

# Farmers say agricultural economy is in trouble

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Farmers from all across the country voiced serious concern about the health of the U.S. farm economy in a survey conducted October 5th over the Agriculture Council of America "Farm Line." By overwhelming margins, they said their gross farm income will sharply decrease from last year, and they will be forced to defer major purchases until income improves.

The information was gathered by a panel of high-level experts on the farm economy and representatives of the national news media. Interest in the toll-free phone-in ran extremely high, with about 400 farmers and local businessmen completing calls during the five-hour program and the phone company reporting a very substantial back-up of callers who couldn't get through.

The survey results were personally presented to Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland, who has participated in earlier Farm Line programs. Bergland said "the information would be of great value to the Agriculture Department" because although he has heard about the problems at many meetings around the country .... "this is the first time we've seen the farm

economic situation studied in a nationwide survey."

Each caller who spoke with one of the 35 panelists in Washington was asked to respond to a special questionnaire designed to

assess opinion on their economic situation and gauge reaction to the new Farm Bill. Eighty-eight per cent of those polled said their incomes would drop in 1977, eight per cent said their incomes would remain the same and four per cent said their earnings would increase. When asked how the current farm price situation has affected their personal standard of living: eighty-two per cent said it has lowered it, 17 per cent said it has maintained it and one per cent has improved it.

The Farm Line survey showed extreme caution toward future purchasing. Ninety-six per cent of the respondents said they would only purchase those items necessary and will defer major purchases until some later date when income improves compared to the four per cent who indicated they intend to make capital purchases as planned.

In his analysis of the survey results, ACA Chairman Dale Hendricks remarked "I think agriculture is in its worst shape in years, and people are deeply concerned about

what to do. Bankers are worried. Farmers are worried. The consumer doesn't know what to expect."

"And young farmers who've just started are the ones who are going to have the most difficult time - a lot of them won't survive due to economic pressures," added Hendricks, a dairy producer from Bloomfield, Iowa.

The majority of callers also doubted the effectiveness of the recently signed Farm Bill. Forty-eight per cent said it will not be of assistance to farmers. Thirty-two per cent of the callers felt the new bill will be of assistance and 20 per cent were undecided.

A great number of callers felt they didn't know enough about the new farm program. "How are consumers supposed to understand the Farm Bill, if we farmers don't know enough about it," offered a caller from Kansas.

Reaction to the projected farm strike in the Midwest was mixed. Forty-five per cent of those polled thought the strike would be effective, 42 per cent felt it would not be effective and 13 per cent were not sure.

ACA operates the Farm Line periodically to provide a vehicle for discussion to let people at the local level discuss major agricultural

issues, with key decision-makers in Washington, D.C. As a non-political and non-lobbying organization ACA does not advocate any particular position or view; the opinions expressed via

the Farm Line are strictly those of the participants.

The Agriculture Council of America, formed in 1973, is made up of individual farmers and ranchers

nationwide, farm and commodity groups, and companies that supply the farmer. Its purpose is to improve communications between farmers and urban consumers.

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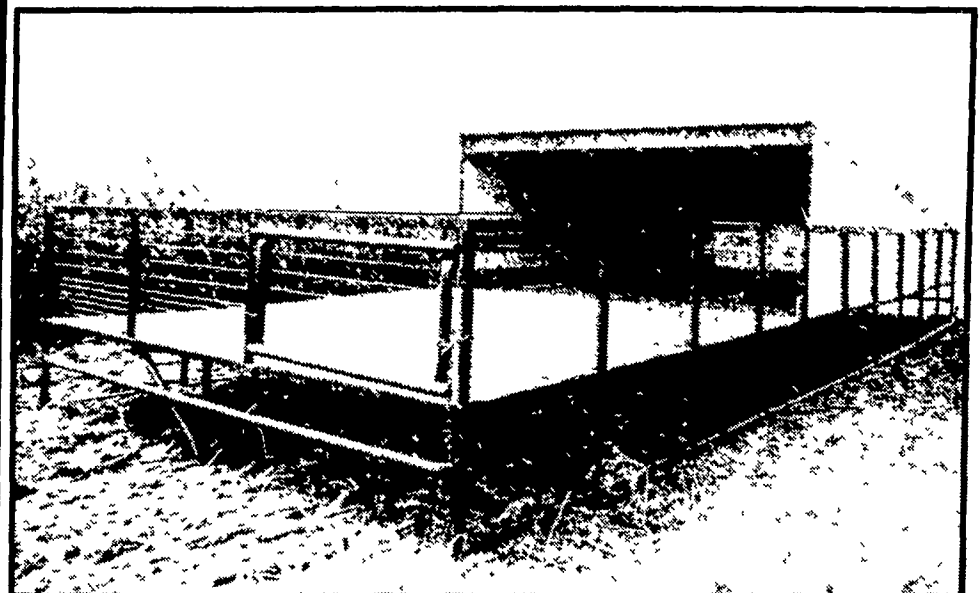
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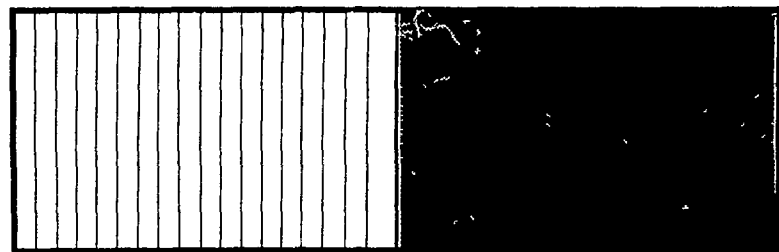
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