

AAW presents Washington-on-the-line

HERSHEY — American Agri-Women looked at foreign trade policies Tuesday during a Washington-on-the-line telephone linkup with agriculture attache's from three foreign embassies.

Special guest "speakers" were Eric Denig for the embassy of the Netherlands and Mario Balava representing Brazil, both linked up through their Washington embassy offices, and Robert Swift, speaking from Chicago for the Australian government.

Washington editor of THE PACKER, and THE DROVERS, Larry Waterman, served as moderator. Three convention delegates representatives, Doris Royal, Julie Hinter and Audrey Sickinger, served as panelists questioning the attaches on a variety of agriculture trade concerns.

One percent of agriculture exports from the Netherlands comes to the United States, mostly in dairy and horticulture products, including the famous Holland floral bulbs. In turn, the Dutch buy some \$2 million worth of American farm products, mostly grains, meats and soybeans.

Since land, much of it reclaimed from the invading sea, is an ongoing problem in Holland, AAW represen-

tatives questioned the Dutch solutions to another domestic farm worry, land use. According to Denig, their 10 million acres of farmland come under strict zoning laws at national, provincial and local levels.

Dutch farmers operate under regulations telling them which areas can be farmed and under some conditions, even how the land can be used, although cropping choices are theirs.

"Everybody complains about it," commented Denig matter-of-factly. However, since the country is so small, and agriculture so vital to the Netherland's domestic economy, the population has had to accept such restrictions.

Brazilian agriculture attache Mario Belava noted that almost half of his country's exports are farm products, mostly coffee, cocoa, sugar and soybeans, with a large percentage sold to the U.S.

Convention delegates, questioning future increases of Brazilian exports of soybeans of the U.S., were assured that shipments of the oil crop are not likely to be boosted much in the next five years. Instead, Belava foresaw a Brazilian cropping program shift in the future toward more needed crops.

Part of that shift could be

geared toward Brazil's highly successful domestic grain alcohol production. In 1975, the government of the large South American country plunged into a program of partially replacing gasoline in all vehicle use. After reaching their goal this year of 20 percent alcohol to 80 percent gasoline in motor fuels, plans for the next five years are directed to total conversion to alcohol-burning engines.

According to Australian ag representative Robert Swift, agriculture products exported from his country are vital to the well-being of the rural segment's economy. About 90 percent of Australia's wool production, 35 percent of beef and veal products and 70 percent of sugar is sold worldwide.

But Australia's largest trade item with the United States is beef, sometimes cited by American farmers as part of the reason for low domestic beef grower returns. Dairy products, mostly in the form of cheese and casein, are also sent to American markets in fairly large quantities.

Swift criticized the counter-cyclical proposed beef import quotas that would allow foreign meat quantities to rise when domestic production is low in

the U.S., and drop when meat supplies were high

"That formula wrongly assumes that other countries will manage their meat production accordingly," argued Swift "It's a policy that may drive our producers out of business waiting for the low cycle to come."

He added that since beef imports amount to only seven percent of total U.S. domestic use, the quantity is not large enough to greatly affect American beef producers' prices. However, the three and one-half percent of beef consumption filled by Australian imports represents a full fourth of total production from that company, making it a much needed market to Aussie cattlemen.

In response to an Agri-Women question on the value and possibility of forming a world grain cartel, Swift replied that he would not be in favor of an OPEC-like pricing agreement on grain sales, but would like to see some cooperative method of leveling pendulum price swings. Instead, Swift proposed more international understanding and agreements on grain sales, with consuming countries as well as producer interests represented in grain

cooperative pricing decisions

Moderator Larry Waterman, summing up the phone linkage segment, noted that specialty crops show great promise in the United States exporting picture.

Two billion dollars worth of fruits, vegetables and tree nuts has been sold to

countries like Japan, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan.

While American fruit growers are eager to sell larger shipments to Japanese consumers, who pay as much as a dollar for a grapefruit, the island's country's farmers have a strong lobby to keep tariffs high on incoming farm goods.



Larry Waterfield and AAW panelists, from left, Audrey Sickinger, Julie Hinter and Doris Royal, quizzed a trio of foreign ag attaches via telephone linkups during a Tuesday segment of the convention.

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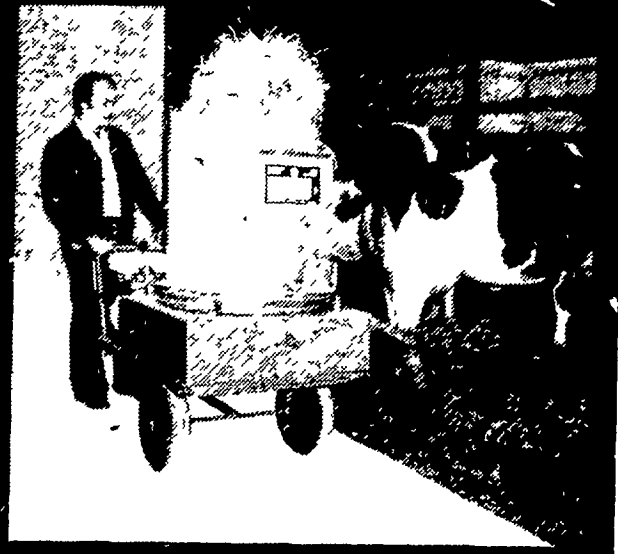
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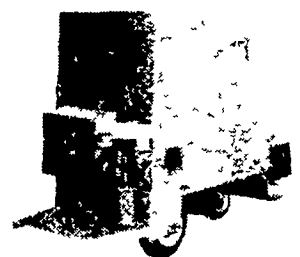
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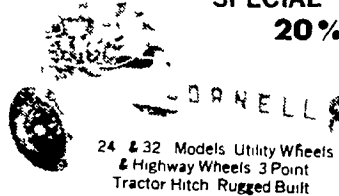
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