

# Helms outlines Senate Ag Committee agenda

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, outlined priorities for the agricultural legislation for the first session of the 96th Congress.

Helms said agricultural trade is his top priority for legislative initiatives in 1983.

"We must be prepared to take unilateral action, if necessary, to induce the Japanese to reduce their trade barriers and the European Economic Community to eliminate their predatory agricultural export subsidies. The Agriculture Committee is currently preparing a package of legislative initiatives that would give the U.S. the tools to counter these predatory practices so as to bring the offending nations to the bargaining table."

A number of senators have indicated they are considering legislative proposals to deal with trade problems, added Helms.

Among the initiatives being considered, said Helms, are:

- legislation to require the export marketing of U.S. dairy surpluses;
- legislation requiring the use of proceeds of dairy product sales and funds from other sources for an export subsidy "equity" fund;
- the direct use of funds mandated for export enhancement under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1982;
- review of most-favored-nation trading status and eligibility for International Monetary Fund loans for export - subsidizing countries; and,
- an export payment-in-kind program.

Helms has been an outspoken critic of EEC agricultural export practices over the years. Last year he authored an amendment to the Budget Reconciliation Act, later enacted by Congress, mandating the use of \$175-\$190 million for

export enhancement measures to counter the predatory practices of the EEC. In November, he was a Congressional spokesman at the Ministerial Conference of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade in Geneva.

The implementation of an effective domestic payment-in-kind program also ranks high in priority.

"It is absolutely essential that we stop building government commodity stocks and start reducing our huge surpluses. Otherwise, farmers cannot expect to see farm prices that will cover their costs of production and allow them to earn a fair profit. The secretary of agriculture's PIK proposal, announced by the president, is aimed at achieving these goals," said Helms.

A matter of overriding concern in all agricultural legislation will be its budgetary impact, said Helms. "In these times of massive federal deficits, it is incumbent

upon us to devise programs that provide effective protection for farmers without burdening the entire economy with higher deficits and higher taxes. The bottom line is this: effective agriculture policy must be fiscally responsible," he stated.

Helms said there are likely to be further changes made to the Food Stamp program during the budget process. These reforms will be designed to reduce the program's susceptibility to fraud and abuse, provide greater State flexibility, and slow the overall growth in the program. Helms said he will continue to push for a mandatory workfare provision and voluntary block grants to States.

Reforms in regulatory issues must also be considered, said Helms. He listed food safety and meat inspection rules as two areas that demand consideration. "Regulatory changes have not kept pace with the dramatic changes in our food processing

plants and technology. We must see that these rules are updated and changed while maintaining adequate protection for the consumer."

In addition, there are two expiring authorities which fall under the Committee's jurisdiction: the Agricultural Subterminal Facilities Act of 1980 and the National Aquaculture Act of 1980. Also, some bills approved the Committee in the 97th Congress but never passed by the Senate, such as the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act and the Farmers Home Administration bill, may be dealt with.

"The legislative future of these bills is not yet clear," said Helms.

Helms said other Committee senators may also have issues they would like to bring before the Committee. He cited in particular Sen. Roger Jepsen, who is pursuing reforms in the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977.

The Agriculture Committee also will exercise continuing oversight of the Department of Agriculture and other agency programs that fall within its area of jurisdiction.

Helms said subcommittee assignments will be made after Congress reconvenes and the Committee meets to reorganize and establish Committee rules.

Helms welcomed new Committee member Sen. Pete Wilson of California. Wilson fills the spot vacated by retiring California Sen. S. I. Hayakawa.

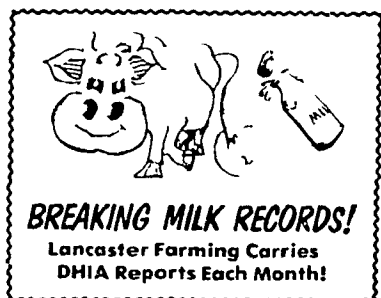
"I hope the senate Agriculture Committee will continue to work with the same bipartisan spirit of cooperation that has been the reason for our successes these past years," said Helms. "I have appreciated the cooperation and hard work of Sen. Walter Huddleston, the ranking minority member of the Committee, and look forward to working with him and all of our colleagues in the upcoming session."

## Soil conservation, a moral responsibility

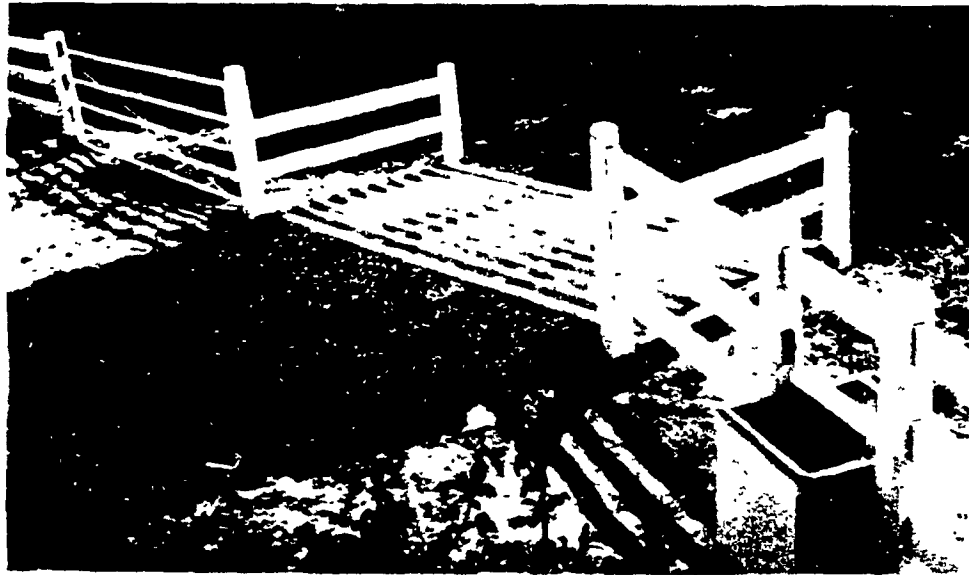
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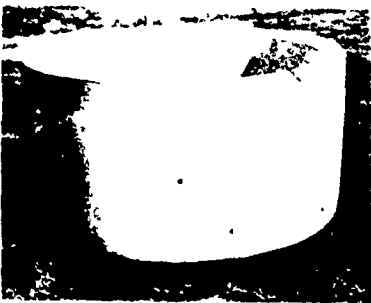
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