

NCA recommends changes in ag statistic reports

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Cattlemen's Assn. has recommended changes in agricultural statistical and economic reports which would make the information more useful and, at the same time, save taxpayers' money.

The recommendations were made in a statement presented to the Economics and Statistics Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in connection with the ESS budgeting process. The statement, prepared by NCA's marketing committee, was presented by Burton Eller, NCA vice president for government affairs.

NCA said ESS should: collect and provide all basic economic data for use by agricultural producers and related industries; provide only those vital services and information which it is not feasible for the private sector to provide; conduct useful and timely economic research which addresses current and prospective industry problems. The primary objective of ESS should be to provide useful and timely information for use in making management decisions.

NCA said ESS can make budget savings without reducing services which are really useful to mainstream agriculture and which benefit the public as well.

Basic points made by NCA included:

✓ USDA should reduce or eliminate its current analysis and outlook information. It should provide basic inventory and other data of use to cattle and other

producers. But it should not be issuing price forecasts. Analysis and outlook information is now provided by private services, state extension services and others. It no longer is necessary for USDA to devote expensive resources to forecasting.


A recent survey showed that most NCA members feel USDA's role should be one of collecting and reporting basic data. Most feel that USDA outlook reports are of limited value or of no value. If budget cuts are necessary, the cuts should be made in the market outlook area.

✓ In making adjustments in its economic reporting, USDA should consider the relative importance of different segments of agriculture. If cuts must be made, they should be made in reports for very small segments of agriculture. Mainstream agriculture should have priority. At present, beef cattle account for 23% of all farm marketings, but statistical reports on cattle represent only 7% of the ESS budget for statistics.


✓ USDA economic research should be redirected so that it focuses on current and prospective problems in agriculture. Its chief aim (benefiting the public as well as producers) should be to develop information which will help improve decision-making and productivity.

Research on fundamental changes and trends in agriculture is needed. Various indexes and price relationships used in economic analysis are out of date and need updating.

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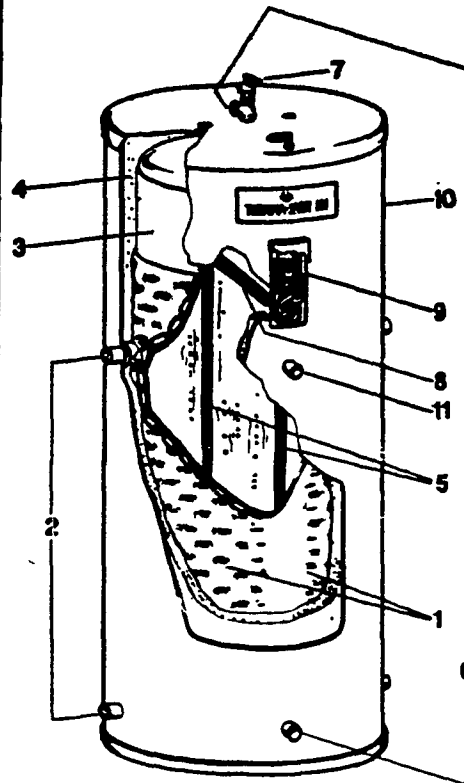
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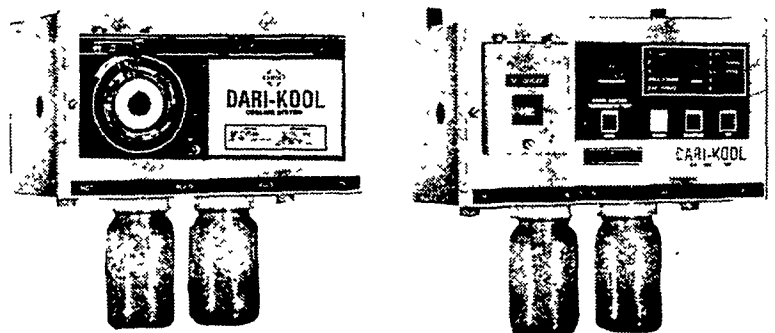
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