

EVD KW Zentrale 1914–1918/1–2

*Le Directeur du War Trade Board, V. McCormick,
au Ministre de Suisse à Washington, H. Sulzer¹*

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Washington, 29th November 1918

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 16th and 22nd of November², which I assure you are receiving careful and considerate attention. You will aid us materially in reaching a decision on the matters involved if you will be so good as to furnish us with further information on the following points:

1. Is it certain that increased shipments of breadstuff grains are a necessary prerequisite to an increase in the bread ration in Switzerland? On page 3 of your Memorandum of November 16th³ you say: «Furthermore, an increase in the bread allowance is out of the question until an adequate supply for three or four months is secured. Only if imports increase in the required proportion can we make use of this year's crop to reserve such a stock». I note, however, that on page 4 of the same Memorandum you indicate that the available supplies (as of September 21) would last till February 25th, 1919, with an average 350 gram ration beginning January 1st, 1919 (the 260-gram consumption meanwhile continuing). Does this not afford the necessary reserve for three months (November 25, 1918–February 25, 1919)?

The Bureau of Research of the War Trade Board has calculated that with an average 300 gram ration from December 1, as suggested in your letter of November 22, the supplies (257,860 tons) of September 21 as stated in your Memorandum of November 16 (deducting consumption, September 21 to December 1, on the basis of an average 260 gram daily consumption for 4,000,000 people, and ignoring importations September 21 to December 1) would last till May 2, 1919, without any further importation.

2. I find a considerable disparity between the statement on page 4 of your

1. *Cette lettre se réfère aux négociations menées à Washington en vue du renouvellement de l'accord américano-suisse du 5 décembre 1917, échu le 30 septembre 1918 et prorogé depuis lors à titre provisoire. La France et l'Angleterre, en tant que puissances contrôlant les voies et les moyens de transports vers la Suisse, participèrent à la négociation et furent co-signataires du nouvel accord du 22 janvier 1919, cf. n° 136. Voir aussi le manuscrit – et les photocopies des documents qui s'y rapportent – intitulé: Dokumente zur Geschichte der amtlichen Beziehungen zwischen der Schweiz und den USA, zusammengestellt und kommentiert von Herrn Minister Dr. Carl Stucki, Februar 1963, E 2001 (H) 1976/17/299, 301.*

2. *Non retrouvées.*

3. *Non retrouvé. Il s'agit de l'exposé suisse du 16 novembre, rédigé dans le but d'orienter les négociateurs américains sur la situation économique en Suisse (Négociations. Notes concernant les différentes pièces au dossier et résumé de la situation au 25 décembre 1918. Sans date. EVD KW Zentrale 1914–1918/2–3); l'essentiel de cet exposé semble repris dans le texte établi par la légation de Suisse à Washington, reproduit en annexe: Food Supplies of Switzerland and Present Requirements.*

29 NOVEMBRE 1918

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Memorandum of November 16 concerning the supplies of food in Switzerland, as of September 21, and the data procured by the Bureau of Research.

a. In your Memorandum the 'inland crop' which I interpret to mean the domestic crop, is stated to have covered 113,000 hectares, and to have aggregated 170,000 tons. The area given (113,000 hectares) is approximately that devoted in 1918 to wheat and rye alone (111,000 hectares), as reported by the International Institute of Agriculture, but the estimated combined yield of wheat and rye is, as reported by the same authority, 240,000 metric tons. The area devoted to the three bread cereals (wheat, rye and barley) was 120,000 hectares, according to the International Institute, and the combined yield 254,000 tons. If oats and corn are added, the 'inland crop' is reported to have covered 158,000 hectares, and to have totaled 338,900 metric tons.

b. A yield of 1.5 tons per hectare is given in your Memorandum for the unitemized 'inland crop'. Statistics of the International Institute of Agriculture extending back to 1907 give the lowest average yield per hectare for wheat as 2.1 tons, and indicate that in 1918 the average yield was 2.35 tons per hectare. The 1918 yield for both rye and barley appears from its data to have been 1.6; that for oats 2.15; and for corn 3.03. In no case is the yield as low as that given in your Memorandum, and for wheat it is 57 per cent higher.

3. While the potato crop in 1918 in Switzerland was slightly less than that of 1917, is it not true that it was greater than the average crop of recent pre-war years? Though the present potato ration in Switzerland is only 250 grams a day, the Swiss in this particular are better off than the people of various other countries, for in Germany the potato ration is 207 grams; in Austria 65 grams; in Hungary 143; and in Norway 143.

