

Helms defines ideas in his farm bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Jesse Helms, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, has introduced an omnibus farm bill covering the full range of agricultural commodity programs.

Known as the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981, SB884 is designed to build on and improve the current farm and food statutes which expire this year, Helms said.

He said his proposed legislation marks a new advance toward a goal of reducing government interference in agriculture, while enhancing the farmer's opportunity to receive a fair profit in the marketplace.

In touching on some of the highlights of the bill, Helms said, "My legislation will provide government loan rates for the major grains and soybeans calculated as a percentage of average market prices in recent years, except that the rates could not be less than the current loan levels. This will add predictability to the calculation of loan rates while assuring that they will not interfere with market operations or force the government to acquire burdensome stocks."

For rice, cotton, and the major grains, the bill provides a more cost-effective paid land diversion to replace set-asides, and normal crop acreages, Helms said.

Disaster payments are not reauthorized since these are to be replaced by the expanded Federal Crop Insurance program enacted in 1980, he said.

"A cornerstone of my legislation is a strengthened farmer-held reserve. That, combined with the export enhancement features of the bill, is designed to allow farmers to earn a profit in the marketplace. These provisions make target prices unnecessary," Helms said.

Helms said, "My bill makes substantial commitments to further developing export markets abroad." The legislation provides an Agricultural Export Credit Revolving Fund and is authorized to facilitate loans on a continuing basis.

The bill also calls for remedies to correct hardships caused by agricultural embargoes; Congressional veto of international bilateral commodity supply agreements; and standby export subsidies to counter unfair trading practices abroad.

The Helms bill calls for reducing the annual outlay for food stamps by about \$2.5 to \$3 billion

annually, while at the same time directing the remaining \$10 billion-plus in the program to the most truly needy.

Last week, Helms also introduced, by request, the Administration's version of its farm bill. Helms said that while

the Administration bill contained many provisions with which he is in basic agreement, the peanut section of the Administration's bill would be "devastating to thousands of peanut farmers."

Helms would retain the basics of the present peanut program, which operates at no cost to the taxpayers. The Administration's peanut title would eliminate allotments, reduce quotas, and cost some \$12 million annually.

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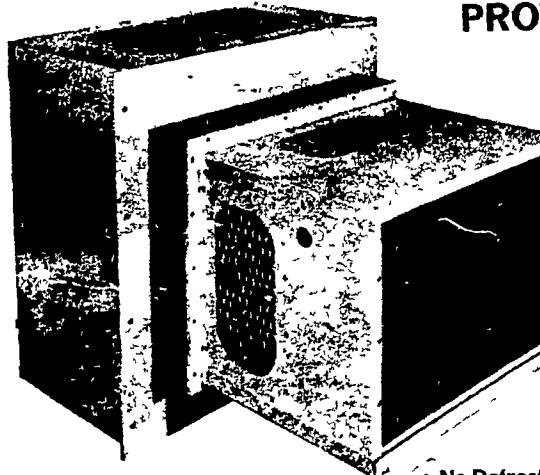
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