

1974 AG Outlook Good For USSR

Soviet crop production in 1974 will most likely fall a



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little short of the extraordinary 1973 performance, unless weather is again unusually favorable, according to a report released today by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Livestock production, however, will probably expand further because of good feed supplies from 1973 crops.

Last year, agricultural output in the Soviet Union rose sharply, increasing 14 percent over the reduced 1972 level. Although growth in livestock production last year was moderate because feed supplies from 1972 were limited, crop output was up nearly a fourth.

The Soviets plan for their 1974 grain crop to be about 8 percent below the record 1973 harvest. Their production target is about 205 million metric tons. While this would be short of last year's outstanding performance, it would exceed any other year and would equal estimated grain requirements. Another record cotton crop is in prospect, and sugarbeet output should about equal the 1973 level. Sunflowerseed production is forecast to be slightly below the record 1973 output.

Last year's record grain and oilseed crops, as well as rebuilt livestock herds, provide good prospects for increased meat, dairy, and egg production.

The Soviets' need for imported livestock feeds is

currently much lower than a year ago, and their purchases of U. S. grains and oilseeds are expected to drop sharply in 1974, given normal weather for the rest of the year. Soviet agricultural trade will probably return to a more normal pattern, with the volume of net imports decreasing considerably.

Capital investment in agriculture will continue to increase in 1974, according to the report, with emphasis on improving the land, largely through irrigation, and supplying farmers with more fertilizer. In addition, the agricultural sector will be provided with more machinery, and construction of large-scale livestock and poultry feeding complexes will continue.

A copy of "The Agricultural Situation in the Soviet Union, Review of 1973 and Outlook for 1974," ERS-Foreign 358, is available free on postcard (please include zip code) or telephone (447-7255) request from the Division of Information, Economic Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

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Farming in the U.S. employs 4.4 million workers almost as many as the combined work force in the manufacture of automobiles and other transportation equipment, plus the entire steel industry.

USDA Seeks Fertilizer Aid For Farmers

Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz today requested the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to direct railroads to make available, on a preferred basis, additional rail cars to assure the essential and timely delivery of fertilizer to the Nation's farmers.


Secretary Butz requested, in a letter to ICC Chairman George M. Stafford, that the ICC use its emergency authority to direct railroads to make 3,000 more covered hopper cars and 1,000 more boxcars available from now until May 1 for the transportation of fertilizer and fertilizer components from manufacturers to dealers in time to meet current planting needs. Need for the priority on additional rail transportation, Secretary Butz, pointed out, is temporary and should have minimum impact upon other shippers.

"Much of our effort to increase the supply of grains for both domestic and foreign consumption," the Secretary stated, "will be futile if farmers are unable to receive the quantity of fertilizer needed during the planting season."


Secretary Butz cited supply reports from farmers and dealers for the week ending March 8 indicating: Nitrogen is short of expanded demand in 41 states, tight in 5; mixed fertilizer is short in 26 states, tight in 17; phosphate is short in 30 states, tight in 13; and potash is short in 27 states and tight in 11.

Inventories of fertilizers in marketing channels are below normal, although production of these fertilizers is greater than that of a year ago—nitrogen by 8 percent, phosphates by about the same amount, and potash by 22 percent. Demand is greater with more acreage in production, but indications are that enough fertilizer is available to meet much of the increased demand. The major problem, currently, is that of getting the fertilizer to farmers.

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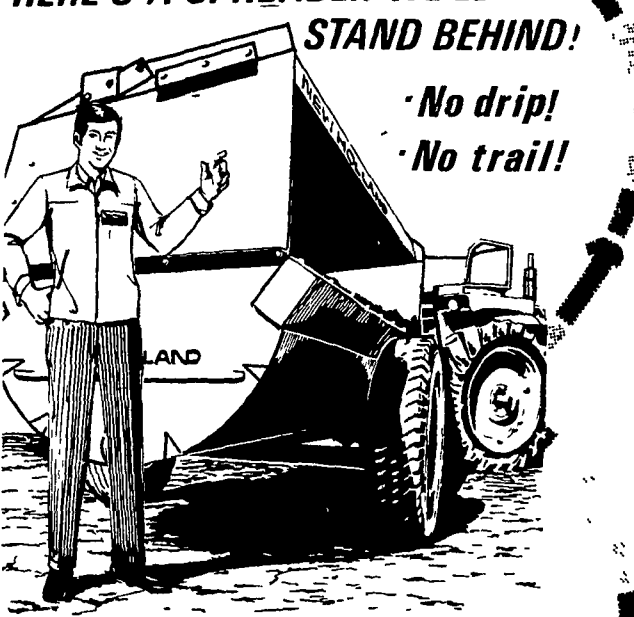
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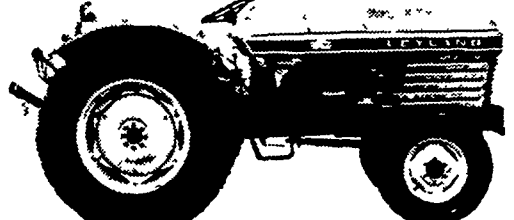
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