

USDA Releases Grain Transportation Prospects

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA recently reported its assessment of the current grain transportation situation in the U.S., as well as predictions for the next several months.

"We provide this information periodically as part of USDA's Long-Term Agricultural Transportation Strategy," said Michael V. Dunn, under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs. "It is intended to help railroads, producers, shippers, and receivers prepare for the changes that occur in agricultural transportation throughout the year."

Based on November 2000 forecasts, production of corn, sorghum, barley, oats, wheat, rye, and soybeans in 2000/2001 is expected to be 16 billion bushels, up 4 percent from 1999/2000. Grain and soybean stocks are forecast down 220 million bushels from last year, a total of 4,861 million bushels. This is the second largest grain and soybean stock level since 1993.

Although grain exporters have experienced higher ocean rate spreads in 2000, the ocean rate spreads between the Gulf and Pacific Northwest still favor shipments from the Gulf. The

year 2000 started with higher oil prices, which increased the cost of all modes of transportation, including ocean vessels. The higher ocean freight rates that started the second quarter of 1999 continued their positive trend through the third quarter of 2000.

The anticipated crop production of approximately 10 billion bushels of corn and 2.77 billion bushels of soybeans comes at a time when the nation's farmers are experiencing the fourth year in a row of depressed grain prices. Low prices are almost certain to guarantee scarce storage space for fall corn and soybeans as producers and grain elevator operators will continue their reluctance to release grain to market.

While the major rail carriers are confident of providing adequate service, a sudden rise in grain prices could cause a surge in grain marketing efforts and an increase in the demand for rail transportation activity.

Although the Class I railroads serving North America have indicated that no substantial problems are anticipated in providing transportation services during the fall harvest and peak shipping season, both

Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads have increased demurrage charges, or penalties for shippers who hold cars beyond the allotted free time to load them.

The truck situation is generally healthy, although diesel fuel

prices and an ongoing labor shortage affecting the motor carrier industry could affect regional grain deliveries during the late harvest season.

This information was developed by USDA and the Surface Transportation Board. It is available on the Internet at

www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/mta/index.htm. To obtain a copy of the report, contact Karla Martin, USDA-AMS-TMP-MTA, Room 1209-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250, (202) 690-1303, fax (202) 690-3616, or e-mail Karla.Martin@usda.gov.

Great Performers Of The Plant World Announced For 2001

PHILADELPHIA — The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) announced winning plant selections for the 2001 Gold Medal Plant Award at a recent meeting of nursery and horticultural professionals.

The three top choices for best woody ornamental plant went to *Cornus mas* "Golden Glory" (Cornelian Cherry Dogwood); *Hydrangea arborescens* "Annabelle" (Smooth Hydrangea); and *Ilex opaca* (American Holly).

The Holly is the first species for which a number of outstanding cultivars have been recommended. Those cultivars include "Jersey Princess," "Old Heavy Berry," and "Satyr Hill."

The Gold Medal Plant Award program, begun in 1978, recog-

nizes exceptional woody plants hardy in growing zones from New York to Washington, D.C. Home gardeners and nursery professionals will find all Gold Medal awardees excellent choices for landscaping, as these plants have been put through a rigorous evaluation, are outstanding garden performers, easy to come by, and make a terrific contribution to regional gardening efforts. To date, 73 plants have been awarded the "Gold Medal."

In an effort to raise awareness for Gold Medal Plant Award winners, PHS recently embarked on a promotional campaign to alert regional gardeners to sources and plant selections. A recent \$375,000 multiyear

grant to PHS from the Chanticleer Foundation, Wayne, will accelerate promotions throughout the tri-state area, bringing educational information about the Gold Medal Program to area retail garden centers where plants are readily available.

In announcing the grant, Christopher Woods, executive director of Chanticleer, noted the award's objective of providing home gardeners with reliable information on selecting outstanding plants that are little known. Chanticleer, home of many Gold Medal specimen plants, is the region's premiere pleasure garden and is open to the public April 1 through October. For information about Chanticleer, call (610) 687-4163.

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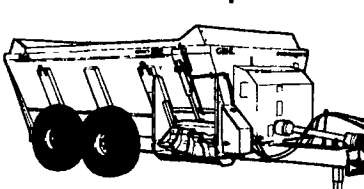


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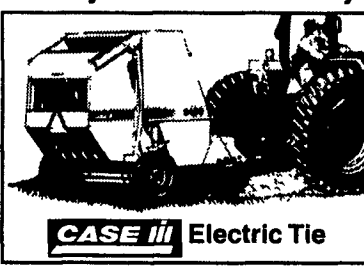
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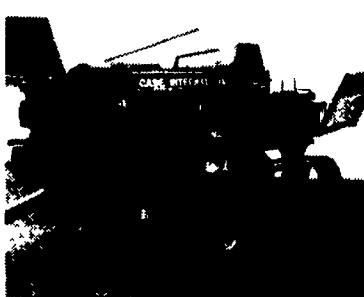


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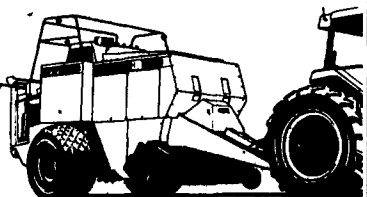
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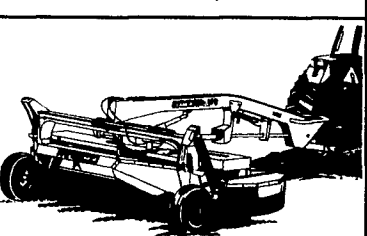
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