

9 million tons of food exports needed

by Marcia Merry and Elizabeth Kellogg

Even before the 1988 harvests are completed in the northern latitude farm-export regions, and the full extent of drought damage is fully known, millions of people in Africa, Asia, and other points around the globe are desperately short of food. Over half of the 8.75 million tons of cereals needed for poor populations internationally is required in Africa.

Since the time of calculation of the accompanying table, the need has intensified. Following a dry period in the headlands of the Nile and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, floods have occurred—all the way from Senegal in Western Africa, through Chad and Sudan. In many locations, the rainfall and the floods are the worst in 50 years.

In addition to destroying vital crops, the succession of dry and wet conditions has created perfect breeding conditions for locusts. The agriculture minister of Sudan, Fatih al-Tigani, reported that they expected a locust invasion by Sept. 10. "This invasion will be the biggest in 1,000 years and exceeds our protection capacity. Unless we receive aid within 10 days, the entire Sudan could be turned into an arid land. . . . The floods have created an attractive atmosphere for locusts which now cover about 1.5 million hectares [about 4 million acres] of our land compared with 450,000 hectares [1 million acres] 1,000 years ago."

This, in a nation where flooding has already left thousands dead and an estimated 2 million persons homeless. Moreover, as one aide worker reported, "The worst may be yet to come," as the Nile continues to rise.

Meanwhile, the malthusian U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's Emergency Center for Locust Operations plans to do, it would appear, nothing. Its *African Locust Bulletin* reports "problems with aerial control due to lack of available aircraft and suspension of Desert Locust Control Organization (DCLO) activities." In fact, the DCLO for East Africa stopped operating Aug. 15 because it ran out of money. The Aug. 23 FAO bulletin makes no mention of any special effort to get funding to resume the spraying, or to get other organizations or donor nations to resume spraying, although aerial control is critical at this point.

Africa, however, is not alone in food import needs, as the table shows. As of mid-summer, grain trade reports

showed that even the most minimal cereals import requirements have not been met this trade year for dozens of nations. According to calculations based on "tracking" the fulfillment of minimum estimated import needs, an additional 9 million tons is required.

Not included at the time of preparation of these estimates, are the possible import requirements for China, because of this summer's devastating succession of drought and floods in the southeast. Thousands of hectares of crops were destroyed in the Yangtze Valley, and as much as 20 million tons of cereals imports may be required.

Criminal negligence

The table shows the tonnages of unmet import requirements for 66 countries most in need as of this summer. Because of the rise in world grain prices as the drought persists, and the worsening impoverishment under International Monetary Fund conditionalities, there is little chance of any nation in need increasing its commercial food purchases. In addition, the Soviet Union has made extraordinary rush-delivery grain purchases of millions of tons over the summer. Ironically, 9 million tons of cereals a year is exactly the annual flow of grain committed by the United States to the Soviet Union over each year of the last five years of the "Long-Term Grain Agreement" concluded between the two nations in 1983.

At the July 1 session of the 19th All Union Party Conference in Moscow, top Soviet diplomat Yuli Kvitsinsky admonished the Third World itself for not sending more food to the Soviet Union. He asserted, "Our help to them [military aid to Third World nations] has to be paid for. . . . We in the Soviet Union are experiencing a shortage of coffee and tropical fruits at a time when the markets of Western states are bursting with them. Yet, we are investing billions in aid to those developing countries that can produce, and traditionally always did produce, those products. It is our duty to offer developing states selfless [military] aid. This is indisputable. But the current situation is unnatural. It must be rectified in our own interests and in the interests of the states with which we cooperate."

Based on the reaction of leaders in the West to date, there is no movement to counter this Soviet demand for food tribute with a demand for an international mobilization to increase food production and allocation to needs worldwide. On Aug. 11, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Economics, Ewen Wilson, told the international press corps that there

were adequate stocks of food to fulfill all domestic U.S. and PL-480 and other food relief needs, and in addition, to continue high rates of cereals exports to the Soviet Union. However, even the USDA and U.N. statistics, as well as the reality of starvation internationally, show how wrong Mr. Wilson is.

