

Wheat exports

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ment, elected in 1983, reduced the export tax on wheat from 25 to 18 percent of the export price.

"For wheat, Argentina's greatest production increases will come from fertilizer use and increased yields," says Hazera. Given the balancing act that the government must perform to increase output and generate revenues and the growth of soybean area, Argentine wheat exports are not expected to increase dramatically.

Down Under: Australia

Australia is expected to export about 560 million bushels of wheat in the current 1984/85 marketing year, over 80 percent of its 680 million bushel crop. In 1970, exports were 350 million bushels. Currently, says USDA economist Allen Johnson, Australia sits at fourth place in world wheat exports.

Australia has one major wheat farming problem: Rainfall is minimal and highly variable from year to year, which results in large swings in output. Australia's parched climate limits the wheat producing areas, and irrigation is not a viable alternative. The arid climate also holds down yield,

which at 21 bushels per acre is the lowest of the top 5 exporters.

Researchers are exploring improved wheat varieties better suited to Australian growing conditions. Some analysts see great potential for high-yielding, low-protein varieties for livestock feed, according to Johnson. To supplement this technology, farmers are becoming better managers. "Because of the critical moisture problem, it is vital that fields be planted quickly and harvested immediately after the crop has ripened to reduce loss. Thus, tight management combined with large efficient machinery is necessary," he adds.

Australian farmers benefit from a central selling agency, the Australian Wheat Board. The board has helped Australian wheat exports to more than double in the past two decades. Sales are made directly to government purchasing authorities as well as through private traders. In 1983/84, export volume was limited by handling and transportation problems. Moreover, Johnson says, the board's potential to increase exports and long-term selling arrangements depends on world market prices and competition.

To the North: Canada

Canada, the third largest exporter, harvested about 779 million bushels in 1984/85, and exports are expected to reach about 630 million bushels. Canada has traditionally been the second largest exporter, but its exports are unusually low this season because of poor weather. In 1983, bumper crops pushed exports to a record-breaking 801 million bushels.

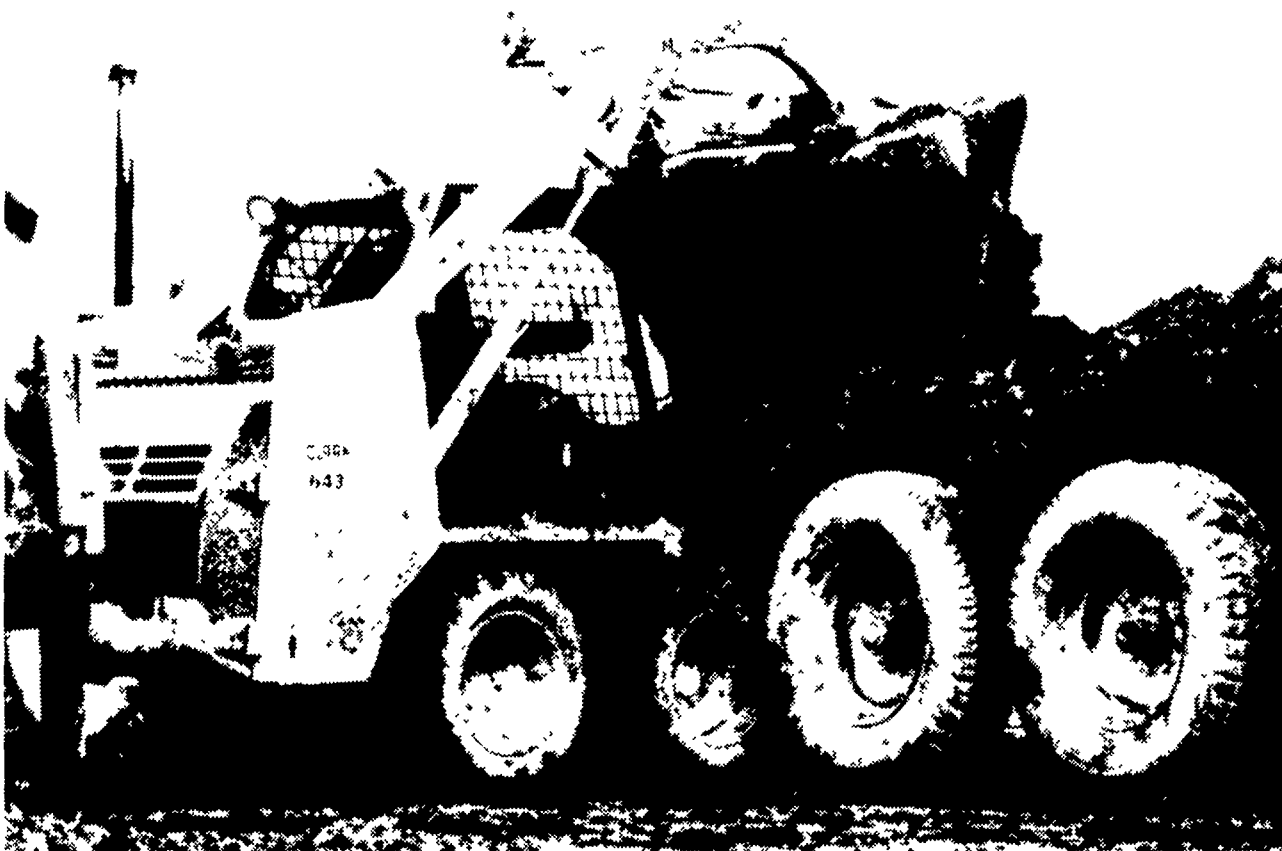
Bad weather is often the bane of Canadian wheat farming, where drought and harsh winters can devastate crops, says economist Carol Goodloe of USDA's Economic Research Service. As a result of the climate, Canada's yield of around 24 bushels per acre is the fourth lowest of the top five producers—although 1984 was an especially bad year for Canada. And, if varieties are developed that better resist cold and drought, Canada could improve its low yield, according to Goodloe.

"Recently, about five percent of Canadian farmers have switched to hardy winter wheat varieties that can survive the cold winter and increase yields well beyond the more commonly grown spring wheat. Some analysts believe 20 percent of Canadian wheat area could be planted with the higher yielding winter wheat varieties by the end of the decade," Goodloe says.

Canadians are also learning how to better manage their low-moisture, heavily farmed land, says Goodloe. For example, to help

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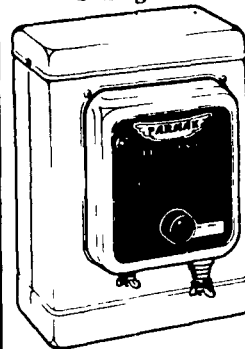
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