

Dairy Co-op opposes Reagan dairy plans

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "Dairy farmers are willing to participate in a serious effort to balance the federal budget. But we don't want to take a financial beating six months ahead of everyone else."

That was the statement of Dairy Co-op President Clyde Rutherford Wednesday before the Senate Subcommittee on Agricultural Production Marketing and Stabilization of Prices.

Rutherford, a director of

National Milk Producers Federation and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, was one of several national dairy leaders who made statements opposing the proposal by the Reagan administration cancelling an 88 cent per hundred pounds increase in the dairy support price scheduled for April 1.

Present law requires the increased based on higher farm production costs during the past six months

"The dairy industry is one of the half-dozen principal industries in the country," said Rutherford. At the farm level in New York State alone it represents more than a billion dollars of sales of raw milk. This amount is at least tripled as the milk is transported, processed, packaged, delivered to stores and marketed. Milk is more than nutrition. It is billions of dollars in jobs and commerce.

Assuming continued high production, the dairy support price

will likely be dropped to 75 percent of parity next October 1. The increase scheduled for this April first only establishes a target price of 80 percent of parity.

What farmers all over the U.S. actually receive for their milk depends on prices paid at 275 unregulated milk plants in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Over 1980 farmers received for all their milk a price that averaged only 72 percent of parity. To cancel the April 1 increase in the support

price would ultimately have the effect of dropping returns to dairymen well below 70 percent of parity, which is inviting a national disaster."

Rutherford cited figures showing

1-Farm milk production costs for the U.S. increased 12.2 percent in 1980 while farm milk prices increased only 9.2 percent. For New York State, farm costs went up 14 percent and farm milk prices only 9.2 percent.

2-Consumer milk prices lagged behind average urban wage rates by 44 percent between 1950 and 1980. In other words, in 1980 it took less working time for an industrial plant worker to buy a gallon of milk than it did in 1950.

3-Between 1967 and 1980, the U.S. cost of living increased 154 percent, the cost of food 162 percent and the retail cost of dairy products 133 percent.

"If we are going to roll back the inflation rate, that is fine," said Rutherford, "but let's all move together. Singling out one industry for a rollback is not constructive. It's destructive."

Mushroom growers discuss imports

KENNETT SQUARE — A feeling of cautious optimism in continuing efforts to combat the effects of imported processed mushrooms was reported at a meeting of growers on Monday night.

Approximately 150 attended the session sponsored by the American Mushroom Institute in the Italian American Club.

The bulk of the session was devoted to present and future activities of coping with imports and putting the mushroom industry on a sound economic footing.

It was reported that some financial relief has been attained by growers since the increase in tariffs on November 1. But continued efforts will be required to find other possible alternative actions in the future to combat the imports.

In the past couple of weeks a mushroom industry analysis survey has been launched by the

USDA. Conducted through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the AMI, the survey was started in the Temple and Chester County areas and will also move into Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and California.

At the conclusion of the six-month survey, a 10-member special task force, including AMI representatives and other experts from throughout the country, will review results and develop a program of possible alternative actions to be taken against imports.

In early April, the AMI will also be participating in hearings in Washington on the favored nation's status of China and the effect China is having on the domestic mushroom industry as the major exporter of processed mushrooms into the U.S.

Presently, a 33-percent tariff is imposed on imported mushrooms. This increased amount went into

effect on November 1. It is scheduled to be cut five percent on November 1 of the next two years.

It has also been reported that efforts to obtain quantitative limitations from exporting nations have not been successful due to the lack of cooperation of these countries.



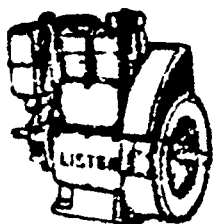
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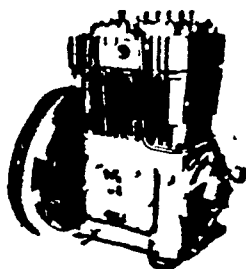
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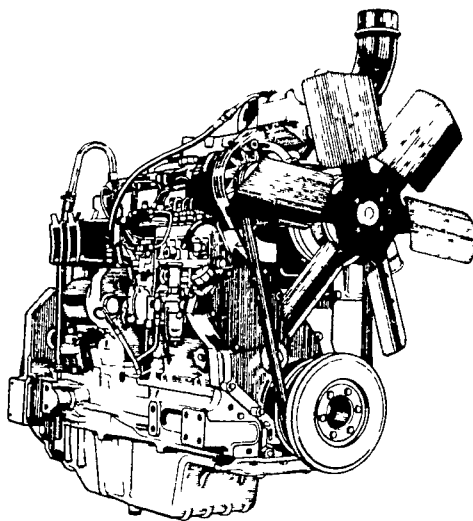
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