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THE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK
IN THE SINO-SOVIET BLOC
1963

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THE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK
IN THE SINO-SOVIET BLOC
1963

Current prospects are that the harvest for 1963 in the Sino-Soviet Bloc probably will not be any better than the mediocre harvest of last year, although weather conditions during the remainder of the crop season will be most significant in determining the final outcome.

Fall-sown grains in the USSR as well as in some of the European Satellites were adversely affected by a dry fall and a severe winter. As a result, there have been higher than normal rates of winterkill of fall-sown crops in some areas. Consequently, prospects for grain crops sown in the fall of 1962 in the USSR are judged to be only fair and range from fair to poor in the European Satellites.

In Communist China, there probably will be little if any improvement in the early grain crop above that harvested in 1962, primarily because of the current drought in some of the areas growing early rice. In North Korea and North Vietnam, prospects are that the 1963 crop will not be much larger than that harvested in 1962.

1. USSR

After an inauspicious beginning the 1963 crop year in the USSR as of mid-May has begun to develop more normally. At this time, prospects for the winter grain crop appear to be fair. The unusually warm weather from 20 April to mid-May has permitted an acceleration of spring fieldwork, and most of the delays previously reported in spring planting have been overcome. However, reserves of soil moisture in some of the areas of the new lands are reported to be low, and another disappointing harvest in that region may be forthcoming.

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The area seeded to winter grains in 1962 (for harvest in 1963) increased by about 5 million hectares above that in 1961 (for harvest in 1962). This increase in winter grains, however, was at least partly negated by unusually dry conditions in the fall that prevented germination in some areas, and by harsh winter conditions that resulted in some winterkill, especially in parts of the central blacksoil zone, northeastern Ukraine, and Rostovskaya and Volgogradskaya Oblasts. In general, moisture reserves at the end of April in most of the winter grain areas were reasonably good and the condition of the crop at mid-May was reported to be satisfactory.

A record area of about 153 million hectares is to be seeded this spring -- an increase of about 9 million hectares above that of 1962 (see the table). Some of this increase resulted from the need to reseed winter grains that failed to germinate or suffered winterkill. The remainder of the increase, if plans are fulfilled, will be caused by the seeding of grasslands and fallow lands under Khrushchev's "plow-up" program.

Although spring sowing was delayed by 2 to 3 weeks in some parts of the European USSR because of unusually cold weather, a favorable warm trend developed after 20 April, and most of the delays in the spring planting of grain crops were overcome by mid-May. The planting of some other crops -- sunflowers and sugar beets, in particular -- however, was well behind the normal schedule.

In contrast to the late spring in the European USSR, much of the new lands area of western Siberia and northern Kazakh SSR experienced an early spring, with fieldwork beginning 10 to 15 days earlier than usual in Tselinny Kray and the southern parts of Omskaya and Novosibirskaya Oblasts. However, a severe cold spell in mid-April that dropped temperatures to as low as 0°F negated the early spring to some extent, and the progress of spring sowing by mid-May was only about normal. Cool weather continued to plague some regions of the new lands with night frosts recorded in mid-May. Moisture reserves at the end of April were low in many parts of the new lands, and another disappointing harvest may be forthcoming from these areas.

- 2 -

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The planting of cotton was practically complete by mid-May. However, heavy rains in parts of Uzbek and Tadzhik SSR's, the two most important cotton-growing republics, destroyed some early plantings and will require some replanting. The development of sunflowers and sugar beets, the sowing of which is generally completed by mid-May, is well behind schedule -- in some areas by as much as 2 to 3 weeks. The severe winter also will have a negative effect on the fruit crop for 1963. Some vineyards and fruit trees were destroyed by the extremely low temperatures in the southern regions of European USSR, especially in Moldavia ASSR where, for the first time in 50 years, temperatures dropped to -31°F.

At the present time, any forecast of crops in general, but particularly spring-sown crops, is premature because weather during the remainder of the growing season and during harvesting will largely determine the size of the harvest for 1963. It should be remembered that 1958, a banner year for Soviet agriculture, likewise had an inauspicious beginning. It appears unlikely, however, that conditions in 1958 will be duplicated in 1963. The late spring in 1963, combined with the exceptionally large quantity of fieldwork to be done in a shorter period, has placed considerable pressure on Soviet farmers. Numerous press reports concerning the poor quality of fieldwork in many areas are indicative of the speeding up of field operations that could have a negative effect on the 1963 harvest.

The long, severe winter, combined with inadequate feed supplies to maintain the record herds of livestock, resulted in some distress slaughtering in the first quarter of 1963. Under normal weather conditions, feed supplies should improve above those of 1962, and some increases in production of meat and milk can be expected in 1963.

2. China

As of mid-May 1963, estimates of the condition of the early grain crops in Communist China indicate that the harvest may be only equal to that harvested last year. Information received during April suggests that soil moisture in the major wheat areas was somewhat better than earlier forecasts. However, because the early grain harvest normally accounts for only one-fourth of the total, the amount of grain harvested

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in 1963 will be determined largely by the weather during the remainder of the current harvest year (June - October).

Weather conditions have varied widely in Communist China during recent months. Conditions generally have been favorable for the early rice crops through the eastern and central provinces of China, although recent heavy rains may have caused some flood damage. Prospects for the early rice crop are especially poor in the south and southeastern coastal areas of China. Crop conditions range from fair to poor in the rest of the country.

Moisture conditions are the most critical in the Han-chiang and Pearl River Deltas of Kwangtung Province and in southeastern Fukien Province. Rainfall has been negligible in these major rice-producing regions for several months, probably causing a reduction in the acreage of early rice and lowering the prospects for the rice that has been transplanted. Moisture conditions over the remaining areas of Kwangtung and Fukien Provinces are mediocre. Temperature and moisture conditions have been reported as favorable in the northern half of the important rice area of Szechwan, but rain is needed in the remainder of Szechwan in order to prevent crop damage.

