

Morocco's 1975 Grain Harvests May Be Poorest in 30 Years

Morocco's harvests of bread wheat, Durum, and barley may be the poorest in 30 years, necessitating imports of 1.5-2 million tons of wheat. The 1975 corn crop, however, may be up if spring rainfall is normal.

Production of oilseeds in 1975 is expected to be about 38,000 tons—only slightly below the 1974 level. Guaranteed prices for soybeans, rapeseed, and safflower seed are up over 1974 levels, and although the Government is providing some priority to oilseed production, outturns of oilseeds appear, to be trending down. However, the new price levels plus favorable weather may give production a boost in 1975.

Outturns this year of the four major cereals probably will be only about one-third of 1972 levels, the latest recent "normal" year. If corn is removed from the list, the figure for the three most important would be only 25 percent. The final outcome will depend on the rain received through May. Also, the possibilities of disease and hot weather at harvesttime are threats that may affect crop projections.

Imports of cereals in 1974-75 are relatively high at almost 1 million tons, and although there could be a new purchase before July, the country's cereal needs now appear to be covered.

Cereal imports during the period July 1, 1975-June 30, 1976, probably will total about 2 million tons of wheat, 35,000 tons of wheat flour (donations), and 230,000 tons of barley.

Though the United States should continue to be the biggest supplier of wheat, the country of origin on official lists will tend to show more "any origin" wheat than is otherwise normal.

Imports toward the end of the marketing year may pick up or slacken in accordance with prospects for the 1976 crop as determined by the rains that should begin in October-November 1975.

Theoretically, Morocco's seaports can handle about 2.9 million tons of grain, but practically the total would be much less. Only Casablanca and Safi have automated handling facilities and silos. Agadir handles heavy citrus shipments, and the other ports can accommodate only small ships. Grain must be bagged for handling at all ports.

Another limiting factor is the relatively small storage capacity of the grain silos at Casablanca (70,000 tons) and at Safi (24,000 tons). Both installations discharge wheat at a slightly slower rate than they take it in.

Still another potential problem is the movement of grain to the interior of the country. The supply of trucks and railway cars for grain shipment is less than adequate, and when the citrus crop is moving to market the situation will be further complicated.

Morocco's flour mills have been busy for the past 2 years milling both flour to supply those whose crops have been below normal as well as the continually growing urban population. Wheat consumption has been about 100,000 tons per month.

Morocco will continue to be a big market for wheat in 1975. Because this commodity is a basic need in the country's diet, the Government will go all out to meet this demand—a move that could, however, result in some disruption of port activity.

Most people will be adequately fed,



Moroccan farmers observe response to fertilizer at wheat demonstration. Because of an anticipated shortfall in the current wheat crop, Morocco is expected to import about 2 million tons of wheat during July 1974 to June 1975.

although perhaps not as well as in other years. Conceivably, the present situation could inspire agricultural programs that would be better able to cope with adverse weather such as has been experienced in recent months. Such programs could include a supply of different varieties to meet whatever weather situation might arise, better storage facilities, more flexible port facilities, better prices for farmers, and perhaps increased development and use of irrigated land for cereal production.

Late rains that discouraged some cereal producers from planting may re-

sult in increased areas in sunflowers and other oilseeds. Such a shift was expected in 1974, but there reportedly was little if any increased oilseeds acreage.

Guaranteed prices are up this year, but this move in itself probably did not result in significant acreage increases. The 1975 oilseed crops for which guaranteed prices are offered are soybeans, rapeseed, and safflower seed.

Probable sunflower acreage is estimated by one source at about 100,000 acres this year, down somewhat from the Government's stated goal of about 186,000 acres. Cotton acreage (the crop

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