

# U.S.-U.S.S.R. grain agreement essential, says NCGA president

WASHINGTON, D.C. — between the Soviet Union and the United States, the likelihood of any

degree of either normality or certainty of increased U.S. grain exports to an expanding USSR market is substantially diminished," Bill Mullins commented following his return from the Soviet Union.

In his capacity as the president of the National Corn Growers Association, the Shabbona, Illinois corn farmer spent a week in Moscow meeting with a wide array of Soviet officials responsible for overall agricultural production, procurement and distribution. This recent trip was a continuation of the effort to maintain a channel of informal and frank dialogue that was initiated with his trip to Moscow in September, 1980.

Mullins stated that "...this most recent trip to Moscow proved as successful as the previous one, and the ongoing contacts with Soviet officials in Washington about US-USSR grain trading issues." Among various issues and mutual areas of interest that were discussed, Mullins indicated that the following ones were predominant:

—An unofficial but frank assessment of the facts affecting the attitude and position of the Reagan Administration to enter

into negotiations for another grain agreement.

—The relative importance of having access to "reliable foreign markets" within the context of the Soviet's commitments for projected agricultural production, storage, transportation and processing under the 11th five-year plan for the 1981-1986 period

—Implications of the evolving U.S. Farm Bill for U.S. grain production, farmer-held reserve and U.S. international grain trade policy

—An assessment of the outlook for grain production potentials in Southern Hemisphere countries and available grain export supplies

Accompanied by Michael Hall, the NCGA Washington Representative, Mullins stressed that "...U.S. officials had clearly committed the United States to making available a total of 23 million metric tons of corn and wheat to the Soviet Union in the 1981/21 season. In addition, the Soviet Union was as free as any other foreign customer to purchase other agricultural products in accordance with their import requirements." Mullins and Hall cautioned, however, that U.S. grain prices could well be at the season's low level, citing the completion of the harvest and that prices are far below the cost of production.

"At the current price levels —

below both loan and farmer reserve level," Mullins recalled too that "...it would be an opportune time for the Soviets to purchase for later delivery up to the 23 million ton corn and wheat authorized level." If U.S. grain prices remain at current levels, farmers would maximize placing grain in both the regular loan program and the farmer reserve, all of which will generate additional farmer demands for reduction in 1982 grain production.

During various meetings in Moscow, Soviet trade officials made reference to "...contradictory statements by U.S. Government officials about whether or not the United States is 'prepared' to negotiate another long-term grain agreement." According to the NCGA President, "it appears that Soviet officials raised these observations simply to underscore Soviet intentions to rely on countries with grain agreements for the predominant volume of annual grain and protein import requirements."

Underlining the conversations about all of these issues with Soviet officials was the preference for another U.S.-Soviet grain agreement. In addition, it reflects the Soviet preference for U.S. corn and protein because of reliability of arrival quality and efficiency of conversion in poultry and livestock feeding, Mullins commented about

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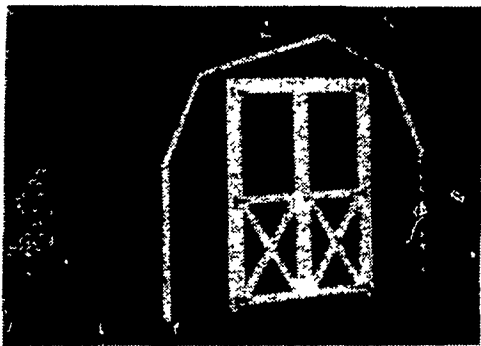
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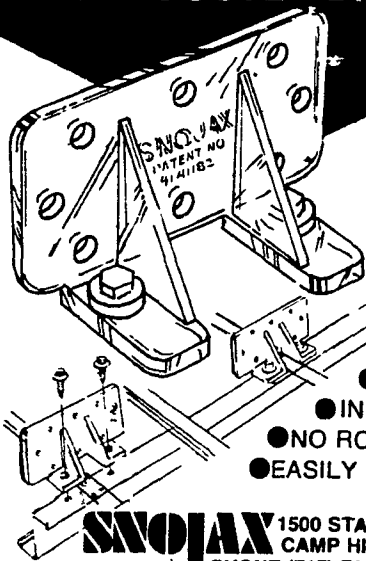
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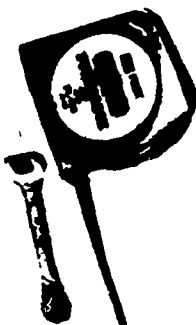
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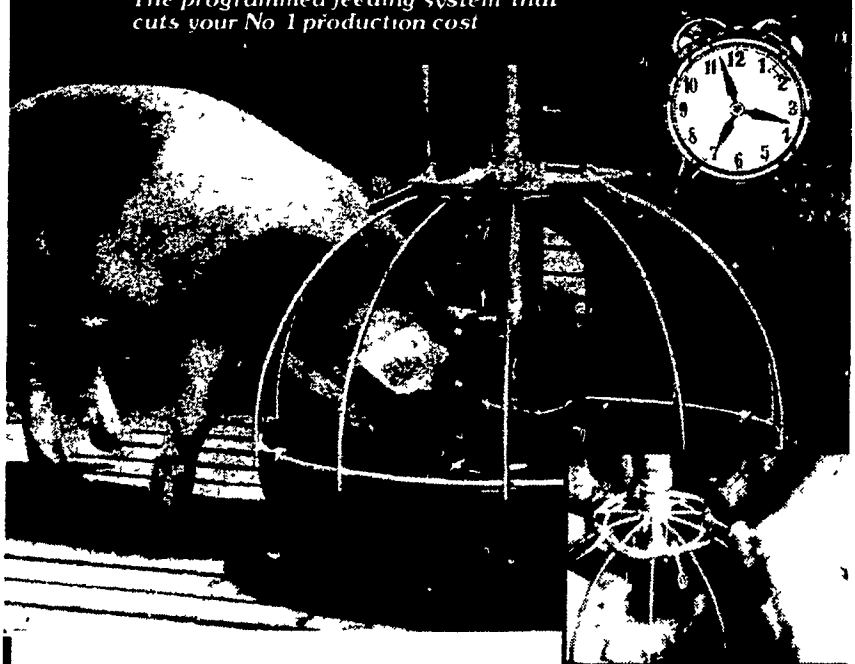
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