

Pa. Farmers Union to sue Block over milk tax

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania Farmers Union's executive director, Carl Kaufman, has announced that his organization will file suit against USDA Secretary John Block, in federal circuit court, several days before USDA intends to begin collecting the gross receipts tax from dairy farmers.

Farmers Union will petition for a new injunction against USDA's collection of the 50 cents per hundredweight levy, which is scheduled to become effective April 16.

Kaufman said he anticipates

that several other producer groups may join Farmers Union as co-plaintiffs in the suit. Considering the cost of litigation, Kaufman, said, Farmers Union welcomes additional plaintiffs, either silent or on the record.

Secretary Block's most recent announcement is to the effect that USDA will begin by collecting only the first 50 cents. Collection of the second 50 cents per hundredweight will be delayed, according to Block, to give Congress time to adopt more appropriate legislation. USDA plans to start levying the second 50 cents by late

summer if the matter has not been resolved by the Congress by Aug. 1.

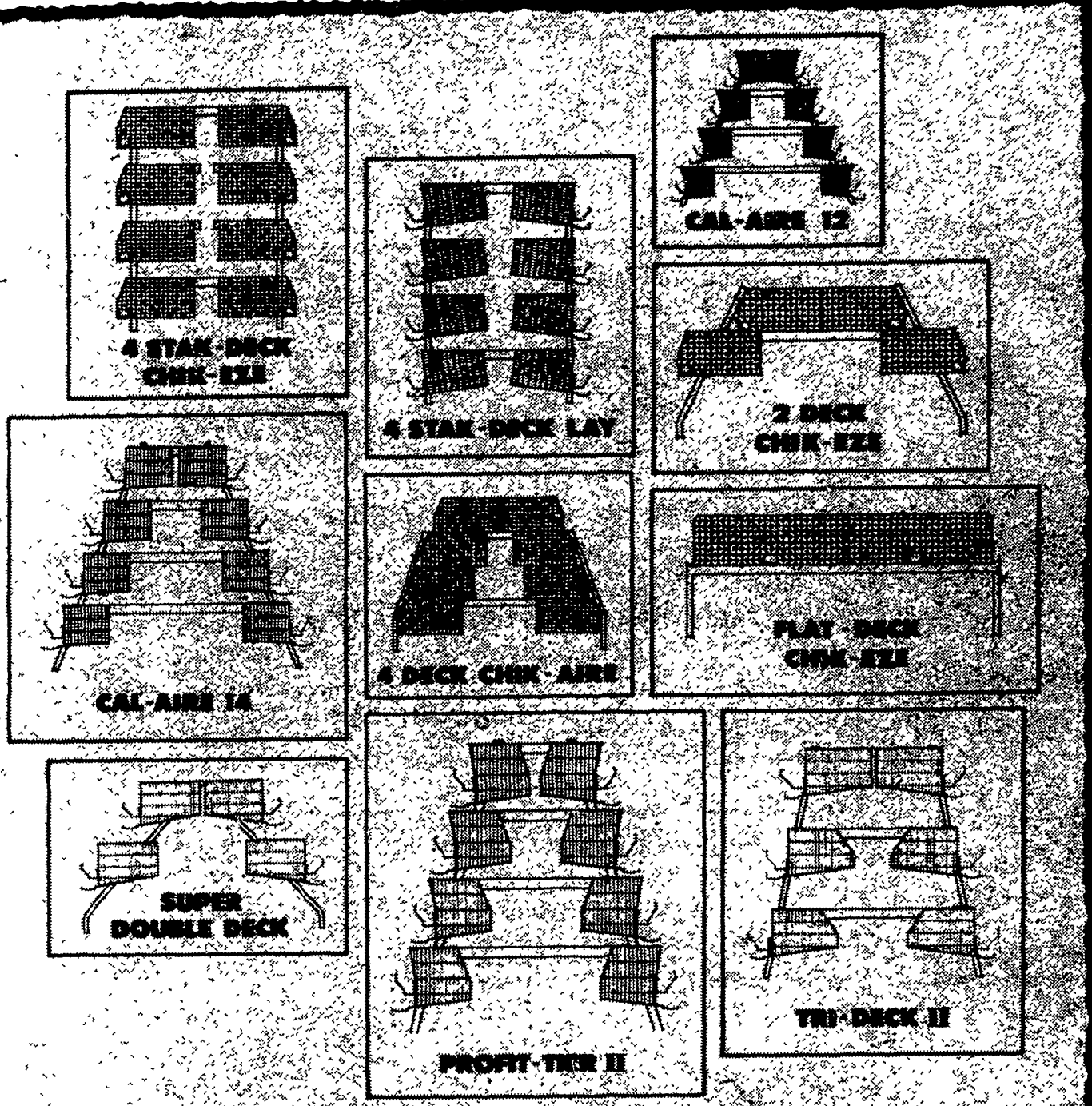
After the South Carolina federal court issued an injunction against USDA's earlier collection attempts, because of flaws in the agency's pre-collection public notice and invitation for public comments, USDA started over, redoing the required preliminary procedure.

Farmers Union organized in Washington with 50 members from Pennsylvania joining dairy farmers from across the nation who visited members of Congress on

Tuesday and Wednesday to urge that Congress replace the present law with a measure recently introduced by Congressman James Oberstar (D. Minn.). Oberstar's bill would establish a base price of 70% of parity which would be guaranteed to producers who reduce their production by the

amount specified by USDA (a uniform percentage reduction for all producers). Those producers who refuse to reduce production, or worse, insist on increasing their production, would be subject to progressive deductions from their milk checks.

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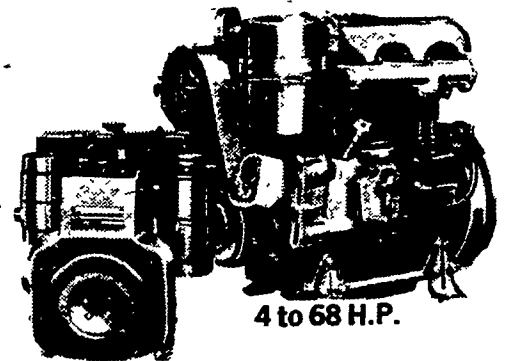
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