



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

FACT SHEET

March 2006

Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust

The Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust is a food reserve for Public Law (P.L. 480) administered under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture. This reserve is available to meet emergency humanitarian food needs in developing countries, allowing the United States to respond to unanticipated food crises with U.S. commodities.

Up to 4 million metric tons of U.S. wheat, corn, sorghum, and rice can be kept in reserve. As of Jan. 15, 2006, the Emerson Trust held about 915,000 metric tons of wheat and \$107 million in cash. The cash can be used to administer activities or to purchase commodities not held in the Trust.

The reserve was originally authorized by the Agricultural Trade Act of 1980 as the Food Security Wheat Reserve. Subsequent legislation broadened the number of commodities that can be held in the reserve and, in 1998, it was renamed the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 reauthorized the Emerson Trust through 2007.

Guidelines for Release: The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to release commodities from the reserve to meet unanticipated emergency needs that cannot otherwise be met under Title II of P.L. 480, the U.S. government's major humanitarian food aid program. Each fiscal year, the Secretary can release up to 500,000 metric tons, plus up to another 500,000 metric tons that could have been, but was not, released in prior years. The Secretary is also authorized to release eligible commodities for use under all titles of P.L. 480 if domestic supplies of those commodities are determined to be in limited supply and would not meet the availability criteria of P.L. 480.

All commodities in the reserve and all donations made using the reserve are U.S. commodities.

Guidelines for Replenishment and Reimbursement: The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) may be reimbursed for the value of U.S. commodities released from the Emerson Trust from either P.L. 480 appropriations or direct appropriations for reimbursement. The CCC may then use that reimbursement to replenish commodities released. Direct appropriations may also be used for replenishment. Reimbursement to the CCC for ocean freight and related noncommodity costs occurs through the regular USDA appropriations process.

History of Releases Through January 2006

June 22, 2005: Release of up to 500,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, to relieve suffering and avert famine in Africa, especially Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Dec. 3, 2004: Release of 200,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, to further respond to emergency food needs in Sudan.

March 20, 2003: Release of 200,000 metric tons, with an additional 400,000 metric tons as needed, is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated emergency needs in Iraq and Africa.

March 19, 2003: Release of 200,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated emergency needs in Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Aug. 28, 2002: Release of up to 300,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated emergency needs in southern Africa.

June 7, 2002: Release of up to 275,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated emergency needs in southern Africa.

Jan. 22, 1996: Release of up to 1.5 million metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Titles I, II, and III, because of limited domestic supplies.

July 19, 1994: Release of up to 200,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated needs in the Caucasus region.

May 31, 1991: Release of up to 300,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated needs in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

Sept. 14, 1989: Release of up to an additional 2.0 million metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Titles I and II, because of limited domestic supplies.

Oct. 26, 1988: Release of up to 1.5 million metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Titles I and II, because of limited domestic supplies.

Dec. 5, 1984: Release of up to 300,000 metric tons is authorized for use in P.L. 480, Title II, for unanticipated needs in Africa.

Additional Information: For more information, contact: Programming Division, Export Credits, FAS/USDA, Stop 1034, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-1034; tel.: (202) 720-4221; fax: (202) 690-0251.

Information about USDA food aid efforts is also available on the FAS Web site:
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/food-aid.asp>

General information about FAS programs, resources, and services can be found at:
<http://www.fas.usda.gov>