TABLE 1

8,750 million tons of unmet import requirements for 66 nations, as of July 1988

Nation	Est. import requirements, all cereals ¹ (1,000 metric tons)	Pledged ²	Unmet ³	Nation	Est. import requirements, all cereals ¹ (1,000 metric tons)	Pledged ²	Unmet ³
I. Africa				II. Asia			
Egypt	8,800.0	7,531.9	1,268.1	China	15,150.0	12,592.3	2,557.7
Morocco	2,421.0	2,103.7	317.3	Kampuchea	180.0	24.7	155.3
Chad	90.0	44.3	45.7	Laos	120.0	21.9	98.1
Niger	20.0	109.6	110.4	Vietnam	950.0	226.0	724.0
Mali	85.0	49.7	35.3	Indonesia	2,305.0	1,936.1	368.9
Mauritania	153.0	155.1	(2.1)	Subtotal	20,065.0	16,024.1	4,040.9
Sudan	570.0	574.1	(4.1)	III. Asian Subcontinent			
Somalia	359.0	201.4	157.6	Afghanistan	250.0	250.0	0
Djibouti	54.0	25.9	28.1	Bangladesh	3,000.0	2,920.0	80.0
Ethiopia	1,475.0	1,292.9	172.1	Bhutan	22.0	22.0	0
Burkina Faso	140.0	74.8	65.2	India	1,050.0	1,000.0	50.0
Cape Verde	45.0	37.2	7.8	Nepal	50.0	33.6	16.4
Gambia	30.0	60.9	(30.9)	Sri Lanka	877.0	877.0	0
Guinea	140.0	69.4	70.6	Maldives	40.0	7.5	32.5
Guinea-Bissau	15.0	9.9	5.3	Subtotal	5,289.0	5,110.1	178.9
Liberia	125.0	44.8	80.2	IV. Middle East			
Senegal	470.0	240.6	229.4	Yemen A.R.	740.0	732.2	7.8
Sierra Leone	95.0	24.9	70.1	Yemen P.D.R.	225.0	63.8	161.2
Benin	112.0	83.9	28.1	Subtotal	965.0	795.8	169.0
Ivory Coast	600.0	450.0	150.0	V. Oceania			
Ghana	138.0	169.9	(31.9)	Kiribati	7.0	0.0	7.0
Togo	75.0	43.7	31.3	Papua New Guinea	150.0	148.0	1.6
Nigeria	550.0	132.2	417.8	Samoa	8.0	0.0	8.0
Zaire	310.0	276.8	33.2	Solomon Islands	17.0	0.0	17.0
Rwanda	34.0	21.9	12.1	Tonga	6.5	0.0	6.5
Burundi	23.0	14.3	8.7	Vanuatu	10.0	0.0	0.0
Equatorial Guinea	8.0	1.2	6.8	Subtotal	198.5	148.4	50.1
Cent. Afr. Rep.	35.0	13.1	11.9	VI. South America			
Sao Tome	10.0	9.7	.3	Bolivia	362.0	310.4	51.6
Uganda	24.0	21.4	2.6	VII. Central America			
Madagascar	139.0	121.6	17.4	Dominican Republic	525.0	471.3	53.7
Mozambique	750.0	536.0	214.0	Haiti	235.0	243.5	8.5
Tanzania	105.0	94.2	10.8	El Salvador	320.0	297.2	22.8
Comoros Isl.	36.0	21.4	14.6	Honduras	208.0	172.3	35.7
Kenya	215.0	180.4	34.6	Nicaragua	130.0	93.6	36.4
Angola	340.0	218.2	121.8	Subtotal	1,418.0	1,277.9	148.6
Zambia	155.0	96.0	59.0	Total 66 nations	48,313.5	38,655.0	8,745.7
Lesotho	215.0	197.6	17.4				
Swaziland	60.0	54.0	6.0				
Subtotal	20,046	14,988.3	4,106.9				

1) Estimates of minimum cereals tonnages required to be imported this year, through either commercial purchases, concessional-priced food relief, or donated food aid.

2) Total cereals imports committed, either commercial contracts or food relief pledges, as of July 1988.

3) Unmet requirements for total cereals imports, as of July 1988.

Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organizations, U.S. Department of Agriculture and EIR News Service.