

# 1973 - Good Year For Communist Agriculture

Agricultural output in the People's Republic of China rose to a record level in 1973, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report on Communist Asian countries. Prepared by USDA's Economic Research Service, the report says that farm output also increased in Mongolia and North Korea, but dropped in North Vietnam.

In China, weather was generally good, and the

government, reacting strongly to a poor 1972 agricultural year, focused its efforts on assuring production increases in 1973. As a result, China's grain and fiber crops hit alltime highs. Total oilseed production improved slightly. Livestock production, however, stagnated because poor 1972 weather had reduced feeder supplies.

China's wheat, corn, and cotton imports were at record levels in 1973, another result of the poor 1972 farm year. Its soybean exports dropped sharply but rice exports rose about 71 percent to 1.4 million metric tons.

For the year ending June 30, 1974, China's wheat and corn imports are expected to be even heavier than they were a year earlier. Some of this grain was purchased before the outcome of the good 1973 harvest was known, providing China with a hedge against poor crops. If good weather prevails through the 1974 growing season, China's grain import requirements between July 1974 and June 1975 could be reduced.

In Mongolia, where the

livestock sector accounts for 80 percent of agricultural output and a good share of export earnings, the number of sheep, goats, and horses increased significantly in 1973. Wheat, oat, and barley harvests were also up.

Total crop production in North Korea appears to have been fairly good, with bumper harvests of wheat, barley, and rice.

North Vietnam's major food crop, rice, suffered extensive damage in 1973. There was a prolonged drought at seeding and

transplanting time and then a typhoon later in the season.

A copy of "The Agricultural Situation in the People's Republic of China and Other Asian Communist Countries: Review of 1973 and Outlook for 1974," ERS-F 362, 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.

## Loans Available For Middle-Income Families

Effective June 1, Pennsylvania students from middle-income families will once again be able to receive interest free loans to help pay their college and vocational training costs. That's the date the needs analysis will be lifted from most families who take part in the State Guaranteed Student Loan Program.

Federal legislation has been approved which does away with the controversial needs test. The result will be that students from families with income of \$15,000 or less will be able to borrow up to \$2,000 for each undergraduate year in college or trade school and the interest will be paid by the federal government until nine months after the student leaves school. This is true for nursing schools as well. Graduate students will be able to borrow up to \$2,500 each year, but will be required to show need for any sum in excess of \$2,000.

Students with adjusted family income above \$15,000 must still establish a need for loans they make in order to qualify for interest subsidy from the federal government.

The maximum amount a student will be able to borrow over the period of his undergraduate academic life will be \$7,500. Graduates can borrow up to another \$2,500

for a cumulative maximum of \$10,000.

The new provisions will become effective in time for most students attending school this summer to take advantage of them.

Kenneth R. Reeher, Executive Director of PHEAA, said that the removal of the needs test should "turn the program around" to the point where students once more can turn to a loan as a student aid source. This, he said, coupled with recent PHEAA changes geared to increasing the maximum income eligibility levels in the State Higher Education Assistance Grant Program.

On March 1, 1973, the needs test was put into effect. The result was that the number of student loans dropped off drastically. Students in the middle-income group found they could not qualify for interest subsidy by the federal government and most lenders did not make non-subsidized loans. Students could not qualify because their adjusted family income was too high. Adjusted income is based on a family's adjusted gross income shown on the federal tax form. This gross figure is reduced by 10 percent of the gross and by the number of individual personal exemptions claimed on the tax form (\$750 per person).

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## Mexico Recommends Soy Tortillas

The Mexican government has recommended that principle government agencies responsible for feeding people use soy-fortified tortillas, according to Berwin Tilson, president of the American Soybean Association (ASA).

"The recommendation was made because of the increased nutritional value of soy-fortified tortillas," Tilson explained.

By adding four percent defatted soy flour to a tortilla, its protein content increases by one-third, Tilson said. The additional amino acids of soy make the tortillas also have a higher biological value.

The recommendation, if followed, would effect 272 government-owned agencies in Mexico. Included among the agencies are hospitals, homes for the elderly, orphanages and social security institutes.

To increase interest among tortilla producers to produce soy-fortified tortillas, the Mexican government is loaning the Association of Tortilla Manufacturers money to

enlarge and modernize their facilities.

"The American Soybean Association has been working with one tortilla manufacturer in developing soy-fortified tortillas," Tilson said. "The Mexican government has taken interest in our work and decided soy-fortified tortillas would benefit the entire populace."

Mexico's 55 million population annually consumes approximately six million tons of tortillas, according to Tilson. In Mexico City alone, one million tons of tortillas are consumed annually.

"The switch to soy-fortified tortillas will be gradual," Tilson explained. "Mexico is in the process of developing more plants capable of producing soy flour, but further expansion is planned to meet the full demand."

In August 1973, 200 tons of soybeans were used for soy flour, but now Mexico is using 500 tons a month for producing soy flour. By December, officials estimate Mexico will be using 1,200

tons a month for soy flour production.

"The possibilities of soybeans in the human diet are just starting to be developed," Tilson said. "Many countries are beginning to realize soybeans are an excellent protein source with multiple uses."

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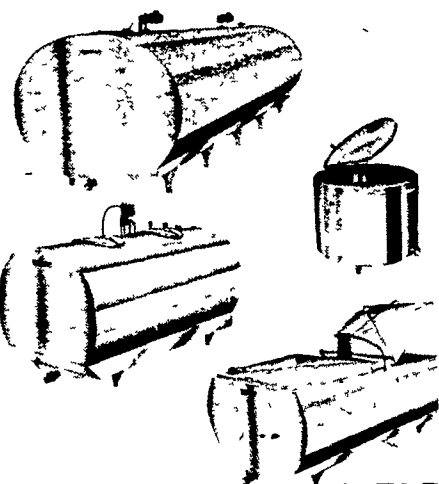
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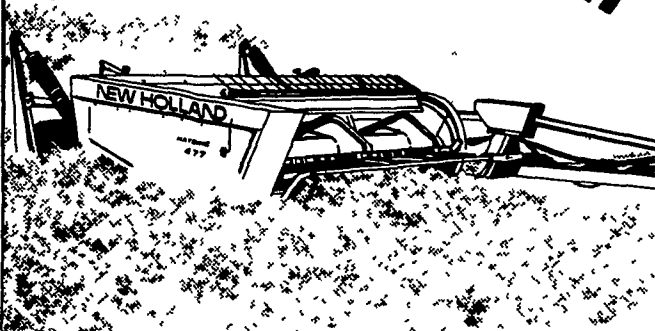
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