

U. S. Council of Farm Cooperatives Has Annual Meeting

Secretary of Agriculture Cliff Harkin said they will have an increasingly significant role in developing farmer cooperative organizations and in helping improve incomes for the nation's agricultural industry.

Keynoting the 42nd Annual Meeting of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives held on January 12-13, Secretary Harkin said that "Countless farmers have found that it pays to belong to a good, going, well-managed cooperative."

He disclosed that the country's 7,700 farm supply and marketing cooperatives realized net savings of \$600 million last year for distribution to members and patrons, over and above what they received from their market-

ings and savings through cooperative purchasing.

Ag Trade Potential

Secretary Harkin said that in its potential for foreign trade expansion, agriculture can be regarded as a "growth industry", if improved access to world markets—especially Europe—can be attained. He called on farm organizations to strive for understandings with their European counterparts that can lead to "trade cooperation instead of trade chaos."

On a similar note, the 600 delegates to the NCFC annual convention heard Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas call for an expansion of agricultural exports. "Our programs must look to overseas markets, and we must be prepared to compete for maximum utilization of our products throughout the world," he said. Dole stated that if U.S. farm exports are to reach \$10 billion by 1980—a necessary objective—they must move freely in the markets of the world. "Agriculture has received entirely too little attention in negotiations for trade liberalization," he declared.

Freight Rate Impact

In other Council presentations, George M. Stafford, chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission, discussed the growing crisis in transportation and its effect upon farmer cooperatives.

He said that the I.C.C. recognizes that the farmer is less able than many others to pass transportation rate increases on to the consumer. "Rate increases may result in higher food costs for the consumer, but the farmer often is hurt more than the housewife who goes into shock when the bells on the cash register stop clanging and the bad news comes forth," said Stafford.

The Chairman further stated that more and more farmers are finding that the slim margin of profit they expect from a cur-

rent harvest can be cancelled overnight by a freight rate increase. "The across-the-board approach to raising freight rates only serves to lock in all of the ingrained defects that may exist in the railroad rate structure," he said.

Stafford emphasized that general rate increases have a way of tipping the delicate balances that govern market relationships for cooperatives. "Many observers, carriers, and shippers alike believe that whatever logic was used in the past to establish these relationships has largely been destroyed by rate increases that are applied across-the-board," he declared.

Political Action Needed

Reporting on the National Council's activity on legislative matters during 1970, Executive Vice President Kenneth D. Naden urged all Council members to give more attention to public affairs in order to assure their ultimate survival in true cooperative form. "The time is here for more—not less—political action," he said.

"We found again in 1970, as we have before, that unity and involvement of the membership is the only dependable effective route to success in legislative affairs," said Naden. "No one farmer, or local cooperative, or even a regional cooperative has much political power. But coordinated action through an organization such as the National Council can accomplish something of significance."

Council Officers Elected

Turning to Council business matters, delegates elected the following slate of new officers for the coming year: President, Robert C. McInturf, president of Allied Grape Growers, Madera, California; First Vice President, C. W. Paris, executive vice president and general manager of Gold Kist, Inc., Atlanta, Ga.; and Second Vice President, W. Gordon Leith, corporate vice president and secretary of Farmland Industries, Inc., Kansas City, Mo.

The National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is the national legislative arm of some 100 farm marketing and purchasing cooperatives and 34 state cooperative councils located throughout the United States.

Peanut Peculiarity

The peanut's manner of fruiting is remarkable in that when the petals have fallen, the flower stalk bends downward, pushing the growing pods into the ground, where they develop and ripen below the surface.

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