

## Agriculture by Suzanne Rose

### Food available, but not for the needy

*Despite the existence in the United States of "mountains" of food surpluses, little of it is expected to reach drought-stricken Africa.*

**T**he October U.N. Food and Agriculture (FAO) *Food Outlook Report* says that sub-Saharan Africa will require a record quantity of food aid in 1992-93, but "with a decline in world food aid availability now predicted, it is most unlikely that this requirement will be met."

Daily the agricultural press in the U.S. heralds the bumper corn crop, which is expected to reach 223 million metric tons when the full harvest is in. But the propaganda blitz is directed not at solving the hunger crisis, but at explaining the record low corn prices as due to "oversupply."

The other direction taken by the cartel propagandists in the press is to demand even more subsidies from the government (Export Enhancement Program payments) to the cartel trade companies to market this surplus.

In the case of soybean oil, whose stocks are at an all-time high of 1 million tons, the soybean cartel is demanding EEP payments in order to pursue trade war against the countries of the European Community by dumping the oil on traditional EC markets. Although soybean oil is one of the most calorie-dense commodities available for food relief efforts, the cartel sees it as a means to further its use of "food as a weapon."

Meantime, the European Community has 28 million tons of surplus wheat stocks, but still boast that they have already done their share of food relief efforts to Africa, having sent 1.5 million tons.

Southern African countries, which required record amounts of food imports last year because of

drought-reduced harvests, have even less food available this year, because the short water supplies hindered the plantings. The FAO reports that, whereas 70% of their food aid requirements were met by donor pledges, only 75% of the pledges have come in. For the 1992-93 year, requirements have doubled.

Worldwide, annual cereals output has increased a mere 1.5% over 1991, or 29 million tons. This is clearly not an adequate response from western governments, whose policies determine agriculture output, to the burgeoning worldwide food crisis. The FAO report identifies the countries which are in need of major relief efforts, including war-ravaged Iraq, Afghanistan, parts of former Yugoslavia, parts of the CIS, and Africa, including Mauritania, the area of the Gulf of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, and southern Africa.

In Somalia, food aid pledges have increased to 200,000 tons, but the FAO says they require 500,000 tons. Next year their requirements will double. The earnings of these same countries from sales of their commodities have been plummeting because of the collapse of commodity prices on the world market, further undermining their ability to import food commercially, and increasing the need for food aid.

The absence of headlines in the United States and elsewhere on the need to mobilize a relief effort, demonstrates that the policy of the Anglo-American countries, which dominate food exporting capabilities, is to allow countless millions to die.

The bureaucratic fascism of the U.N.'s statisticians is evident from their characterization of global cereal supplies in the FAO report as "adequate to meet the anticipated reduced level of global demand"—by which they mean the reduced ability of countries and consumers to pay for food under depression conditions. In the next sentence, they say that cereal import needs, both commercial and in the form of food aid, will be much larger than last year. Nowhere do they report what actual world food requirements are, based on adequate nutrition standards. Therefore, their estimation of food aid requirements for southern Africa of 3 million tons is a gross underestimation.

Over last year, cereals production increased significantly in only one of the major food-exporting countries, the U.S., and that is because of the high-yield corn crop this year. A record harvest of 222.8 million tons is expected. Carryover stocks of 53 million tons are anticipated. The corn harvest in the U.S. has been delayed by weather problems and by high moisture content in the corn, and only half has been harvested.

Nevertheless, if one includes carryover stocks, 172 million tons of corn are available now to be mobilized. These supplies are in the hands of farmers or commercial channels. Only a minuscule amount is in the hands of the government—a situation fostered by the 1985 Farm Bill to eliminate any government-controlled stocks. This forces farmers to sell directly into the cartel-dominated market, and keeps prices way under the actual cost of production. As a result, the price of corn, at under \$2 per bushel, is at a historic low.

A significant relief effort would mean that the government would buy corn directly from the farmer or from commercial channels, threatening the grain traders' control.