

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### Food disputes in a world of hunger

*Trade "experts" like to refer to a decline in "demand growth," meaning that nations cannot afford to produce or import food.*

One week before the scheduled, annual trade talks between the United States and the European Community, the U.S. Agriculture Department released world food statistics at its 63rd annual "Outlook" conference in Washington, D.C. The rhetoric was upbeat, but the figures were grim. Said Richard Goldberg, deputy undersecretary for international affairs and commodity programs, on Dec. 3, "Agriculture export trade is not going to be conducted in a world of scarcity, but in a world of surpluses." He's lying.

World per capita availability of cereals, meats, and necessities is decreasing markedly, while the most productive agricultural sectors of the world—North America and Western Europe—are engaged in vicious trade war, and attempts to decrease their farm output. Whatever the outcome of the combination of ongoing GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) meetings, and North Atlantic food trade talks, the reality of world food shortages and mass starvation must be the measuring rod for farm and food policies in 1987.

The following is a summary of the statistics made available at the Outlook conference.

As of year-end, the figures for 1986 world grain production showed a slight upward trend, from 1.64407 billion metric tons in 1984, up to an estimated 1.64697 billion metric tons for 1986. Measured against the nutrition needs of today's 5 billion people in the world, this amounts to about half of what is actually required—3 billion tons for direct consumption of cereals and for

provisioning the livestock needed to supply animal protein to the diet. In addition, another billion tons of cereals—for a total of 4 billion worldwide—should be produced for carryover stocks, and to make up for losses in storage, shipping, and processing.

A person requires an estimated 24 bushels of grain each year for direct and indirect consumption. Multiply the world's 5 billion people times 24 bushels (at about 50 pounds of grain a bushel), and the minimum world grain output objective of 3 billion tons is calculated.

Total world cereals production in 1986, relative to population, works out to a little over 14 bushels per person. In addition, according to best estimates, only 1.61394 billion tons, not the full harvest, will go for consumption. This brings down the bushels per person to well under 14. World grain stocks are piling up, unused and deteriorating, because of the decline in world food trade. So-called world ending stocks this year will be .38675 billion metric tons, up from .25585 billion metric tons, in the face of starvation.

The trade "experts" like to refer to this process as a decline in "demand growth." What they mean is that whole nations cannot afford either to produce their food, or to import it—under the monetary conditions of the International Monetary Fund and related banks and food cartel companies.

According to these "experts," there is nothing much to be done about the starvation, and the response to the situation should be to drastically reduce

existing levels of food output below "effective demand"—the imposed inability of peoples to obtain food. Over the 1986 period, incredible measures were enacted to reduce food production in the world's most highly developed farm products exporting nations—the United States and the European Community.

The European Community has enacted a milk output quota—with penalties for violation, and a tax on "excess" grain output, called a "producer co-responsibility" levy.

The United States has implemented the Dairy Herd Termination program, in which whole herds are eliminated permanently. Farmers are also coerced into idling record amounts of land to gain cashflow from government programs.

In addition to these measures to directly decrease production, unprecedented measures have been introduced to give over to food cartel control huge quantities of valuable foodstocks, at the expense of the general public and farmers. For example, in the United States, the new program called the Payment-in-Kind generic crop certificate plan, allows cartels to get what they want, when they want, from government stocks at cheap prices.

In Europe, a similar swindle, under a different name, has allowed cartel brokers to send huge quantities of meat and other foodstuffs to the Soviet Union, at the cost of the lives of millions of people in Africa, to whom that food would have been exported under a rational international policy.

As of year-end, the line-up of proposed "alternatives" to this mess, to be introduced into the 100th Congress and EC deliberations in 1987, is designed to make things worse. It is all based on the assumption that nothing can or should be done about the IMF system.