

USDA studies casein imports

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Imports of casein, a dairy protein, compete with domestic dairy products in some uses and may affect the cost of the federal dairy price support program, according to a study released June 1st by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

However, it does not appear that invoking import restrictions would substantially reduce the cost of the dairy price support program, said Assistant Secretary of Agriculture William Leshner. Restricting casein imports by the maximum allowed under law would cause some domestic users to shift to dairy and non-dairy alternatives, but would not significantly increase the use of domestically-produced skim milk solids, he said, in a recent Mid-Atlantic market bulletin.

Trends in casein use suggest that the effect of imports on the dairv

program could be much greater in the future, he added.

Leshner said the study was begun in May 1980 to help government policymakers in the debate on whether imported dairy proteins displace domestic skim milk solids, thus increasing the cost of the dairy price support program.

Casein is a dairy protein used in various food, feed and industrial products. Since the late 1960's, there has been no domestic production of casein due at least in part to federal price supports for nonfat dry milk and other processed dairy products that have made casein production non-competitive, Leshner said.

He said those who favor restricting casein imports have proposed taking action under Section 22 of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. Section 22

allows imposition of a 50 percent tariff or a quota equal to 50 percent of casein imports during a representative period if it is found that imports substantially interfere with the operation of a commodity price support program.

The report, Leshner said, concludes that under a tariff, the use of domestically produced skim milk solids would not shift to other non-dairy substitutes.

Further, because a 50 percent tariff would not increase commercial disappearance of skim milk solids, it would have no im-

act on government purchases, Leshner said. A 50 percent quota would cause users to substitute an estimated 10 million pounds of nonfat dry milk and would save the government about \$9 million, less than 1 percent of the 1980 dairy price support program costs, he said.

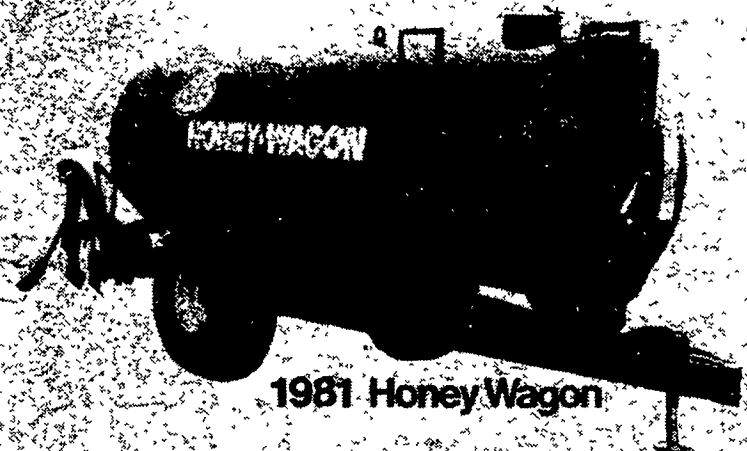
Leshner said copies of the report will be given to USDA policy officials and members of Congress for review. But it may be several weeks before any decisions are reached on the casein import question or before USDA is ready to make recommendations.

Major suppliers of casein to the United States in 1980 included New Zealand (50 percent), Australia (12 percent) and European Community countries (28 percent). USDA estimates the United States imported 152 million pounds of casein in 1980, 128 million pounds were used in manufacturing and processing with 24 million pounds added to inventories.

One third of casein imported in 1980 was used in the manufacture of imitation cheese. Other major uses include animal feed and pet food, coffee whitener, industrial uses and bakery goods.



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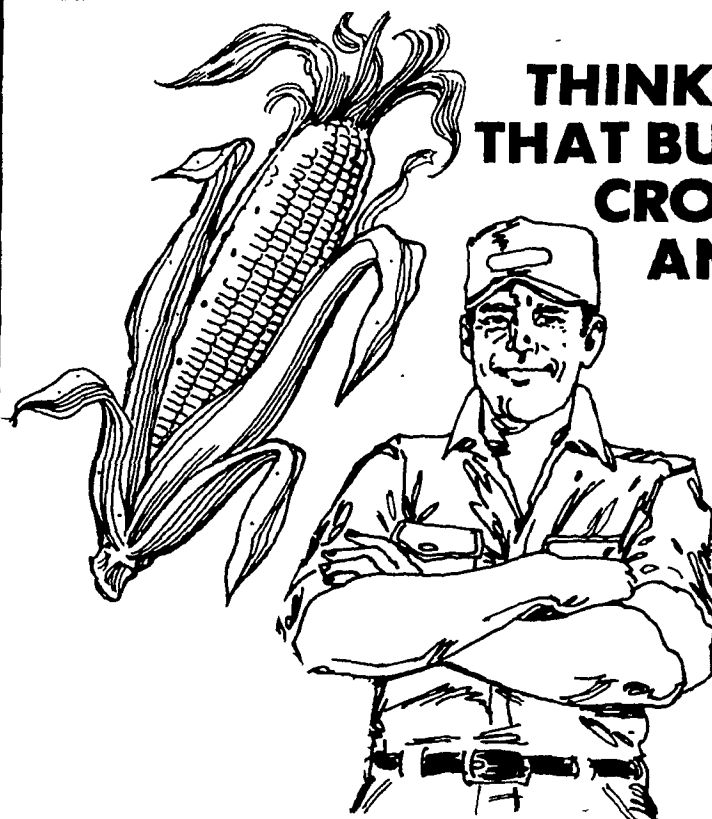
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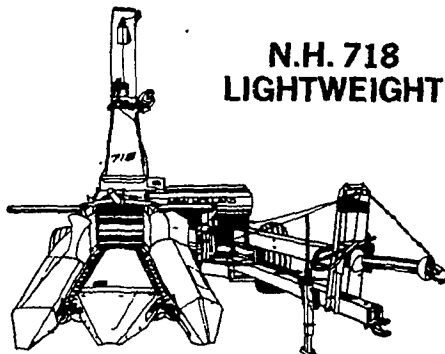
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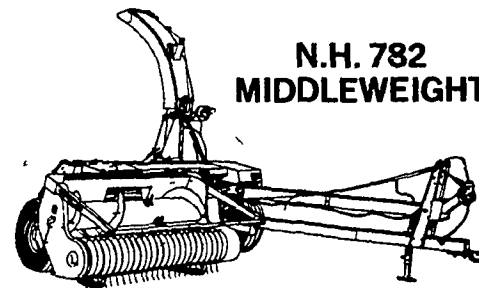
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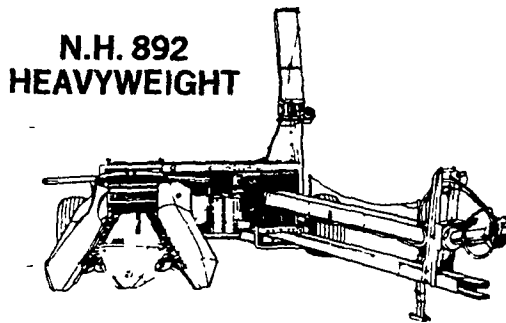
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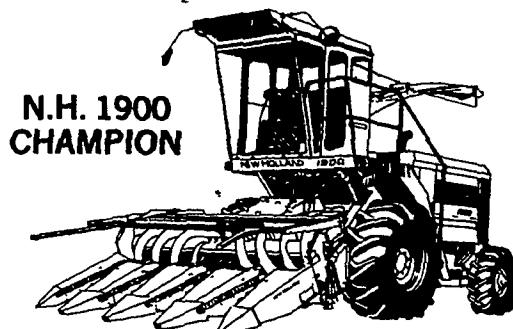
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