



NEWS from

U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE CALLS FOR HEARINGS INTO U.S.D.A. FORECASTING WHICH COSTS FARMERS MILLIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Senator Bob Dole today called for Senate Agriculture hearings to "investigate the accuracy of the U.S.D.A. ability to predict crop production throughout the world." In a letter to Committee Chairman Herman Talmadge, Dole said, "...when there is doubt as to whether to raise or lower estimates at U.S.D.A., and the choice is to always take that figure which will keep farm prices low and cost farmers millions of dollars." Dole added today that "It seems farmers always lose with U.S.D.A. forecasts."

Following is the full text of Dole's letter:

President Brezhnev's announcement this week that USSR grain production will be only 194 million metric tons when the U.S.D.A., only days before, had predicted 215 million metric tons causes me great concern.

I would like to ask that hearings by the full Committee or the appropriate subcommittee be scheduled as soon as possible to investigate the accuracy of the U.S.D.A.'s ability to predict crop production throughout the world. Every year we spend millions of dollars through the Foreign Agriculture Service, Statistical Reporting Service, Economic Research Service, and NASA's satellite programs in order to accurately predict the grain production throughout the world.

In addition, in recent years, the U.S. and USSR worked out an agreement whereby U.S. grain teams would be allowed to visit the Soviet Union annually to check crop production.

In addition, the CIA maintains their own surveillance of crop production throughout the world, and supposedly these recent reports supported the 215 million metric ton forecast.

To me there are three subjects to explore in these hearings:

- (1) Our crop forecasting procedures are not functioning and need an immediate overhaul and reorganization to assure accuracy. This will not necessarily require additional funding.
- (2) If President Brezhnev is misleading us about their grain production for some diplomatic, political or strategic purpose, then why was the U.S.D.A. so quick to revise their prediction to comply with his figures of 194 million metric tons.
- (3) There is some indication the agencies of U.S.D.A and CIA might have known that their figures were high but chose to hold that line for reasons known only to them. Reports from persons who visited Russia recently did not concur with the 215 million metric ton prediction.

Worldwide crop forecasting is as important to farm prices as are domestic figures. It seems that, inevitably, when there is doubt as to whether to raise or lower estimates at U.S.D.A., the choice always is to take that figure which will keep farm prices low and cost farmers millions of dollars.

I would suggest that witnesses at these hearings include appropriate personnel from U.S.D.A., CIA, State Department and the Council of Economic Advisors.

I realize this is a busy time while we are winding up energy legislation, and that you are as involved as I am in that legislation; however, I pledge my full cooperation in assisting in the conduct of these hearings as soon as possible.