

Farm Bureau calls for new nat'l dairy price support

DALLAS, Tx — Farmers at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting in Dallas which ended last Thursday have called for a national dairy price support program that will bring supplies down to demand levels.

To achieve such a program, they said the price support level should be adjusted according to the net amount of dairy products purchased by the federal government. This would mean the support price would drop if the government bought more than in the previous year.

This decision on the controversial dairy issue came on a vote of farmer-delegates who make policy for the organization. Delegates from the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association were Keith Eckel, PFA president, D. Eugene Gayman, vice president and Christian Wolff, board director.

The delegates also voiced their opposition to the controversial 50-cent assessment that was to take effect Dec. 1, but is barred by court

injunction after the plan quickly spawned several lawsuits throughout the country.

In addition, the Farm Bureau members said milk should be marketed on a protein basis as well as a fat content basis. Accordingly, they urged the Food and Drug Administration to increase minimum standards for milk using California's current standards.

While the margin of the vote on the dairy policy was clear-cut, how it was arrived at was not. Numerous plans were rejected, including ones that would have established a three-tier price system, a "voluntary paid diversion program" aimed at cutting government purchases to one-third of the 1982 level, and a base-and-quota system to "provide constraints on production."

Reaffirming their support of a "market-oriented" agriculture voting delegates also formally endorsed the payment-in-kind or "crop swap," program President Reagan announced to them earlier in the week.

Delegates said the program must be viewed as a "short-term" solution needed to bring supplies in line with demand. It must be implemented, they said, in conjunction with an "effective voluntary acreage reduction program" for the 1983 and 1984 wheat, feed, grains, cotton and rice crops.

In addition, the farmers and ranchers asserted that PIK be "structured in a manner that will enhance orderly marketing" and that it be coupled with an incentive program for foreign purchasers of U. S. commodities. While the Reagan plan basically meets the Farm Bureau's criteria, it does not currently contain an export provision.

On foreign trade, the delegates took a strong stand against embargoes. The threat of embargoes or other restrictions that adversely affects markets is an inappropriate tool in the implementation of foreign policy.

On the issue of agricultural credit, the delegates said they opposed any changes in the Farm

Credit System that would limit agriculture's access to credit. They said the Farmers Home Administration primary emphasis should be in the areas of farm ownership and operating loans, with priority given to farmers who can't get credit elsewhere.

Regarding the difficulty that some farmers are having in meeting their loan obligations, the Farm Bureau policymakers said that FmHA and other lenders "should consider economic conditions over which the farmer has no control and reschedule loans on

an individual basis."

American Farm Bureau Federation President Robert Delano, in a post-convention news conference, said he thought the outcome of the four-day meeting indicated that "the philosophy of Farm Bureau has not changed, the direction has not changed."

The farm leader said that overall the delegates' decisions recognized that agriculture's future prosperity lives in the market system and not with continued government intervention.

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