Although the prospects are for a slight increase in yields of winter wheat in North China, wheat acreages appear to be no higher and in some areas lower than in 1962. In addition, a cold snap early in April may have caused some crop damage in northern Anhwei, and an exceptionally dry winter in the central and southern regions of China, coupled with a reduction in the sown acreage, has lowered the prospects for winter wheat in those areas.

Conditions also have been reported to be poor in much of the regions growing spring wheat and soybeans. Precipitation in Northwest China, an area of marginal rainfall, generally has remained well below normal since November 1962. Furthermore, since July 1962 precipitation has been well below normal in most of the important regions of Northeast China growing soybeans and spring wheat.

- 4 -

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The regime's continuing concern over the food situation is reflected in editorials in the Peking newspapers, which stress the overriding importance of the agricultural sector and point out the need for increasing the amount of industrial support for agriculture.

3. North Korea

Crop conditions appear to have developed favorably in North Korea up through the end of April. Precipitation ranged from 60 to 80 percent of normal over the major agricultural areas between October 1962 and March 1963. Rainfall in April was above average, and soil conditions were reported to be favorable for spring planting. However, a favorable distribution of rainfall will be needed through May and June for an average-to-good rice crop. Statements made by the regime earlier in the year indicated that the food situation would be improved in 1963. Based on the present outlook, it is believed that the regime will be doing well to maintain rations at the current level during 1963.

4. North Vietnam

In North Vietnam, drought conditions have persisted since last fall, and the outlook for the early rice crop, which represents approximately one-third of the total rice crop, is poor. The unfavorable development of the early rice crop apparently has been further aggravated in April by below-normal rainfall and by insect damage. The present poor outlook of the early rice crop precludes any short-run improvement in the existing tight food supply situation in North Vietnam.

5. European Satellites

In the European Satellites, agricultural difficulties persisted throughout the winter of 1962 and the spring of 1963. The outlook for the fall-sown crops (wheat, rye, barley, and rape) is not favorable. Although the weather has been the most important factor affecting the current outlook, recent policy measures designed to tighten political control in the countryside and the continued presence of passive resistance by the peasants also have adversely affected the livestock programs of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

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The European Satellites experienced a sharp decline in production of grain in 1962. With stocks of grain already low and the costs of additional imports high in terms of valuable foreign exchange, agricultural plans for 1963 called for an expansion of the area sown to grains. In response to this need the acreage sown to wheat, rye, and fall barley reportedly was increased in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary. In Bulgaria and Rumania the plans for 1963 called for expansion of the corn acreage.

Throughout most of the European Satellites the weather during the critical fall seeding time was unusually dry. Fall-sown grain failed to germinate or developed poorly. Some of the planned acreage was not seeded. An early frost also was reported in many areas further retarding plant growth. The winter in East Europe was one of the coldest in the past decade and extended through mid-March. Moreover, severe freezing and heavy snowfall did not permit the use of pastures for livestock.

Although deep snow cover protected most of the grain area, winter damage ranging from 10 to 15 percent of the fall-sown grain was reported in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Polish officials have admitted that some damage occurred to winter grains, but recently maintained that the over-all condition of the fall-sown rye crop was good and that of winter wheat was average. However, significant winter damage affecting from 30 to 50 percent of the fall-sown rape crops has been reported in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland. The combined effects of a dry fall, winterkill, and late spring lower the prospects for a good harvest of winter grain in Eastern Europe.

Heavy snowfalls and low temperatures also delayed spring fieldwork throughout the European Satellites -- reportedly from 2 to 4 weeks. Moreover, seasonal rains, combined with the melting of the heavy snows, have caused some flood damage in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Severe damage to crops from spring floods was reported in Albania. Less crop damage occurred in other Satellites, but large areas of pasture land in Hungary were inundated. More favorable weather has been reported throughout the Satellites in

- 6 -

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April and May, and the planting of potatoes, sugar beets, and corn apparently has progressed satisfactorily.

Prospects for an improvement in the livestock situation in the European Satellites are less favorable than that of crop developments. The number of livestock declined in nearly all the Satellites in 1962, a result of the shortfall in the fodder base and institutional changes. The smaller number of breeding stock this spring, particularly the smaller number of sows, has reduced the possibility for improvement in meat supply in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and probably Poland. Rumania has admitted that the meat and livestock problem remains serious. Food supplies, especially supplies of livestock products, are not expected to improve until late summer.

- 7 -

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Table
Progress of Spring Sowing in the USSR
1958-63

Date As of	Thousand Hectares					
	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
5 April	3,100	N.A.	3,583	6,503	4,435	N.A.
10 April	N.A.	7,400	5,395	11,576	7,470	N.A.
15 April	6,300	11,748	10,900	17,551	13,750	4,760
20 April	10,400	18,449	18,850	24,455	27,975	6,210
25 April	15,950	31,589	28,584	33,449	41,520	11,155
30 April	26,700	N.A.	43,107	45,500	54,150	23,818
5 May	36,870	57,110	54,925	54,603	62,169	40,386
10 May	52,000	73,076	72,235	71,269	76,934	65,477
15 May	70,500	92,666	89,356	88,000	95,924	89,104
20 May	92,000	108,712	109,187	103,900	110,412	113,491
25 May	108,817	118,092	123,000	115,500	125,005	133,600
31 May ^{a/}	120,000	123,342	134,000	125,000	138,517	N.A.
Plan	125,000	125,000	135,000	131,000	144,000	153,000

a. Spring sowing generally is 95 to 100 percent complete by this date.

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