

# Soviets boost

[Continued from Page 1]

Pennsylvania is described in greater detail in latter parts of this article.

Making the top of the news this week are the grain sales to Russia which were just rumors at last week's writing. But, as is usually the case, they were confirmed — in this case even before that particular issue of this paper was delivered into readers' mailboxes.

The Soviets purchased a million tons of soybeans from the United States last week, and 300,000 tons this week, adding further strain onto an already low supply, and with lowered soybean acreages this year, the picture is not expected to be very bright for anyone not in the soybean raising business. More than three-quarters of the Soviet's soybean purchases came from the United States, while 200,000 tons were ordered from Brazil, where soybean supplies are also tightening up.

In addition, corn and wheat sales were also announced. Late this week more rumors for additional sales were confirmed and the United States committed itself to delivering an additional 1.5 million tons of soybeans to the Soviets. That order, along with others for corn and wheat won't be filled until after October 1. The sales will apply to the conditions of the new long-range trade agreement worked out last Autumn.

With soybean carryovers from 1975 and this year's plantings being down as they are, the soybean market is expected to remain strong for the rest of this year — and probably well into 1977. The situation is likely to carry other grain prices to new heights as well, and could spell trouble for those who must buy grain in order to produce finished products such as milk, meat and eggs.

In all, the Soviet Union has contracted to buy 3.8 million tons of grains from the United States. The sales do not include the 1.3 million tons of soybeans purchased during the past week and apply to the long-range grain agreement which takes effect on Oct. 1. Categorized, the 3.8 million ton sale includes 1.75 million tons of soybeans, 2.25 million tons of corn, and 1.55 million tons of wheat. All have to be shipped after Oct. 1.

A spokesman for Penufield Feeds noted that he expects soybean and corn prices to remain strong since supplies of both are turning out to be tight. He added, however, that there is an abundant supply of wheat. Also, the quality of the crop is being described as good or better. But yields in Pennsylvania are nothing to brag about. Just a bit over a third of the crop has been harvested so far, with combines rushing out to the fields between showers. Considering the frequent rains, the wheat is coming in satisfactorily, although some fears are being expressed over the possibility of repeating last year's nightmarish harvest when some wheat was actually sprouting on the stalk.

Wheat quality, for the most part, was being described as being good or better in all parts of Lancaster County. A Quarryville grain dealer described the crop's quality as "beautiful," while another dealer in the Bird-in-Hand area called it "nice."

Yields, however, are down. With the crop only about a third in, yields in southern Lancaster County are averaging about 37 bushels per acre. Some report harvests as high as 50 bushels per acre, while others combined only half that much or less. "Some of the nicest wheat we've ever seen came in here up until about the 6th," a spokesman at Quarryville's Red Rose Feed Store said. The frequent rains during the past week are definitely expected to hurt test weights, although no one is panicking yet. Test weights, are, in fact, still very satisfactory and have been exceptionally high for most of the harvesting season so far.

The per cent moisture reading has also been satisfactory for the most part. At least up until the rains arrived last weekend. The ratings had been well below 13.5 per cent for nearly all parts of the area last week, but are coming up now due to the wetness in the fields. A headline to this part of the story might have read: "Wheat harvest slowed, mud plentiful," but the Russian grain deals overshadowed that one.

One grain dealer described the present situation adequately enough by saying: "Fortunately the combines have had a few hours here and there." They're out combining every chance they get — possibly (most likely) because they're remembering how wet and miserable the harvest was last year. A big headline a year ago next week proclaimed: "How wet can you take wheat?" echoing a most frequently asked question of the time. Farmers and grain handlers alike are hoping and praying that the situation won't repeat itself.

Moisture readings this week were predominantly over the 14 per cent mark, grain handlers reported. Some went as high as 16 per cent. There have been scattered reports of some of the earlier varieties of Abe and Arthur 71 beginning to sprout. Overall, however, it should be emphasized that the quality of harvest is still being described with kind and appreciative words. Only the yields are being criticized.

Wheat on the Eastern Shore of Maryland was described as "excellent." If the weather improves a bit in this part of the country, the wheat harvest may still have a chance to be excellent here. Right now a lot of farmers and grain dealers are watching the situation with fingers crossed, while corn is thriving in the hot, humid weather and has reached a height of around six feet in quite a few fields.

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