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The following estimates, forecasts, and projections are mainly taken from recent publications of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Economic Research Service, and the World Agricultural Outlook Board of the USDA.

Corn. Corn ending stocks are forecast at 1.94 billion bushels for the 2000/2001 marketing year compared to 1.72 billion bushels at the end of the 1999/2000 season. The market year average price is expected to be between $1.70 and $1.90 per bushel. Projected U.S. corn exports are down 50 million bushels from the previous forecast because some importers, especially Japan, are expected to minimize purchases of corn varieties not approved for some, or all uses. As of March 21, the Farm Service Agency had paid corn growers loan deficiency payments on 7.73 billion bushels of corn, totaling $2.26 billion in payments and averaging $0.29 per bushel.

Soybeans. The U.S. soybean exports for 2000/2001 are up 15 million bushels this month to 975 million bushels, based mainly on prospective higher imports for China. U.S. soybean ending stocks are forecast at 330 million bushels, down 15 million bushels from the previous forecast. The market year average price is projected between $4.45 and $4.65 per bushel. Through March 21, growers had received loan deficiency payments on 2.35 billion bushels of soybeans, receiving just over $2.19 billion in payments averaging $0.93 per bushel.

Oranges. As of March 1, U.S. orange production for the 2000-01 season was 12.4 million tons, unchanged from last month's forecast but 6 % less than last season's final utilization. Florida's all orange forecast was 223 million boxes (10.0 million tons), the same as last month but 4 % less than the 233 million boxes (10.5 million tons) utilized last year. Early and midseason varieties in Florida are forecast at 127 million boxes (5.72 million tons), unchanged from a month ago but 5 % lower than last season. Florida's Valencia forecast of 96.0 million boxes (4.32 million tons) remains unchanged but is 3 % lower than last season's final utilization.

Grapefruit. The March 1 forecast of the 2000-01 grapefruit crop for the United States remains unchanged at 2.60 million tons, representing a 6 % decline from last season. The Florida all grapefruit forecast continues at 49.0 million boxes (2.08 million tons) but is 8 % below the previous season..

Cattle. January 1 **cattle on feed** in the U.S. feedlots with capacity of 1,000 or more totaled 11.7 million head, up 3% from a year earlier. February placements were down 16% from the previous year. Marketings of fed cattle were down 15% from 2000. At mid-March, **prices** for choice steers (Nebraska direct, 1100-1300 pounds) averaged $79 per cwt. Feeder steer prices (Oklahoma City, medium-large frame, 750-800 pounds) were around $88 per cwt in mid-March, up $2 from mid-February.

Hogs. During the first two weeks of March slaughter had been running about 1% below a year ago. Prices at mid-March (Iowa-Southern Minnesota direct, 230-250 pounds) were around $47 per cwt, up $7 from mid-February. Second quarter prices are expected to average around $45 per cwt.

Other Livestock. February **milk production** was down 4.3% from the previous year. Production per cow decreased 4.4%; however, the number of cows was up slightly. **Cheddar cheese prices** (U.S. 40 pound blocks, wholesale) were up the first two weeks of March. During January, total **cheese** production was 1.2% below the previous year, **butter** production was down 9.7% and **nonfat dry milk** production was down 12.1%. US table **egg production** during February 2001 totaled 6.52 billion, down 2% from February 2000. Wholesale market **egg prices** for the first quarter of 2001 (Grade A large, New York) are expected to average 75-76 cents per dozen, compared with 63.3 cents a year ago. Second quarter 2001 egg prices are expected to average 68-72 cents per dozen, compared with 62.1 cents a year earlier. **Broiler-** Type chicks hatched during February 2001 totaled 670 million, down 4% from last year. Cumulative Broiler-Type Placements in 15 selected states thru March 17, 2001, were 1.58 billion, slightly below a year ago. The wholesale 12-city average price for whole **broilers** for the first quarter of 2001 is expected to be 57-58 cents, compared with 54.6 cents from the first quarter of last year. Second quarter 2001 broiler prices are expected to average 57-59 cents per pound, compared with the 55.7 cents for a year earlier. Cumulative **turkey poult placements** for the 2001 marketing year through February 2001 were 143 million, 1% above the same period a year ago. Placements in February 2001, at 23.7 million, were down 2% from last February. Prices (8-16 lb. hens, Eastern Region) for the first quarter of 2001 are expected to be 61-62 cents compared with 62.9 cents for the first quarter last year. Turkey prices for the second quarter of 2001 are expected to average 64-68 cents per pound, compared with the 69.0 cents average for the second quarter of 2001. **Supplies in refrigerated warehouses** at the end of February 2001 compared with a year earlier were: total chicken, down 13%; turkey, down 7%; pork, down 10%; pork bellies, down 4%; beef, down 2%; frozen orange juice, up 11%, butter, down 23%; and American cheese, down 5%.

