



# Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

## Your 'typical' farmer talks

What do America's farmers expect from their government when it comes to farm policies? That question could probably be answered in many ways, depending on the farmers you talk with.

FarmFutures magazine asked some big farmers—the truly productive ones who produce most of what we eat. They surveyed the nine percent of U.S. farmers who

produce about two-thirds of total U.S. farm output. These are by no means average farmers, and consequently their responses to a questionnaire may not be typical farm responses.

The big farmers who responded to the FarmFutures magazine survey rated policies that deal with international trade as more important to them than anything else.

No doubt this reflects their awareness of what has happened to them over the past decade from the first Russian grain deal to the recent grain embargo.

They know that international trade took them out of the farm surplus business and put them into a cash market. And they also realize the government has the power to change all that. Most of those responding to the survey felt the government should have less influence over export trade than it's had in the past.

As reflected in the FarmFutures' survey, farmers seem to have deep concerns about the embargo and the way it was handled. Eighty-seven percent of those answering the survey said they think the embargo issue should be covered in the new farm bill due out of Congress some time this year. And more than two-thirds of them believe that if an embargo is necessary, farmers should be reimbursed for what the lost markets actually cost them.

Big farmers are looking for a free world market with as little government interference as possible. They also want Uncle Sam to promote farm exports. Virtually none of them want more government control.

Consider this: only four percent opted for a national grain board that would control farm export. Only 17 percent wanted an international cartel that would establish world grain prices, and only eight percent favored bilateral agreements on farm exports between nations.

When asked for their opinions about the survival of small farms, a surprisingly large percentage of big farmers showed concern about the future of small farmers. They were split about 50-50 — between those who want the government to put limits on farm size and those who don't. Here's how they reacted to some ideas that are being discussed for helping the small farmer:

About half favored a lower limit on the maximum size of government payments per farm. That figure is now set by law at \$50,000.

Eighty-two percent said they did not favor a limit on investment tax credits which give high-earning farmers an advantage. And an equal figure did not want to tax capital gains on land the same as ordinary income.

Eighty-five percent were against increases in inheritance taxes, so large land holdings would have to be broken up. But they did favor directing more agricultural research toward the problems of small farmers.

Almost four-fifths of those responding to the survey favor easier government subsidized credit to help young farmers on small farms.

Traditionally, farm subsidies have garnered most of the media attention associated with past farm bills. But FarmFutures' readers don't think price supports and other subsidies are all that important.

Only 10 percent indicated farm income supports as their greatest concern. And, when asked how much support they would like to see from the government, almost half said less than they've had, while only 18 percent felt farmers need more income support.

Nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents felt we need new laws that will effectively control the development of farmland for other uses. But opinions were definitely mixed on what should be done. The most popular methods—39 percent favored changes in inheritance tax to keep land in farming, 28 percent preferred charging lower taxes for land kept in farming, and the least popular option involved restrictive zoning of farmland and having the government pay for development rights.

That's how a select group of large farmers responded to

(Turn to Page D7)

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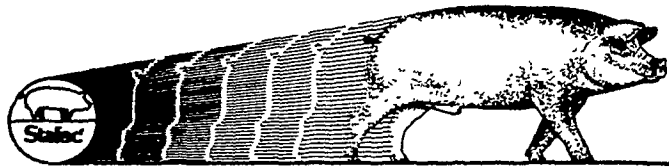
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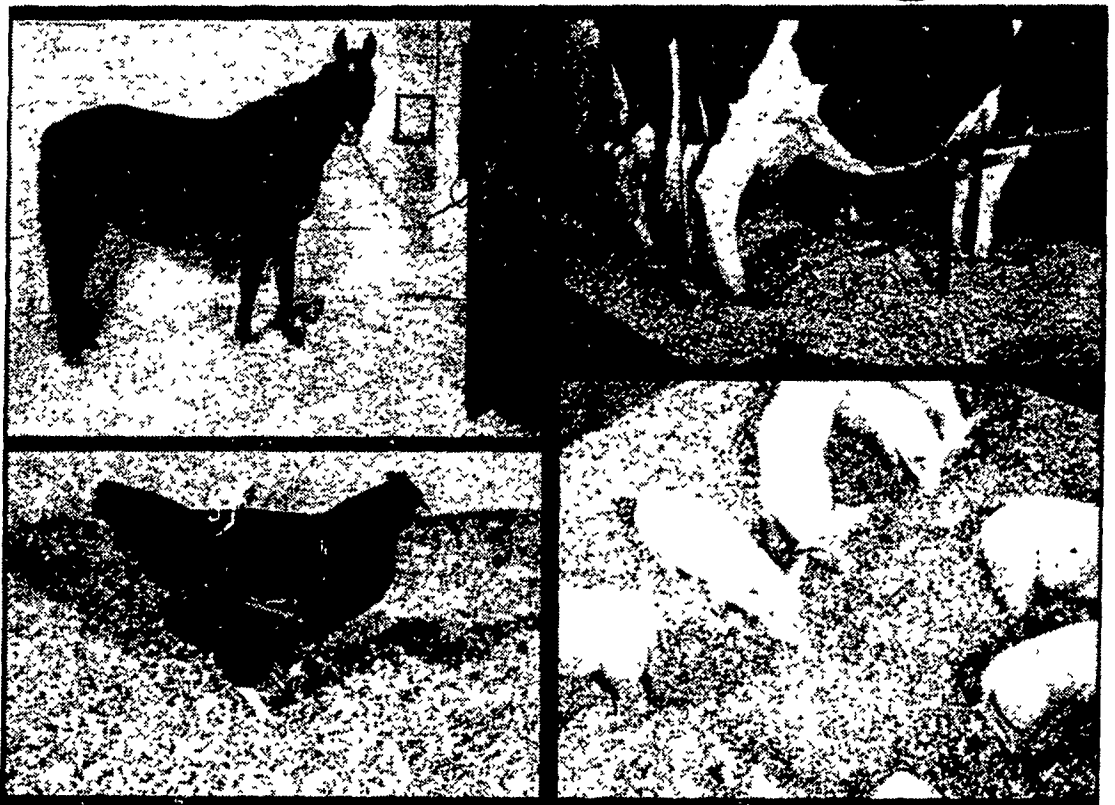


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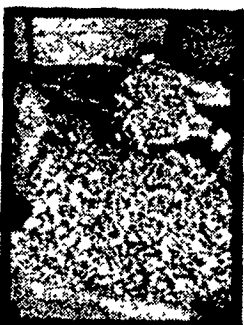
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