On page 3 of your Memorandum of November 16 you say with reference to potatoes: 'In order to compensate this serious deficit, it is of the utmost necessity that we receive a monthly allotment of 12,000 tons of corn'. On page 4 of the same Memorandum, in setting forth the available supplies in Switzerland, you deduct from the 'total supplies' the '28,080 tons necessary to balance in some measure deficiency in this year's potato supply'. Do not these proposals, taken together, provide double compensation?

4. I note from your statement of November 22 concerning the shipment of grain to Switzerland between September 1 and November 22 that 35,070 tons (presumably metric tons) went forward. The time involved was approximately 12 weeks, giving average shipments of 2,922 tons per week.

In your Memorandum of November 16, it is stated that on September 21 there were in Swiss warehouses 35,600 tons presumably of bread cereals, and that 52,260 tons were in transit or stored at French ports. The production in Switzerland in 1918 of wheat, rye, and barley, minus requirements for seed, is calculated by the Bureau of Research at 231,740 metric tons. The sum of these supplies gave Switzerland a stock of cereals amounting to 319,600 tons. Since September 21 nine weeks have passed, bringing, presumably, 2,922 tons of grain each week, or a total of 26,298 tons. Altogether, Switzerland therefore would appear to have a bread cereal supply of 345,898 tons, available for consumption.

On the basis of a present average per capita daily consumption of bread in Switzerland of 260 grams (your Memorandum of November 16, p.2), and assuming that Switzerland adopt a 300 gram ration on December 1, 1918, instead of on January 1, 1919, it would appear that the grain supplies now on hand or in transit (to November 22) would suffice for 298 days, or until July 15, 1919.

ANNEXE

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Washington, 16th November 1918

FOOD SUPPLIES OF SWITZERLAND AND PRESENT REQUIREMENTS

I. Bread Consumption

A. Present (insufficient) ration

1. Individual consumption

a) Principle:

Barring the following exceptions, the standard general allowance is at present 225 gr. of bread and 18.5 gr. of flour daily.

b) Exceptions:

1. Children – 150 gr.

All children under two years of age (except those of producers) are given a children's bread card, entitling them to 150 gr. of bread daily and 500 gr. of flour monthly.

2. Individuals on the Relief Fund list: 275.

A supplementary allowance of 50 gr. of bread daily is granted to those persons who, having proved that their resources are insufficient for their support have consequently been placed on the Relief Fund list and can secure bread and milk at reduced prices. The number of such persons, which in October 1917 totaled 601,000, was increased to 689,000 in June 1918, a certain number of whom are not granted this additional 50 gr., being already entitled to the 100 gr. supplementary allowance granted to hard labor workmen (see below).

3. Hard labor workmen: 325 gr.

In accordance with article 29 of the decision of the Swiss Military Department of September 14th, 1917, which reads as follows:

'... are considered as belonging to the class of hard labor workmen, adults who perform manual labor requiring continuous physical exertion, that is to say, during at least 20 days of the month and 8 hours a day. 400,000 workmen over 16 years of age who fulfil the foregoing conditions are granted a supplementary allowance of 100 gr.

4. Army – 400 gr. Soldiers under arms receive a 400 gr. ration.

5. Producers

Producers are allowed to retain 135 kg. of grain a year per member of household. Their grain consumption amounts to 370 gr. daily.

NOTE. In this memorandum the term of producers is used to denote those farmers who produce sufficient wheat for their own and their families' support.

2. National consumption

Taking into account the foregoing figures, the daily average consumption per capita is 260 gr. of grain (flour included) which amounts to a total daily consumption of 1040 tons.

B. Why the present allotments must be increased.

At present, as we have seen, the daily bread ration of the large majority of the Swiss population is 225 gr. of bread per capita.

The present state of undernourishment, especially of the urban population, makes it imperative that this standard ration be increased by one third and fixed at 300 gr. daily and that a proportionate increase be granted to all other classes of the nonproducing consumers.

This increase would seem justified even if other essential foodstuffs were normally abundant and cheap in Switzerland. However, as they are all scarce and as the prices of several of these commodities place them beyond the reach of the average consumer, the increase in the bread ration is an absolute necessity if economic and social catastrophes are to be avoided.

On the other hand, an increase in the bread allowance would be a very dangerous experiment before increased shipments are absolutely guaranteed. This alone would allow us to set aside a part of our domestic crop as a reserve for emergencies.

