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Economist says grain deal may not increase sales

By Jim Garrett

UNI Agricultural Economist Dean Linsenmeyer said the recent grain contract by the United States and China probably will not have any major increase in overall U.S. export grain sales.

Linsenmeyer said the Chinese already have been purchasing between 6½ to seven million tons of wheat per year for the past two to three years.

He said the new agreement will increase sales to China to a minimum of nine million tons per year, for the next four years.

The big advantage Linsenmeyer said, is that the contract will obligate China to buy, and the United States to furnish, the contracted amount. He said this contract specifies that grain shall be purchased at current market prices when each order is filled.

Linsenmeyer said U.S. farmers are responding favorably to the China deal. He said the bilateral agreement will tend to stabilize the international market for U.S. farmers.

The only negative reactions that have been perceived to any extent, Linsenmeyer said, are from the Canadians. He said since China has been purchasing grain from Canada regularly, the Canadians had counted on a regular buyer of wheat. Linsenmeyer said Canada does not react favorably to competition from U.S. farmers.

He said if the Russians, who are the largest single producer-user of wheat worldwide, continue to have small harvests in the future like this year's 13.9 percent drop off from the projected goal—bilateral agreements like the one with China could become a big factor on the world market.

Linsenmeyer said as a result of the 17 million ton Russian grain embargo, American farmers now are able to sell that wheat to China at a considerably higher price than they would have sold it to Russia.

As a result of the international market opening up after being slowed down from the embargo, Linsenmeyer said, the China deal has brought a good sign to U.S. farmers.

Linsenmeyer said additional sales to China probably will depend on China's ability to increase its future foreign exchange. He said since China has a low balance of trade with the United States the Chinese are limited to how much they can theoretically buy from the United States.

UNI Ag Economist Loyd Fischer said the China deal is not a sale, but rather an agreement to allow the Chinese to enter into the U.S. market to buy wheat. Whereas the Russian grain embargo, Fischer said, was on an additional 17 million tons negotiated above the U.S.-Russian grain treaty, which has one more year to go, with a remainder of 8 million tons.

Farm by-products to fuel NU farm

By Bob Glissman

A \$910,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy will allow NU to develop a potentially energy self-sufficient farm at the Field Laboratory in Mead, said Dennis Schulte, UNI assistant professor of agricultural engineering.

The 150-acre farm will

have a swine operation and also will produce corn, sweet sorghum and soybeans, he said.

The potential for energy self-sufficiency comes through the conversion of farm by-products into fuel—methane from swine manure, alcohol from sweet sorghum, and, as a replacement for diesel fuel, oil from soybeans.

Initial plans for the project accelerated when those involved with the Energy Integrated Farming Systems program of the U.S. Department of Energy requested proposals from industries, private farmers and universities, Schulte said.


The university, as part of its research, was already developing a concept which fit the requested proposals, he said, and after submitting the proposal more than a year ago, the Department of Agricultural Engineering received word that theirs was one of nine programs nationwide which would be

financed. Most of the other programs which will receive money were submitted by private farmers.

The farm will be ran by two people—one who will oversee the crops and another who will run the swine operation, Schulte said.

In addition to the fuel conversion, the farm will use solar power to help heat the swine facility, and will produce some of its own fertilizer using an electric-arc discharge process. Other techniques which will be used include enriching the air of the greenhouse with carbon dioxide, matching the water applied with irrigation with the exact needs of crops and soil, and drying grain with natural air in place of natural gas.

Some of the questions which will be studied in these areas, according to Schulte, are how economical and time consuming the methods are.



Maria Muldaur

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