

Farm exports expected to increase

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NEWARK, Del. — As important as farm exports are to American farmers and to the American economy, they're not a cure-all for agriculture's ills. That seems to be the consensus of a number of leading agricultural economists who say that farm exports won't pull American farmers out of their economic doldrums in the near future.

It's fairly obvious looking at the predicted 1978 crop supplies that the export market won't buy it all. Granted, a lot is being done to improve U.S. farm exports but so far it just isn't enough, and looking toward the future it isn't sure enough for farmers to plan on.

As far as the U.S. is concerned the real problem seems to be foreign trade barriers—those nasty little quotas, tariffs and levies aimed at protecting foreign farmers from low priced U.S. farm commodities. The European Economic Community can add almost \$3 to a bushel of corn worth only \$2 in the United States. This is done through a variable levy system designed to support farm prices in certain European countries.

All countries seem to have trade barriers of one kind or another so American farmers can't scream too loudly — they don't want Canadian beef brought into this country and yet they would like to export as much of our surplus grain as possible.

The economists say that given the fact that U.S. farmers can produce grain more cheaply than farmers in Europe and many other countries, trade barriers are especially detrimental to U.S. agricultural exports. And, in the long run, doing away with trade barriers would help American farmers. But that's not the way it works. Everybody likes competition but only for the other guy, not for himself. U.S. steelmakers don't like Japanese competition. U.S. automakers don't like Japanese or German competition. So we have our quotas and tariffs and they have theirs.

To protect its farmers the Japanese government guarantees purchase of all the rice farmers can produce at four times the world market price. The result is a mountain of surplus rice. Four million tons, in fact, that the Japanese government must somehow deal with. The effect of that has also been to reduce Japanese purchases of U.S. wheat.

Tariffs aren't the only problem to expanded U.S. exports. There are some other countries out there trying to export also, and some of them are willing to sell food at lower prices. Argentina, for example, has increased agricultural exports by about two-thirds since 1976. And the experts think Brazil may be exporting as much food as the U.S. by the mid-1990's. Malaysia plans to double its annual production of palm oil in order to take ad-

vantage of the world oil markets.

There's no question that current levels of grain exports have helped American farmers tremendously. Certainly they would like to export even more if prices and policies would allow this. Meanwhile they have the capacity to produce so much more grain than can be consumed at home that their prices remain in a depressed condition. And like their own crop production here at home, their export opportunities depend on the weather more than anything else. If there's a short crop somewhere else in the world because of dry weather American farmers may benefit. On the other hand, if the world crop for a particular commodity is good everywhere at the

same time, American farm prices can be seriously affected.

The experts believe 1978 exports to the western European countries will remain below last year's level because of larger crops in those countries. Eastern Europe had another good crop year but they see some opportunity for increased imports. Also, Japan and the near East countries may be stronger buyers this year.

Uncertainty still surrounds the exports market to both the Soviet Union and China. Both countries have been trying to produce their needs at home and to limit their dependence on U.S. commodities. The experts say China will buy U.S. wheat only if other sources are unable to supply its needs and that eastern

Europe and Russia are reluctant to increase the large deficits they've already accumulated in their recent trades with the U.S.

So it's a confusing picture to the U.S. farmer who watches his crops ripen and struggles with his harvest, not knowing what the final price will be. Ironically, if his yields are good, his prices may be poor. It's very difficult to win in that kind of economic game.

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Ninety years ago, a volcanic explosion equivalent to a hundred hydrogen bombs almost entirely destroyed the Indonesian island of Krakatoa. What portions of the island that did not sink into the sea, were covered under a blanket of ash 200 feet thick. But in just two years' time, vegetation had reappeared: 15 species of flowering plants, 11 of ferns and 2 of mosses.

4-H club meets

FLEMINGTON, N.J. — The Beekeeping Club awarded the 4-H hive to Jeffrey Foster, 16, Bloomsbury, N.J., at their November 18 meeting, held at the home of member Bob Goeller, Hampton.

Club leaders, George Foster, and J. D. Dittson, discussed winterizing hives and showed the proper way by using Bob Goeller's hives.

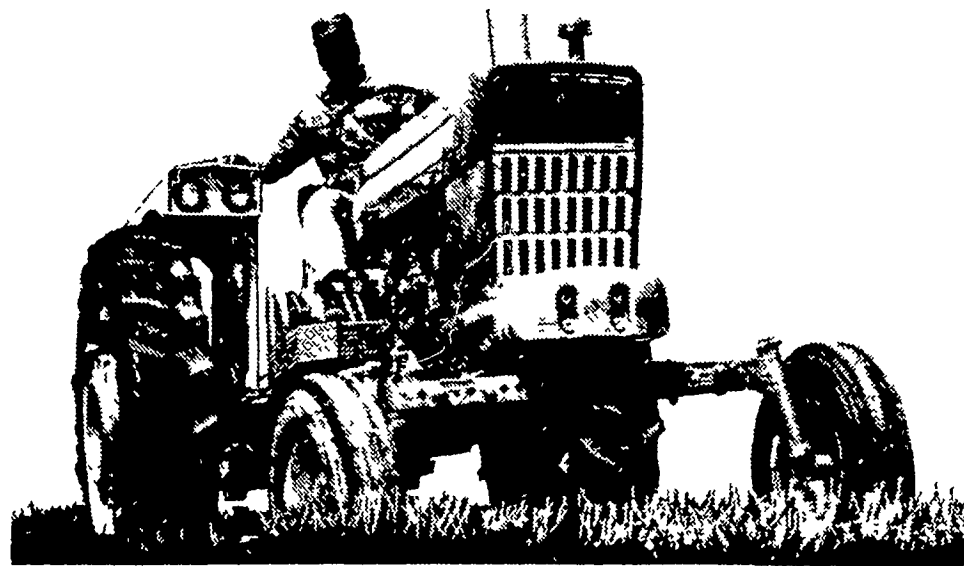
The next meeting will be held on December 16, at 2 p.m. at the home of George Foster, Bloomsbury. They will use bees' wax to make wax candles and other novelties.

Anyone age 9 to 19 who is interested in learning more about beekeeping is invited to attend this meeting. One can call Foster at 609-479-4455 for more information. This program is sponsored by the 4-H Youth Development Program of the Cooperative Extension Service, Rutgers University.

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