Trade. March U.S. **trade projections** for soybeans, beef, and pork improved while 2000/2001 export prospects for corn and cotton declined, compared with last month. Wheat, rice, broilers, and turkeys were unchanged from February. March projections for the volume of exports for the 2000/2001 marketing year compared to 1999/2000 are: **wheat** up 1%; **corn** up 3%; **rice** down 9%; **soybeans** up slightly; **soybean meal** down 8%; **soybean oil** up 3%; and **cotton** up 2%. March projections for the volume of meat exports in calendar 2001 compared to 2000 are: **beef** up 1%; **pork** up 3%; **broilers** up 3%; and **turkeys** up slightly. The **U.S. trade** deficit for goods and services increased to $33.3 billion in January, from a revised $33.2 billion in December. The **U.S. agricultural trade** surplus was $966 million in January, compared with $1.406 billion in December.

Prices. The rate of **inflation**, as monitored by the CPI for all urban consumers, increased 0.4% in February and has increased 3.5% over the last 12 months. The **PPI** increased 0.1% in February, and has increased 4.0% for the 12-month period ending in February. The February **prime rate**, averaging 9.50%, was down from 9.05 in January. Compared to a year earlier, **feed** prices in January were up 12%; **feeder livestock and poultry** prices were down 1%; **fertilizer** was up 44%; **ag chemicals** up 12%; **farm machinery** was down 1%; **seeds** up 2%; and **fuels** up 18%.

World Weather and Crop Developments (March 12-18). In the **United States**, a wide band of heavy precipitation boosted moisture reserves in the lower Mississippi Valley and Southeast. The moisture was beneficial along the gulf Coast, but interior areas experienced flash floods. In Florida's Peninsula and along the mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain, rainfall was lighter and moisture shortages remained. Another line of precipitation provided additional moisture for parts of the central Great Plains and Corn Belt. California experienced favorably warm, dry weather, while the Pacific Northwest received much-needed rain and snow. Mild weather caused crops to break dormancy in southeastern **Europe**, but dryness lingered, hampering growth. In **FSU-western**, continued unusually mild weather prompted winter grains to break dormancy in southern areas and raised soil temperatures to favorable levels for early spring grain planting. Unseasonable warmth increased moisture demands of developing winter wheat in the **Middle East**. In **Australia**, showers in New South Wales raised concern for maturing cotton, but boosted long-term moisture reserves for winter agriculture. Mostly dry, seasonably warm weather spurred filling summer crops toward maturity in **South Africa**. Warmer weather favored winter crop development across eastern **China**, while showers increased moisture supplies across theYangtze Valley. Heavy showers continued in **Thailand**, causing localized flooding. Showers slowed summer crop harvesting across the northern **Brazilian** growing areas and portions of central **Argentina**. A developing drought worsened conditions for winter grains in southern **Morocco**, while the third consecutive week of dryness increased stress on crops in **Algeria** and **Tunisia**.

Other News. **Continuing record-large meat production**, lackluster growth in exports, and a slowing domestic economy may pressure meat prices downward. A combination of reduced winter acreage in first-quarter 2001 and several bouts of sub-freezing weather in Florida have reduced supplies of fresh-market vegetables and raised produce prices. **Lettuce has never been more popular** in the U.S., the average American consumed 33 pounds of lettuce in 2000--an all-time high. In response to growing consumer demand for variety, freshness, and convenience, and as a result of technological innovations in packaging materials, lettuce shippers now offer their customers everything from heads of iceberg to ready-to-eat salads. They have also adopted various business strategies to manage buyer demand for greater volume, broader product lines, and year-round availability. **"Smart growth" is a catch-all phrase** to describe a number of land use policies to influence the pattern and density of new development. Smart growth directs development to designated areas (cities and older suburbs) through incentives and disincentives, without actually prohibiting development outside them or threatening individual property rights. **While the general weakness in agricultural markets** of the past couple of years continues, early signs of recovery are evident. Many farm sector indicators continue to remain favorable, including asset values and debt levels, due in large part to record government payments. **The Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture**, established under the 1996 Farm Act, released its report on January 31, 2001, concluding that the Federal government should develop policies and programs promoting global competitiveness of U.S. agricultural products. **Japan's government is revising its agricultural policies** and programs to stem the decline in self-sufficiency in food production, and to ensure that its farm program expenditures will be exempt from reductions required under World Trade Organization rules.

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