

EIR Feature

'Conservationists' are shutting down food production

by Marcia Merry

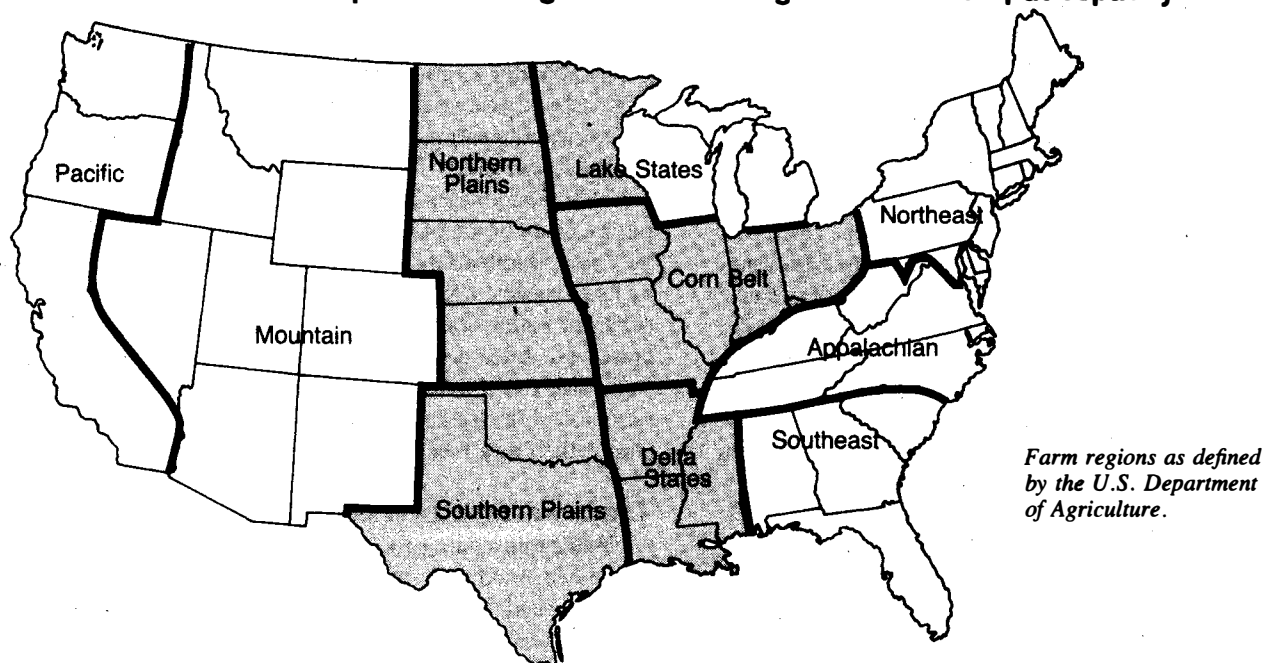
For approximately the last 20 years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has periodically cut back crop harvests by temporarily setting aside land, keeping farm commodities off the market, or otherwise take curtailing food output. These programs were always promoted in the name of "evening out" variations in weather, swings in prices, and so forth, so that farmers' incomes and production conditions would remain stable enough to guarantee the nation's food supply. Even the notorious Payment-in-Kind (PIK) program, which cut 1983 corn output in half, and the 1984 "milk PIK," were intended as episodic projects to temporarily reduce production.

But the USDA policies in effect in 1986, based on the new farm law, the Food Security Act of 1985, are of a completely different order: Their intent is to shut down *permanently* a large part of the production capacity of this nation. Similar programs are underway in the European Community, based on radical alterations of the Common Agriculture Policy. The rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic is familiar: Government intervention to maintain the farmer and national food supplies should stop, in the name of the "competition of prices in the free market."

