

CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION FROM
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REPORT

CD NO.

DATE OF INFORMATION 1951

DATE DIST. 7 Apr 1952

NO. OF PAGES 3

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

STAT

COUNTRY Rumania
SUBJECT Economic - Agriculture
HOW PUBLISHED Monthly periodical
WHERE PUBLISHED Stuttgart, Germany
DATE PUBLISHED Apr - Jun 1951
LANGUAGE Rumanian

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SOURCE Orizontu-1 (Emigre), No 4-6, 1951.

RUMANIAN AGRICULTURE DETERIORATES UNDER COMMUNISTS

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Since World War I, Rumania had been known as the granary of Europe. She was, and still remains, a typically agricultural country, whose soil and climate favor the cultivation of all temperate-climate plants. The droughts which, in former times, caused serious damage to corn and other crops are now greatly reduced through the aid of new agrotechnical developments.

Notwithstanding the favorable soil and climatic conditions of the country, Rumania's agricultural yield is very low. This is caused by various factors: insufficient and antiquated agricultural equipment; reduced buying power; large price discrepancy between agricultural and industrial products; abolition of rural property; inadequate training in modern methods; and lack of easy-term farm credit.

In the decade 1940 - 1950, crop yield and crop area varied considerably, but generally, the cultivated areas were much smaller than those prior to the war. The lowest points were reached in the first half of 1942 and the second half of 1947. This reduced acreage was the result of political measures such as grain price ceilings, compulsory delivery quotas, etc.

Wheat, which accounts for 30 percent of Rumania's total crop area, and corn, which accounts for 50 percent, are complementary crops. In 1941 and 1946, when wheat production reached its peak, corn production was at a minimum; conversely, in 1942 and 1947, when wheat harvests were low, corn harvests were correspondingly high. Barley, oats, and rye yields varied considerably from year to year, although the general pattern showed an increase in the second half of the decade. Rice, which before the war was cultivated only in small areas, achieved particular importance after the war, and attempts were made to meet the demands of internal consumption.

Medicinal plants comprise another category in Rumanian agriculture. The area planted to sunflowers, colza, soya, castor beans, mustard, poppies, and the like underwent a notable change. The area planted to colza and soya

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decreased from 61,000 hectares before the war to 32,000 hectares after the war. Conversely, the sunflower area increased from 43,200 to 191,000 hectares, and cotton, from 1,700 to 35,000 hectares. The area planted to flax, hemp, cotton, sugar beet, and tobacco also increased considerably during the decade.

Vegetable raising was given full support by the government at the expense of other crops. As an example, the pea crop increased over 600 percent, or from 42,100 to 263,000 hectares. The characteristic Rumanian method of growing vegetables is to plant beans, squash, potatoes, or other vegetables between rows of corn. Insofar as beans are concerned, such planting accounted for over three fourths of the entire bean production.

Cattle raising, the second main branch of Rumanian agriculture was never developed to the full extent that was needed, considering the vital role played by draft animals in the nation's agriculture. Horses, pigs, and poultry suffered the greatest losses during the decade 1940 - 1950, because of large confiscations by the Soviet Army. More than 330,000 oxen, 721,000 sheep, and 237,000 pigs were requisitioned between September 1944 and December 1945 alone. Moreover, the severe drought of 1945 - 1946 and the so-called agrarian reform of 1945, coupled with the deterioration of the nation's agricultural equipment, further aggravated the situation. Toward the end of the decade, large-scale collectivization was sought as the cure to all these evils, but instead, waste, poor management, and poverty were the only achievements.

Tools and equipment being entirely unsuited to the needs of modern agriculture, the crop yield was greatly reduced. The absence of basic farm machinery, such as tractors and grain drills, was especially felt. However, during the early years of the war, this condition improved somewhat because of the large imports of tractors and other agricultural machinery from Germany.

The agrarian reform of 1945 resulted in serious losses of tools and equipment, inasmuch as these were requisitioned by the state and received improper care.

Viticulture is another phase of Rumanian agricultural activity. Too many people in the past engaged in arbitrary grape cultivation without regard for suitable soil and climatic conditions, thereby depriving various areas of more important crops.

