

11-7-1990

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Recommended Citation

Ranieri, Steven. "On 1990 Grain Imports." (1990). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/35>

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On 1990 Grain Imports

by Steven Ranieri

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, November 7, 1990

On Sept. 21, Javier Contreras Padilla, leader of a corn growers association affiliated with the National Campesino Confederation (CNC), told reporters that the 1990 corn harvest is estimated at 12 million metric tons. Domestic consumption requirements dictate imports of an additional 4 million tons, he said. About 30% of corn producers nationwide, said Contreras, have abandoned the crop due to interest arrears on loans contracted with Banrural. These producers, he added, account for about 500,000 tons of the product per year. Next, Contreras asserted that farmers are not likely to boost corn output without higher prices for their products, and improved technical support. Dryland farming combined with the absence of crop rotation has produced severe erosion in 60% of the surface area used for corn production (seven million hectares nationwide). Consequently, said Contreras, Mexican productivity is quite low: 1.8 MT per ha., compared to an average 6 MT per ha. in countries with about the same quantity of corn crop surface area. On Nov. 5, the daily La Jornada quoted a report in Newsweek as saying that Mexican corn imports this year are up 80% relative to 1989. The total could reach 6.5 MT at a cost of approximately \$850 million. Citing other unidentified sources, La Jornada reported that basic grains imports this year (corn, beans, rice and wheat) are expected to total about 12 million. (Sources: Notimex, 09/21/90; La Jornada, 11/05/90)

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