

Speak out for farming; call a Congressman for free

WASHINGTON D.C. — Last Friday the Agriculture Council of America (65 members of Congress from both political parties) and Farmland Industries announced plans for a national hearing on the farm economy, conducted by telephone on May 11, with an accompanying mail-in survey on solutions to agriculture's current problems.

A bank of 50 telephones will be set up in the Cannon House Office Building Caucus Room. Members of Congress, their aides, officials of Executive Branch departments and representatives of independent agencies with economic responsibilities have been invited to take calls from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. (EDT).

The purpose of this farmers' oversight hearing is to dramatize to the Washington audience the depth of farmers' and ranchers' difficulties and to try to stimulate a broader discussion of feasible remedies.

"It is not an attack on the administration or anyone else," said Allen Paul, president of ACA.

"It is an attempt to find solutions, acceptable to a majority of the interests represented in our government, by discussing these too-long-ignored problems with officials of all backgrounds—rural, suburban or urban," he said.

In 1980 and 1981, U.S. farm in-

come fell to its lowest levels since the 1930s' Depression. The projections for 1982 (dependent on weather and other relatively unpredictable factors) warn of further, sharper declines.

Farmers, farm business operators and anyone else who wants to call can tell officials directly of their situations and their views on various proposed remedies—simply by dialing 1-800-368-5769 between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. (EDT) on Tuesday, May 11.

The 12-hour call-in has been made possible through a grant to ACA from Farmland Industries, the nation's largest farmer-owned cooperative.

The U.S. representatives and senators (see attached list) who joined in today's announcement endorsed the telephone hearing as an extension of their attempts to have the plight of their constituents more fully considered in the making of national economic and budgetary policies this year.

In 1982, according to tentative long-range estimates by Agriculture Department experts, U.S. farmers and ranchers face a nose-dive in farm income of up to 28 percent—from an estimated \$18.9 billion in 1981 to perhaps \$13.6 billion (the "best guess" in March within a range of \$13 to \$18 billion). Net farm income in 1980 was pegged at \$19.9 billion, or \$8.1

billion in 1967 dollars about half what it was during the 1974-75 recession. In contrast, per capita disposable income for the population as a whole has increased since that time by more than 11 percent, reported the ACA spokesman.

The grim prospects for 1982 farm income are not a secret. If they had emerged for many other industries, however, there would be consternation, an outcry throughout the government and an intensive search for solutions by all, not just those directly affected or directly responsible for the so-called farm constituency, he said.

"Washington policymakers seem to know the problems of, for example, the housing and automobile industries. Now it is time for farmers to speak out and be heard," Paul said. "There may only be less than 3 million farm operators and workers, but 20

million other American workers—from tractor factories to super-market check-outs—depend for their jobs on food and fiber producers' staying in business."

No attempt will be made to control the opinions of those who call, Paul explained. Most callers will be using a survey questionnaire that asks them to briefly describe personal financial situations and then rate, by order of preferred priority, various proposals that have been advanced as solutions to today's bleak agricultural economic outlook.

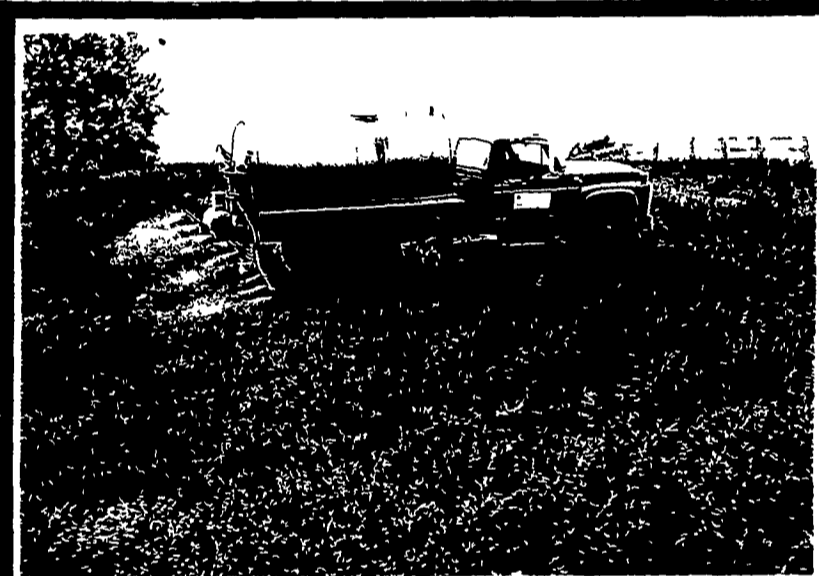
Responses to the survey, which respondents are being asked to mail to ACA, will be tabulated immediately after the hearing, made public and later forwarded to President Reagan, Speaker of the House Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., the appropriate committees of the Congress, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, and the heads of

relevant governmental agencies.

The Agriculture Council of America is a nonlobbying organization of producers, farmer-owned cooperatives, agricultural associations and local and national agriculture-related businesses. It serves as a forum through which diverse agricultural interests can focus on solutions to problems of common concern and as a source of factual information about modern agriculture for the non-farm public.



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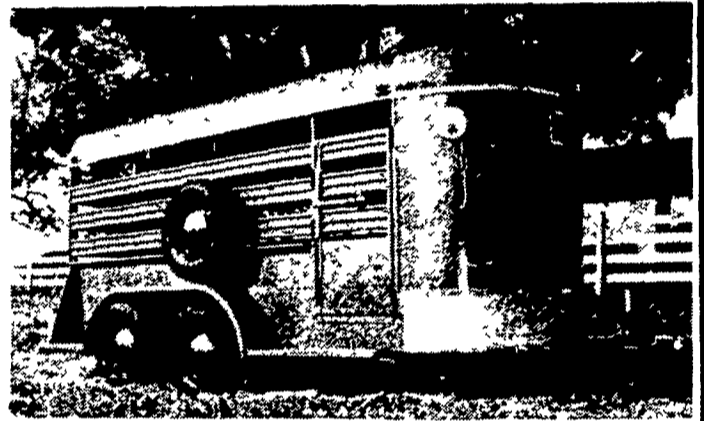
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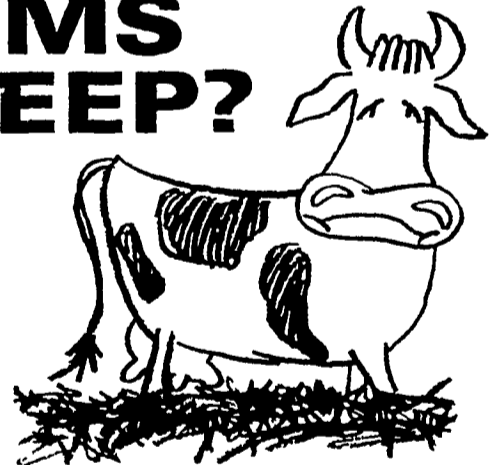
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