However, behind the rhetoric, government farm policies are protecting the special interests of the international food cartel companies and private money trusts, which are dictating the shutdown of independent farms and food processing and distribution capabilities, while positioning themselves to dominate food supplies. In service of this policy, the "conservationist" societies and think-tanks are churning out the legislation for governments to implement.

The food cartel includes the five firms which control at least 90% of the world grain trade: Cargill, Louis-Dreyfus, Continental, André, and Bunge. Together with agri-business giants such as the Swiss firm Nestlé, they dominate the world food market, including the U.S. domestic market. Operatives of the food cartels infiltrated into the USDA—such as Orville Freeman during the 1960s, and Cargill's Daniel Amstutz today—have masterminded the multi-billion-dollar grain deals with the Soviet Union, even as they are wiping out the American and European independent family farms.

Core states of U.S. farm production regions are shutting down food output capacity



The statistics presented in this *Feature*, based on first-quarter 1986 crop output estimates, make clear how the current Washington policies will devastate the food output of this country. The 1986 dairy termination program is designed to kill off milk herds over 18 months, to reduce national milk output by 9-10%. The cropland retirement program—the Conservation Reserve—is designed to reduce crop output by under 5% this year—but ultimately by 25% over a five-year period. The Farmers Home Administration policy to foreclose on farm borrowers is designed to put about 60,000 farms out of operation. Inaction from Washington on the overall farm crisis is resulting in an unprecedented farm failure rate.

The cartel-orchestrated “free market” farm price declines will reduce output potential in this nation by over one-third—about the size of the current output for export of the United States. Thus U.S. food potential is being reduced to the level of minimal domestic demand, and the ability to produce for international need, and for emergency, is being wiped out.

The solution to the American agriculture crisis, as we shall elaborate elsewhere in this package, is to initiate the kind of emergency food production measures that were implemented in World War II and other periods of crisis, including low-interest production credits, a stay on farm foreclosures, and a shift in foreign food policies. It is essential to mobilize for such a policy shift in Washington, because the current measures coming from the administration and Congress alike are the result of pressure and influence by those who are committed to reducing Western food supplies, and shrinking

Blueprints for famine

Over the past few years, there has been a series of policy documents circulated in Washington and in the capitals of Western Europe, promoting bogus “benefits” of the current policies. There are two levels of documents: the government-connected recommendations for “restructuring” farming, and the more rarified plans to “conserve” the globe, by food reduction and depopulation.

Consider the “restructuring” reports first.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has done a series of studies on how and where to remove land from crop production. In the name of fighting erosion, the studies are all aimed at reducing the food crop base of the country. There are no studies being done of how and where to build up and improve soils, or how to develop large-scale irrigation projects to bring additional land under cultivation or increase productivities.

In April 1985, the USDA released its “Analysis of Policies to Conserve Soil and Reduce Crop Production” (USDA Economic Research Service, Agr. Econ. Report No. 534), which listed exactly which parts of the country should have land retired, what percent was to be removed, and from what crops. For example, for the cornbelt region, which in 1984 harvested 84.2 million acres, the USDA recommended removing from 12.7% to 60.8% of the cropland from production. Such plans were worked up to target the heartland farm states, as shown on the map.

The USDA recommends that 50-100 million acres, out of a base acreage of 421 acres, be permanently removed from food production. This amount of land would produce 361

million bushels of wheat over the next five years—a year's wheat supply for 29 million persons—and 402 bushels of corn over the next five years—food for 17 million persons.

On March 17, 1986, the congressional Office of Technology Assessment released a similar report ("Technology, Public Policy, and the Changing Structure of American Agriculture," GPO No. 052-003-01018-6), claiming the inevitability of the extinction of small farms and the emergence of large farms based on biotechnology advances. The report announced that approximately one million farms will disappear between now and the year 2000, mostly moderate-size and small farms. About 50,000 large farms will account for 75% of U.S. agriculture production by the end of the century, the OTA predicts. The rationalization given for this policy is that only large farms will be able to afford and apply new biotechnology advances. This is untrue—unless government or cartel policy makes it so.

