

U.S. fertilizer output could hit 55 million tons

LITITZ — The U.S. fertilizer industry could reach nearly 55 million tons in domestic product movement in the current 1980-81 year, predicted Ed Wheeler, president of The Fertilizer Institute during a national meeting at mid-week.

Wheeler estimated that,

based on Institute data, producers moved 53 million tons of fertilizers to the U.S. marketplace in 1979-80, a four percent increase over the previous year, for a record. Previous record was 1977-78 at 51.6 million tons, domestically.

Speaking at the TVA

National Fertilizer Development Conference, held in concert with the Institute's Annual Trade Fair, Wheeler based his prediction for another record fertilizer year on five observations.

"1. Currently, all U.S. grain prices are at or above

year-ago pre-harvest prices. Wheat prices, for instance, have not buckled, even in the face of a record winter wheat crop.

"2. Corn yields will be well below last year - perhaps by 3/4 billion bushels. Soybean harvest will be below earlier pre-

dictions. All this adds to further strong grain and oilseed prices for farmers.

"3. Cotton prices are high - very high. Smaller farmers have sold most of last year's crop but big farmers have not.

"4. Exports of U.S. grains have continued at high levels despite the 'embargo' of U.S. grain to Russia. Look at the facts: 1979 - 137 billion metric tons of grain in export at \$32 billion value; 1980 - export of 150 million tons is in sight at \$38 billion.

"5. U.S. government help for farmers through increased loan rates and target prices already is being enlarged by a billion dollars. Additional help will come in 1981, if farmers need it - regardless of who is president."

Wheeler indicated that fertilizer retailer inventories appear to be at a low level with some of the larger retailers now beginning to buy for fall sales.

"Producer inventories are well within normal limits." However, he warned his fertilizer retail listeners to keep a close watch on continuing heavy export demand for U.S. fertilizer products. "We will have a stronger demand than you may think," he cautioned.

In all, the industry leader projected a decidedly positive outlook for '80-'81. "Farmers will really farm in the year ahead - and they will be farming on a rising farm market"...a mere ideal market situation for fertilizer sales, he said.



A loaded truck much larger than this one would not be able to cross the bridge on Rt. 372 east of Quarryville. To avoid the 11 ton weight limit, most big rigs detour along Rt. 472 which turns off just

before the bridge. This span over Conrail tracks, and others like it, will be the subject of a meeting at Refton Fire Hall Monday.

Bridge meeting

(Continued from Page A1)

Across the Octoraro Creek between Lancaster and Chester Counties is a bridge where the posted weight limit is different depending on which end of the bridge is approached. Either end, farmers maintain, is posted too low for typical rural truck traffic.

Farmers at the meeting Monday can expect to hear a pitch for State Governor Richard Thornburgh's proposed SWAP tax which has been promoted as the only practical answer to the declining condition of highways and bridges.

The SWAP tax would be a six percent levy at the pump on gasoline. The Administration says the measure would raise \$50 million for every penny tax. Debt service on existing red ink would eat up the first five cents of that tax.

In some cases PennDOT has granted temporary permits to allow truckers to cross posted bridges.

This possibility also may be discussed at the meeting on December 22.

The meeting is opened to the public and all individuals or group representatives are welcome to attend.—CH

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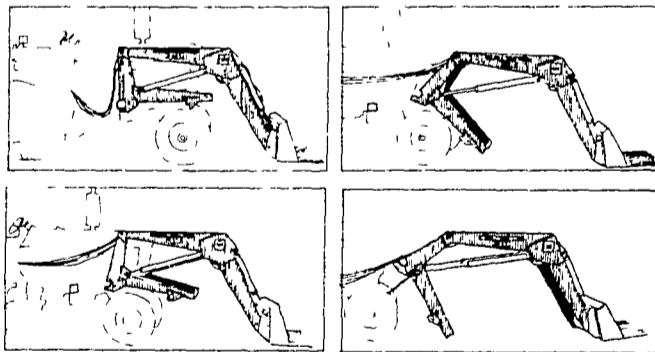
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