

USSR resumes U.S. grain purchases

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today he is "extremely pleased that the Soviet Union has returned to the U.S. market for corn — the first Soviet purchase of U.S. grain since President Reagan lifted the embargo April 24."

Private exporters reported sales of 450,000 tons of U.S. corn for delivery after September 30.

"These purchases are consistent with the U.S.-USSR consultation held in London June 8-9, when it was agreed that the Soviets could make additional purchases under the existing long-term agreement both before and after the agreement expires September 30."

"The United States has worked

hard to develop the Soviet market, as well as to expand farm product sales in other parts of the world," Block said. "American farmers have invested their own labor and capital in producing for export. It is right and fair that they have the opportunity to compete for those markets, including the Soviet Union, and to benefit in terms of income. The resumption of grain sales to the USSR is most gratifying. This gives me reason to be very optimistic that the door has been opened on additional grain sales."

The present five-year agreement, which became effective October 1, 1976, provided for purchases by the USSR of a

minimum of 6 million tons of U.S. corn and wheat each year, with purchases above 8 million tons requiring prior consultation between the two governments. The Soviets bought 6.1 million tons the first year of the agreement, 14.6 million tons in the second year, and 15.5 million tons in the third year.

In October 1979, after a short crop in the USSR, the Soviets were told they could import 25 million tons of U.S. grain the subsequent 12 months. However, on January 4, 1980, President Jimmy Carter announced an embargo on the export of agricultural products and certain other items to the USSR, except that the United States promised to honor the existing 6-8

million tons commitment on corn and wheat. As a result, shipments in the fourth year of the agreement amounted to only 7.9 million tons.

By April of this year, the Soviets had completed purchases and shipments of the 8 million tons permitted in the fifth and final year of the agreement. Without further consultations between the governments, no additional purchases would have been permitted under the agreement.

However, at the June 8-9 consultation in London this year, the United States agreed the Soviets could purchase without further consultation up to 3 million tons of U.S. corn and 3 million tons of U.S.

wheat for delivery before October 1.

It was also agreed that the USSR could proceed to purchase "reasonable quantities" for delivery on or after October 1. The understanding is that if these purchases approach 3 million tons of wheat and/or 3 million tons of corn, the United States will communicate further with Soviet authorities.



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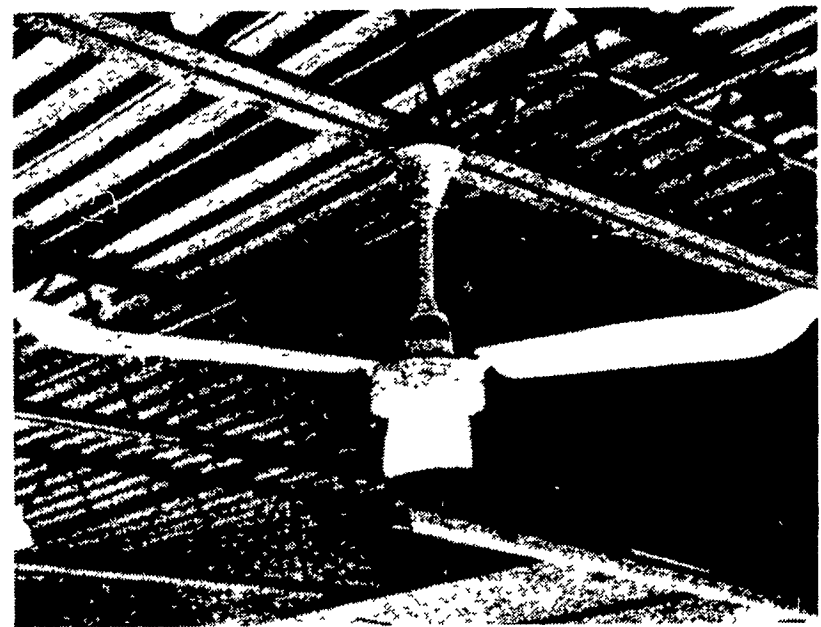
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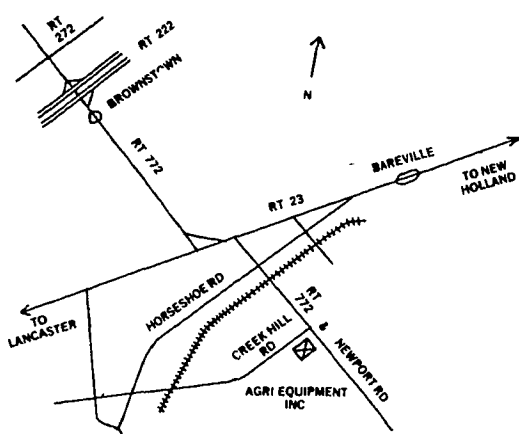
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