
From Washington

Soybean acreage virtually the same

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual spring survey of planting intentions indicated that as of early April farmers intended to plant 71.3 million acres of soybeans in 1980 (71.58 million acres were planted in 1979).

The intended acreage figure was slightly higher than the 70.6 million acres estimated in the January planting intentions report, a survey that was taken before President Carter announced barred sales above minimum contracted levels to the Soviet Union.

The soybean acreage decrease is smaller than many observers were predicting last year when it became apparent the U.S. would produce a record crop. In mid-August, for example, Siegfried Mielke of *Oil World Weekly* told the American Soybean Association's annual meeting there might be a drop of seven to ten million acres in soybean acres for 1980. Mielke said the U.S. super crop of 1979, combined with normal South American crops would saturate the market—a condition that would cause reduced prices and trigger reduced plantings.

What's happened? The embargo to the Soviet Union has cut a major outlet for U.S. grain that competes with soybeans for acreage. USDA's Jim Matthews told the *Wall Street Journal* that high prices for nitrogen-based fertilizers, needed for intensive corn production, may have influenced a switch to soybeans which is a less expensive crop to plant. Tight money may have influenced farmers who had trouble finding affordable loans to get a spring crop planted: soybeans are cheaper to put into the ground than corn.

The report indicates, however, that farmers intend to plant 82 million acres of corn, about two million more acres than in 1979. Matthews speculated corn plantings might have been even higher, and soy plantings lower, if interest rates had been lower.

Matthews did say that some farmers in the South apparently will put some of last year's soybean acreage into cotton this year.

Matthews told the *Wall Street Journal* the survey was taken April 1 before a government corn-storage program was opened to all farmers. Some farmers may switch some of the acreage they planned for soybeans into corn.

A 30-bushel-per-acre yield (the 1979 yield was approximately 32 bushels per acre) would mean another two-billion-bushel soybean crop. With another large corn crop anticipated, initial speculation was for increased surpluses.

But, as one observer told the *Wall Street Journal*, as of mid-April the crops weren't even in the ground and any comments on the potential size of crops was pure speculation.

Chemical tolerance proposal

BASF Wyandotte Corp. has submitted a proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that tolerance be established for residues

of the plant growth regulator N,N-dimethylpiperidinium chloride in cottonseed meal at 3 parts per million (ppm). At the same time, maximum tolerance levels are being proposed for other agricultural products: cotton forage, 3 ppm; cottonseed 2 ppm; meat, fat and meat byproducts of cattle, goats, hogs, horses, sheep and poultry, 0.1 ppm; and eggs and milk, 0.05 ppm. Details: *Federal Register*, April 14, 1980, p. 25098.

FTC considers fat in advertising

The Federal Trade Commission apparently has decided to end two proposals to regulate food advertising by trade regulation rules and it may soon decide whether to publish a third rule originally proposed to regulate advertising of fat, fatty acid and cholesterol content claims. The proposals originated in 1976 and were divided into three phases in which the first phase encompassed fats- and oils-related advertising. Hearings were held on that phase and a presiding officer's report was published in March 1978. Hearings were not held on the second phase involving nutritional claims, and phase three proposals, never published, were scheduled to involve nutrition information requirements in food advertising. Now the FTC has asked for comments on proposals to drop work on phases two and three. With regard to the first phase involving fats and oils, the notice said, "The Commission will soon consider final staff recommendations for regulations covering the areas included in Phase I and determine what form of rule, if any, it should promulgate." Details: *Federal Register*, Tuesday, April 8, 1980, p. 23705.

Pesticide tolerance extended

A temporary tolerance has been extended to June 5, 1981, for residues of the herbicide oxyfluorfen on soybeans at 0.05 part per million (ppm). The extension was requested by Rohm and Haas Co. Details: *Federal Register*, April 17, 1980, p. 26128.

EPA extends time for ammonia comments

The EPA in January proposed adding ammonia to its list of toxic pollutants and asked that comments be submitted by March 3, then later extended the date to May 2. On April 21, the EPA extended the deadline again, this time to June 3. Adding ammonia to the list would effect not only firms producing products with ammonia, but also could affect those using ammonia cleansers. Further information: Joseph A. Krivak, Criteria and Standards Division, US EPA, 401 M St. SW, Washington, DC 20460 (202-755-0100); details: *Federal Register* Monday, April 21, 1980, p. 26734.

Upland cotton acreage revised

The national program acreage for the 1979 crop of upland cotton was revised to 13,475,912 acres when Secretary of Agriculture Robert Bergland signed a new program on March 6, 1980. The initial program, published in the Dec. 22, 1978, issue of the *Federal Register*, was announced as 10,634,181 acres. Details: *Federal Register*, March 11, 1980, p. 15602.

Food spending

From an article "Food Spending and Income" in *National Food Review*, a publication of the USDA's Economics, Statistics and Cooperatives Service Division: "U.S. food spending took two turns during the third quarter of 1979. First, spending for food at home reached the \$200-billion mark seven years after reaching the \$100 billion level. Assuming no changes in the product mix since 1972, only \$9-1/2 billion of that increase was due to higher volume; \$92 billion was the result of higher prices."