

USDA plans to aid drought-stricken farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jim Williams stands ready to aid farmers who live in heat and drought-stricken areas and qualify for federal assistance.

Williams said federal officials are "extremely concerned" about the potential effects of the heat wave on crops and livestock and is continuing to assess the situation. However, he said drought assistance programs—principally emergency livestock feed, natural disaster payments and economic emergency loans—are already in operation and being applied when and wherever needed.

Livestock owners whose normal feed production is cut at least 40 percent may receive financial assistance through the emergency livestock feed program of up to half the cost of the additional feed they must buy. Farmers in more than 420 counties whose county agricultural conservation and stabilization committees determined that disaster conditions existed in their areas are now receiving this aid. Producers may contact their local USDA Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service office to learn how and if they may apply for such assistance.

Wheat, rice, feed grain and cotton producers suffering abnormally low yields may contact their ASCS office for disaster assistance information. County ASC committees are responsible for determining the extent of damage and amount of payment.

USDA also makes emergency loans at 5 per-

cent interest through its Farmers Home Administration to farmers whose production has been cut by at least 20 percent in an area declared a natural disaster area and to those who cannot obtain credit elsewhere. These loans already have been made to more than 320 drought-affected counties. FmHA state directors may determine additional counties eligible for this aid.

Williams said USDA is cooperating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, designated by President Carter to coordinate federal assistance in the affected regions. The department is also preparing a comprehensive assessment of the impact recent weather has had on crops and livestock and compiling a listing of commitments made under on-going programs, Williams said. This report will be made available in the next few days and will be updated on a regular basis.

The latest cause of the drought and high temperatures was a high pressure system which expanded in the past three weeks from the southwest across the Great Plains into the southeastern states. However, rain and falling temperatures last weekend brought relief to many hard-hit areas. Rainfall was below normal for several months in the Northern Plains and spring planted crop yields have been seriously reduced.

Williams said, "The 10-day forecast calls for near to above-normal rainfall and above normal temperatures in major corn-producing states. In the next few weeks, USDA will closely

watch the effect of the weather on soil moisture supplies, which are critical to corn and soybeans as they enter their reproduction period."

Plans proceeding for 1981 pork congress

DES MOINES, IA. — Plans are proceeding at a rapid pace for next year's American Pork Congress to be held March 11 to 13, 1981 at Bartle Hall, Kansas City, MO.

The Congress serves as the annual meeting for the more than 97,000 members of the National Pork Producers Council, the nation's largest commodity organization.

A regular feature at the American Pork Congress is the trade show. This year it promises to be larger than ever, with space in Bartle Hall to accommodate 400-500 companies and their products.

Pork Congress coordinator Mike Simpson, NPPC's Director of Special Activities, said applications are now available for exhibit space. A company should make initial arrangements for exhibit space by September 1, 1980, by writing Mike Simpson, American

Pork Congress, P.O. Box 10383, Des Moines, IA 50306.

Traditional events to be held at the '81 Congress include the annual meetings of both NPPC and the 15,000 member National Porkettes (NPPC's auxiliary group), recognition of state Pork All-Americans, the Annual Banquet, the crowning of the National Pork Queen and educational seminars for both pork producers and Porkettes.

Simpson said sites for two future American Pork Congresses have also been picked. In 1982, the event will be in Indianapolis, IN, and in 1983, it will be St. Louis, MO.

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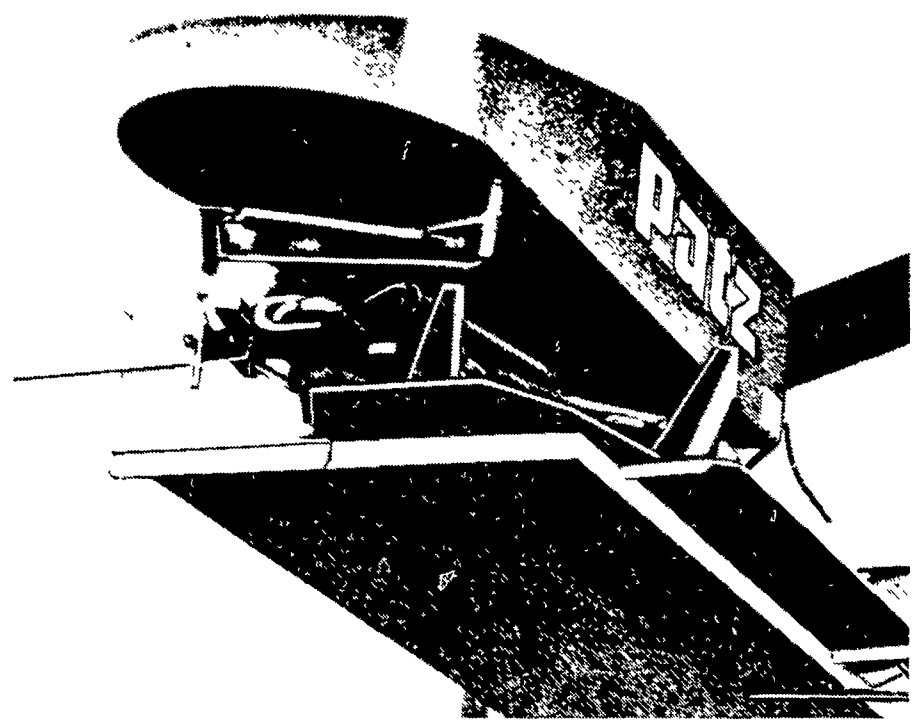
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