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Author(s): Candidate of Economic Sciences L. Vashchukov: ``Economic  
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Subslug: [Article by Candidate of Economic Sciences L. Vashchukov:  
 ``Economic Barometer: ``Ordinary Table or Table Fit for a  
 King``]

## FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Article by Candidate of Economic Sciences L. Vashchukov:  
 ``Economic Barometer: ``Ordinary Table or Table Fit for a King``]
2. [Text] Quite recently many of us grew indignant that meat, sausage, butter, and vegetables were disappearing from the stores, Now it is bread's turn. Some cities are introducing rationing on sales of bread, reminiscent of a blockade. The lines waiting outside the empty stores voice the idea: Hasn't the battle for the throne driven concern for our daily bread out of officials' minds?
3. Let us look through the eyes of impartial statistics at the food supplies with which the country is going into the winter.
4. We will use only facts and figures, bearing in mind that they are stubborn things.
5. The fact that the state granaries supposed to store the grain are half-empty is particularly alarming. Yet the grain fields cannot be said to have failed to produce the goods. Some 160 million tonnes of grain-52 million tonnes less than last year-have been harvested, yet only 39 million tonnes have been brought to the state granaries, at a time when a year ago the granaries had received 66 million tonnes. To what are we to attribute the fall in grain procurements? Reluctance on the part of kolkhozes and sovkhoses to sell grain on the cheap. They were quick to make out the situation: It is far more profitable to barter grain or trade it with stockbrokers, who sometimes pay 10 times more per tonne than the state.
6. Little feed grain has been procured. Roughly 25-27 million tonnes. Yet roughly 48 million tonnes is required. Where is the rest to come from? Some of this will be covered by kolkhozes and

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sovkhozes, but a considerable proportion will have to be bought abroad. As in previous years, we have been put in a spot by mismanagement and tremendous arrears, and grain losses have been permitted in many areas.

7. Moreover there has been a grim "war" for local power that has taken the concerns of autonomous formation, kray, and oblast leaders far from the unharvested grain fields. Yet the fields were shivering in the merciless winds of an inclement fall. Some grain fields were left unharvested. Not just tens of hectares, what is more, but 7 million hectares.

8. Many customers today do not even look in the meat stores. They know that they are empty. Why? Meat products were in short supply before, now the shortage has become catastrophic. Meat production in the public sector has dropped 12 percent. Some 17.3-17.5 million tonnes-roughly 1.5 million tonnes less than in 1990- will be procured. Naturally, state procurements will also fall, which will "reduce" the already meager state resources.

9. For those who are already living beyond the poverty line now, before the so-called price liberalization, the most affordable product is milk. But often it is not on sale. When it does appear, the lines outside the stores stretch for 100 meters. The reason is the same as for meat: Milk production has dropped, and by the end of the year roughly 8 million tonnes less than last year will have been produced.

10. Many people will have to give up their omelet and fried eggs. The price of eggs has risen drastically and production has declined. Roughly 3 million fewer eggs will be procured. It looks as though we have quite simply resolved the eternal philosophical conundrum of which came first-the chicken or the egg. You will not see either in the stores. They appear far less often than unidentified flying objects in our skies.

11. Now a word about potatoes. For a long time they were known as the second bread. Rightly so, since they were often a substitute for real bread. What will happen now that potatoes are becoming a delicacy for some people? Some 60 million tonnes have been harvested, but only 6.3 million tonnes procured. The population has quite a lot of potatoes which they are keeping until the spring and will then put on the market, where the prices have now soared rapidly. Quite recently during the winter, in January, the people of Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, Yerevan, and other cities would pay 1.5-2 rubles [R] per kilogram of potatoes; now they shell out R4-5 each and in some places R10. Even renowned pole vaulter Sergey Bubka probably could not have withstood such a rapid rise in altitude. In order not

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to overstrain himself, he gradually increased his records skillfully, one or two centimeters at a time. There are no laws for our new economic vaulters: They make up all the prices, raising them higher and higher.

12. Many people comment: The emptier the stores, the fuller the market. You cannot help wondering: Is output destined for the state making its way there in a roundabout way? That is most likely the case. But market prices.... The customer looks at them and clutches his chest. Who can afford meat at R80 per kilogram, butter at R50, and eggs at R30 a dozen? Apart from our home-grown millionaires. But what about the rest, whose monthly earnings are only enough for around 10 days?

13. There was an old saying: 'If there's bread on the table, the table is fit for a king.' Are our state's leaders trying to deny this saying and prove to the country's inhabitants that a table can be fit for a king even without bread?

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