

African aid keeps USDA's food inspection team busy

WASHINGTON — The outpouring of U.S. food aid to drought-stricken African countries has kept the U.S. Department of Agriculture busy testing an unusually large volume of commodities to be shipped overseas as famine relief.

USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service tested 4.55 billion pounds of commodity grants for famine relief aid under the P.L. 480 program in the first six months of fiscal 1985 that ended in March — nearly the total tested and delivered in the entire previous year.

"The Department of Agriculture is proud to have a part in our country's response to the African food crisis," said Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block. "Thanks to the productive talent of our farmers and the dedication and hard work of our USDA employees, we are able to translate the generosity of the American spirit into the reality of sacks of grain."

Shipments of raw grains and

processed commodities to more than 75 countries in the first six months of this fiscal year increased 65 percent over the same period last year — from 2.60 billion pounds in the first half of fiscal 1984 to 4.29 billion pounds in the first half of 1985, according to estimates from USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

"The Federal Grain Inspection Service is making sure that shipments of wheat, sorghum, corn, and processed commodities to African countries hard-hit by severe drought and food shortages meet government specifications for quality, safety, wholesomeness, identity, and nutritional enrichment," said John Marshall, field management director for the Agency.

"The agency contracts with part-time samplers to collect processed commodity samples. These samplers have stepped up their work schedules from the usual two days per week to three

days per week. When the Beltsville lab that does the testing is hard pressed, it diverts its overflow workload to a commercial lab in Omaha, Neb.," Marshall said.

The Agency is required by law to inspect and weigh most export raw grains, and provides inspection of processed commodities on request. Government food aid contracts usually require inspection of processed commodities, Marshall said.

The agency also inspects processed commodities for P.L. 480 concessional sales, defense contracts, school lunch and infant feeding programs, and commercial businesses.

U.S. food aid this year is going to 20 African countries that the Food and Agriculture Organization has identified as most seriously affected by the drought. U.S. aid shipments to five of the hardest hit of these countries will include 234,351 metric tons of bulgur (a form of crushed wheat) and 34,885 metric tons of soy-fortified sorghum grits to Ethiopia; 3,618

metric tons of corn soya meal to Kenya; 34,905 metric tons of rice and 678 metric tons of peas to Mozambique; 2,240 metric tons of nonfat dry milk to Niger; and 94,430 metric tons of wheat flour and 3,813 metric tons of vegetable oil to Sudan. U.S. aid to these countries will also include shipments of raw grains.

The Agency inspects other processed commodities going to drought-stricken African countries, including corn-soya-milk products, soy-fortified flours, soy flour, cornmeal, soya products and oils, nonfat dried milk, beans, peas, and lentils. Agency field offices at Omaha; Wichita; Portland; Kansas City; Plainview, Texas; Philadelphia; and Peoria, Illinois, handle the largest number of requests for inspection of processed commodities.

"All testing is done in accordance with the official methods of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists, American Association of Cereal Chemists, and American Oil Chemists Society," says Hank Ikeda, Beltsville FGIS Processed Commodity Testing Laboratory section head.

"Each inspection includes a series of physical and chemical

tests — including tests for protein, moisture, ash, fat, crude fiber, pH, alpha amylase, and other factors. Some contracts require that flour show good baking performance and meet other specifications," said Ikeda.

Products may be analyzed for total microbial count of organisms such as salmonella and staphylococcus and for insect fragments that would make them unsanitary. The lab can determine content of some vitamins and minerals such as calcium and iron. During 1984 the Agency tested raw grain and processed commodity samples for the pesticide residues ethylene dibromide, carbon tetrachloride and methyl bromide.

Testing takes approximately 48 hours. Results are phoned to the originating office for certification. Products that do not meet contract specifications may be discounted or rejected by the buyer.

Because of the large volume of aid shipments, processed commodity inspections made by the Federal Grain Inspection Service over the 6-month fiscal period ending March 31, and increased from 12,009 in fiscal 1984 to 15,283 in fiscal 1985. Total processed commodity inspections in fiscal 1984 were 22,051.

Christmas tree shearing meeting

HONESDALE — A Christmas tree shearing meeting will be conducted at 2 p.m. Wednesday, June 12, at the Hinkley Xmas Tree Farm in Dyberry.

Topics at the demonstration will include: pruning of spruce, pine, and fir; weed control; and fertilization.

Speakers will include Paul Shealer, Carbon County Agricultural Extension Agent and Tom Callahan, Wayne

Agricultural County Agent.

The Hinkley Farm is located approximately seven miles north of Honesdale. Travel north five miles on Rt. 191 and turn left at Dyberry Sand and Gravel. Drive one mile to first crossroads about one mile from the intersection. Look for signs on the left.

For more information contact Wayne County Extension Office at 253-5970 Ext. 114.

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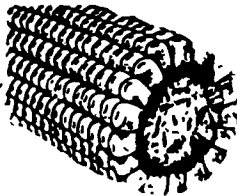
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