

# Helms outlines ag legislation agenda

WASHINGTON D.C. — Sen. Jesse Helms, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, outlined the agenda of agricultural legislation for the second session of the 98th Congress.

"The committee will, of course, continue to monitor the farm economy and will be attentive to problems which might arise in 1984. Beyond that, I hope the committee will lay the groundwork for considering the future direction of farm policy," Helms said.

"While the committee plans no specific legislative activity in regard to the 1975 Farm Bill, informal activities preparatory to action in 1985 will be of interest to the committee. And, without question, the committee will have a special interest in efforts to provide for a more fiscally responsible operation of all government programs—including farm programs—due largely to the problems imposed on farmers by the economic dislocations of massive federal deficits," Helms said.

Other matters on the committee agenda include:

#### Expiring Authorities

In 1984, authorization for several child nutrition programs, including the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will expire. In order for these programs to continue the committee must specifically reauthorize them. Some modification is likely to be considered in that process.

Also, the committee is expected to reauthorize the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) as well as several other expiring authorities which provide for user fees in such USDA programs as

cotton and grain inspection and classing.

#### Wilderness Bills

Another of the priorities for consideration early in the session will be several bills currently pending before the committee making wilderness designations in North Carolina, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Several other bills involving proposed designations in other States are expected to come before the committee as well. The Chairman hopes to begin hearings soon after Congress reconvenes Jan. 23 and move to an early mark-up.

"The wilderness bills have a high priority," said Helms. "We hope to move these bills through Congress and restore long-term stability to the management of our forest resources for multiple use purposes."

#### Exports

"Unfair trade practices by other countries continue to rob U.S. farmers of export markets," Helms said. A number of proposals to counter this problem were introduced last year, and the committee reported S. 822. Helms said consideration of that bill or a modified version, S. 2005, the Agricultural Export Trade Equity Act of 1983, is possible early in the session.

"Our farmers continue to suffer from the export subsidies of the European Community," said Helms. "Other EC proposals concerning its Common Agricultural Policy appear to be blunted right now, but if they come up again, I can assure the EC that the Agriculture Committee stands ready to support countermeasures to make sure U.S. farmers are given fair access to world markets."

#### Bills Pending

Helms said other bills currently

considered early in the session.

H.R. 3867 (comparable to S. 2052), a bill to amend the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, would provide sellers and suppliers of fresh fruits and vegetables with assurances of timely payment. Helms said he hopes this bill will move quickly when Congress returns.

Also, extensions of the National Aquaculture Act of 1980 (S. 1101), and the Native Latex Commercialization and Economic Development Act (H.R. 2733), which have been reported by the committee, may be considered early in the session.

#### Food Stamps

The committee will review the recommendations of the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control regarding all areas within the Department of Agriculture. In addition, the committee will review the findings and recommendations of the President's Task Force on food Assistance.

The committee will conduct hearings on S. 1279, the Chairman Helms' bill to provide state option block grants for nutrition assistance in lieu of the Federal food stamp program.

Hearings will be held also on the food stamp program, specifically

with regard to proposals for eliminating the fraud, waste, and abuse in the program. Among the bills to be considered is the Chairman's bill, S. 1727, a bill introduced by Senator McClure and others.

#### Other Issues

Helms said other committee Senators may bring issues before the committee. For instance, Senator Roger Jepsen (R-IA) is supporting legislation to reform soil and water conservation laws.

Senator Paula Hawkins (R-FL) plans to hold hearings early in the session on S. 1300, the Rural Electrification and Telephone

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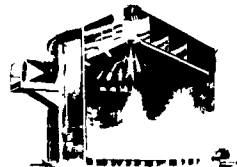
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