The daily potato ration is only 250 grammes, and even so it is not certain that this amount will be secured by everyone, as the supply of potatoes formerly imported from Germany and Holland will probably not be available this winter. In order to compensate this serious deficit, it is of the utmost necessity that we receive a substantial monthly allotment of corn.

No meat ration has as yet been prescribed, but meat is too expensive for many laboring families. If equally distributed among the population, each person would only have from 50 to 60 gr. a day, according to the season (from March till July still less).

There are hundreds of thousands of individuals in Switzerland who have to rely for their maintenance exclusively on those foodstuffs, the administration and apportionment of which have been taken over by the Government.

Such persons are restricted to the following amounts daily:

Daily Allowance	Albumen	Fats	Hydrates of carbon	Calories
260 gr. Grain (bread & flour incl.)	26.69	1.305	122.20	575.47
3½ gr. Butter	—	2.71	—	26.32
10 gr. Pâtes aliment.	0.9	0.08	7.3	34.4
14 gr. rice	0.84	—	10.8	48.0
20 gr. sugar	—	—	200	99.5
13 gr. corn	1.17	0.442	9.36	46.4
½ litre milk (1 pint)	15.0	15.0	20.0	333.0
¼ potatoes	5.0	—	50.0	222.5
13 gr. grease	—	12.87	—	107.0
	49.60	32.407	239.66	1491.59

Before the war, the Swiss workman, like the American, consumed approximately 4000 calories daily. In 1917, the nonproducer consumed on an average only 2750 calories per adult, including everything (imports, meats, etc.). The situation has since become even more serious because of the scarcity of milk and cheese, due to the reduction in importation of cattle, fodder and fertilizers.

According to reliable estimates, cattle has undergone an average decrease in weight of 50 kg. per head and the yearly production of milk has decreased by a sum which amounts to 110 litres per head of the population.

The pork herd, which in 1916 totaled 544,000 has decreased to 364,000 in 1918. The only remedy to this serious reduction, due to the lack of food, is an increase in the importation of oil-cakes and corn.

The scarcity of oats has resulted in a grave undernourishment of horses; we require a minimum allotment of 8000 tons of oats monthly to overcome this serious difficulty, which tends still further to weaken our agricultural production.

The following table shows the deficit in the importation of the most important cereals for the period beginning January 1st, 1918 and ending September 30th, 1918.

Commodity	Allot. for 9 Months according Paris Agreement	Imports Jan. 1 to Sept. 30	Deficit
	Tons	Tons	Tons
Wheat & Rye	225,000	115,258	109,742
Oats	90,000	23,970	66,030
Barley	23,625	13,681	9,944
Corn	105,000	16,122	88,878
Oil-cakes	34,500	11,127	23,373

The foregoing figures may suffice to show how alarming the present situation is.

II. Bread Supplies as of the 21st of Septembre

A. Inland Crop

1. Swiss crop (113,000 hectares at 1.5 ton)	170,000 tons
2. Minus Producers' consumption (700,000 at 135 kg a year)	<u>94,500 tons</u>
Balance for rest of population	75,500 tons

B. Imported Supplies

1. Stored in Swiss warehouses	35,600 tons
2. En route or at French ports (including 5400 tons owed by French Govt)	<u>52,260 tons</u>
	87,860 tons

C. Total Supplies available

1. Total supplies	163,360 tons
2. Minus 28,000 tons for the manufacture of pâtes alimentaires	<u>28,000 tons</u>
Total of available supplies	135,280 tons /

This supply would last 123 days on the present insufficient ration, or if the bread ration be increased as above (as it must be) for the period beginning January 1st 1919, for 155 days only, that is to say until February 25th.

NOTE: Since September 21st, 29,900 tons of bread grain have been shipped from the United States. Thus increased, our supplies can last 29 days more, i.e. until March 24th.

III. Conclusion

The conclusion to be derived from the above memorandum is clearly evident. Switzerland's situation with regard to food supplies, especially bread grain and corn, is very serious, and undernourishment threatens the health of a considerable part of the population.

Owing to the low stock on hand and to the considerable delay to which arrivals are subject, an immediate resumption of regular shipments of cereals is of the utmost necessity.

We require, in order to meet the pressing needs stated above, monthly allotments of 40,000 tons of bread grain, 10–15,000 tons of corn and 8,000 tons of oats.