congratulations!! ... Jerry Urdahl is now with Minnesota Farm Radio ... Mike Hergert, formerly with KCMT, Alexandria, MN, is now with the Minnesota Corn Growers Assoc.



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