Fruit growing is quite important in all hilly regions of the country. Less than 50 percent of Rumania's fruit is cultivated in orchards; the rest grows wild throughout the land. Plum trees are the most numerous, representing 46 million of the 85 million fruit trees in Rumania in 1938, or a total of 54.6 percent, while apple trees account for 19 percent, cherry trees for 8.2 percent, walnut trees for 5.0 percent, pear trees for 4.6 percent, apricot trees for 4.4 percent, and other types of trees for 3.3 percent of the total.

The most valuable tree from the export point of view is the walnut, because of its value to the lumber industry and the value of walnuts as a commodity. The following are the foremost problems in Rumanian tree growth: cultivating a proportionate variety of trees, reducing losses due to waste (before the last war the losses from unpicked fruit were more than 20 percent of the total fruit yield), standardizing and canning the fruit, and organizing fruit-distribution centers.

The forest area occupies about one fourth of all land devoted to agriculture [sic], averaging approximately 0.36 hectare per capita. Annual percentage of growth varies between 2.1 and 2.9 cubic meters per hectare, poor in comparison with that of other European countries and in view of Rumania's

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soil and climate conditions. Of Rumania's total wooded area, coniferous forests account for 25 percent, and deciduous forests for the remainder, beech trees representing more than 40 percent of all Rumanian forests and oak about 25 percent. With respect to their age, over 50 percent of the forests are less than 40 years old, while 25 percent are more than 80 years old.

Fishing could become a large source of national revenue by proper exploitation of the numerous inland rivers and lakes. At present, over 90 percent of the fish are caught either in the Black Sea or in the Danube River and their respective streams. The average yearly fish catch during 1940 - 1944 was 24,373,800 kilograms varying between 16,060,400 in 1943 and 40,860,900 in 1942.

Considering the abundance of fish in Rumanian waters, the yearly catch is much smaller than it should be. This is caused by neglect of the inland waters, badly planned fish culture, and lack of proper fishing equipment.

Rumanian agriculture in the decade 1940 - 1950 was largely influenced by the political developments of the time. The war reduced greatly the number of farm laborers and draft animals available and curtailed any further agricultural developments. However, on the positive side it also brought about an increase in vegetables and medicinal plants, as well as the cultivation of heretofore unplanted crops such as the castor beans, rice, and cotton.

The end of the war did not usher in an era of prosperity. Losses suffered in the last months, reduction in both livestock and equipment, Soviet occupation and its resulting interference in every phase of Rumania's internal affairs, numerous state requisitions, all had a disastrous effect on Rumanian agriculture. Furthermore, the so-called agrarian reform of 1945, the drought of the 1945 - 1946 season, and the Soviet confiscation of more than 400,000 hectares formerly owned by Rumanians of German origin also contributed to the decline. As a result, the former "granary of Europe" suffered a most frightening famine in 1946 - 1947.

The installation of the Communist regime and especially the creation of the Rumanian People's Republic brought a complete change in the agricultural structure of the country. Following the socialist pattern of the Soviet Union, the Rumanian government established agricultural collectives and state farms. After first abolishing all large landholdings, the government started a campaign of annihilation directed against the landed farmer and the middle-class peasant. The destruction of these two classes was the greatest blow to the economy of the nation, since heretofore they had been the largest food growers. At the same time, the lack of agricultural machinery and the resistance of the Rumanian peasant contributed to the failure of the collectives, despite wholehearted support given by the government to the collectives.

At the end of 1950, there were only 1,000 agricultural collectives in the country, totaling 65,000 families and 268,640 hectares of land. This was less than 3 percent of the arable land and only 1.2 percent of the agricultural land. Moreover, in spite of large-scale efforts to establish collectives, government officials were obliged to denounce the grave errors committed by the collectivists, such as negligent waste of materials, inefficiency of state farms, high cost of production, failure to meet quotas, and many other faults of the system.

Rumania's agriculture under the Soviet regime has progressively deteriorated. In short, when the middle-class farmer was destroyed, the personal interest and initiative of every Rumanian peasant was likewise extinguished, leaving in its stead a dull awareness that the Soviet Union is the sole beneficiary of the fruits and labors of Rumanian agriculture.

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