Aristocrats and conservationists

On a different plane, policy pronouncements favoring shutdown of agriculture have come from an international clique of aristocrats, their commodity cartel trusts, and their hired think-tank "experts," who are committed to making food output shrink, bringing the remaining capacities under their own control, and imposing depopulation on whole portions of the Earth.

Earlier this year, at a meeting of the Business Forum at Davos, Switzerland, Britain's Prince Philip, representing the World Wildlife Federation, recommended that the human race "be culled, like sheep," because they have exceeded the limits of their habitat, and like any other animal species, their numbers should be reduced from time to time.

The arm of the World Wildlife Foundation most active in U.S. agriculture policy in recent years has been the Conservation Foundation, which shares staff and offices with the Wildlife group in Washington, D.C.

In 1980, the Conservation Foundation released a study, "The Future of American Agriculture as a Strategic Resource," recommending that the food output potential of the United States be scaled back significantly, because the task of supplying food exports was permanently depleting American soils.

This theme has been repeated constantly in recent years, to the point that the Conservation Foundation staff was holding joint policy sessions with the USDA soil conservation department, and making policy decisions for the government. (See the 1985 Conservation Foundation report, "Eroding Soils: The Off-Farm Impacts.") The Conservation Foundation wrote the farmland retirement program called "Conservation Reserve," enacted by Congress in December 1985.

Under the unprecedented measures of the new farm law, by 1991, a farmer can be fined by the government for draining a swamp to grow food or control mosquitoes. Centuries of progress in agronomy and animal husbandry are to be rolled

back in the name of "preserving wetlands" and making the world "safe for wildlife."

The Conservation Foundation was founded in 1948, by a group including Laurance Rockefeller, and directed by Fairfield Osborn, whose uncle, Henry Fairfield Osborn, headed the pre-war Eugenics Society, funded by the Harriman family and the Rockefellers. The European predecessor of the Conservation Foundation, the Nature Conservancy Society, was run by many of the old oligarchical family trusts, including by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, and was discredited by its advocacy of selective euthanasia for human beings on behalf of nature conservancy, the animal world, and feudal preserves. After the war, these advocates of eugenics and euthanasia toned down their Nazi doctrines in favor of "conservation of the Earth's scarce resources," as a way of maintaining their own feudal and cartel privilege.

Trade warfare diversion

While transatlantic food production capabilities are being shut down, food trade warfare has been revved up to divert attention, and speed the cartelization process. In 1985, the United States enacted the "export enhancement" program, which subsidizes private cartels to offer U.S. food commodities for sale at a discount rate to overseas buyers, in an attempt to beat out the European and other competition. Sales commodities include wheat, rice, eggs, poultry, and dairy cattle.

The program is really just a giveaway to the cartel companies. The government Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) gives away its commodity stocks for free to the private trading companies, to guarantee their profits. Of the more than \$1 billion worth of taxpayer-purchased food stocks given away last year, Cargill, the giant Minneapolis-based food cartel, received 44%; Continental Grain received 15%; Louis Dreyfus received 10%; and Peavey 9%. The same companies represent foreign sales for other nations around the world, so they gain whatever the trade war patterns may be.

The European Community, in retaliation, has put duties on citrus imports from the United States. The United States has placed duties on imports of European pasta. And the war goes on.

Meantime, world grain prices have fallen 27% in the last 18 months. The farm failure rate in Europe is close to matching that now prevailing in the United States. West German farm income has declined by an estimated 15-20% over the last year, and is set to decline that much again. To justify this shutdown process, a report was prepared in March by EC Commissioner of Agriculture Franz Andriessen, called the Green Paper, that calls for a dismantling of price supports for grain and other commodities, and making other radical changes in the Common Agriculture Policy. On April 12, an estimated 40,000 farmers marched through 57 German towns to publicize the food crisis which this shutdown policy will create.