

Block calls for more ag exports

ORLANDO, Fla. — Calling "a healthy, prosperous agriculture our best line of defense in the world," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John Block has vowed that he will not give up in his determination to expand U.S. agricultural exports.

Addressing the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, in the Orange County Convention Center on Friday, Jan. 13, Block said major challenges of three years ago had been met, as he ticked off, reduced inflation, lower interest rates and the removal of the grain embargo, as primary goals that have been accomplished.

Block recalled that it was at the AFBF annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, one year ago, that President Reagan initiated the PIK (payment in kind) program and said, "PIK achieved what it was designed to achieve... surpluses of grain are down."

He said another of his goals, the new long term grain trade agreement with the Soviet Union, has been completed with a 50 percent increase in minimum annual purchase levels.

Also important, Block said, was the establishment of guidelines which assure that federal marketing orders will be managed by the Secretary of Agriculture and his new program announced this year, to encourage improved soil conservation practices throughout the nation.

Conceding that not all of his personal goals have been achieved during the first three years of the administration, he said more must be done to feed the needy in the country. "But, the perception that much of the nation seems to have, that less is being done in the direction is simply not true. Actually, there has been a 25 percent increase in aid to feed the needy under this administration."

Other disappointments, Block said, were the failure to achieve control over price support loan levels and target prices and the fact that the nation's export volume has declined for the third consecutive year... "though that has now turned the corner."

In his major effort to expand U.S. agricultural exports, Block said he will continue to knock on the door to open markets with Japan, vowing to "press on in that

direction until it is accomplished." Other needs cited included assessment of food and food policy needs around the world, establishments of dialogue with interested parties outside agriculture and preparation of a list of food and agriculture policy options. Block visualizes, as a step toward meeting those needs, the recently formed cabinet committee on food and agriculture, on which he serves as chairman pro tem.

Concerning future farm programs, Block said public demand will force reduced costs of government programs. Guiding factors will be that we must be competitive in world markets, or others will get the business. "We simply cannot afford to lose our competitive edge."

"We must erase the term of dependence on government from our vocabulary," Block said. The role of government is not to establish prices, but to maintain a climate for their establishment.

An important consideration for the 1985 farm program is that "producer benefits should not disrupt resource allocation or distort market signals."

Block said, "Thriving agriculture means jobs for our people and agricultural industry serving the world means power for America."

Block asked if government induced acreage reduction is in the best interest of agriculture. He urged Farm Bureau voting delegates to use their power as they have never used it before to answer that question, as they

participate in policy decisions. He cited differences between price and production restrictions in peanuts and soybeans to exemplify the detrimental effects of production controls on market conditions.

Price support loan rates need flexibility so they will not destroy markets, Block said. He said if

permanent policies to reduce agricultural production in this country were advanced, it would be detrimental to our future.

"Exports are our life blood," Block said, noting that commodities from one-third of our producing acreage, 100 million acres, depend on exports for a market.

New Idea cites spreaders

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Solids Plus spreaders from New Idea can handle a wide range of material consistencies.

Processing crops featured

DOVER, Del. — The sixth annual combined Delaware Vegetable Growers' and Potato Growers' meeting will feature a special session Wednesday afternoon for growers of processed vegetables. It will include an update on double row culture for tomatoes, plus reports on lima bean varieties, and insect and disease control.

A program for potato growers will be offered at the same time. In addition, the two-day meeting will cover a wide range of production, marketing and management topics. According to University of Delaware extension vegetable specialist Ed Kee, producers also will be able to attend the largest trade show ever offered in the event's six-year history. The meeting is free and open to all.

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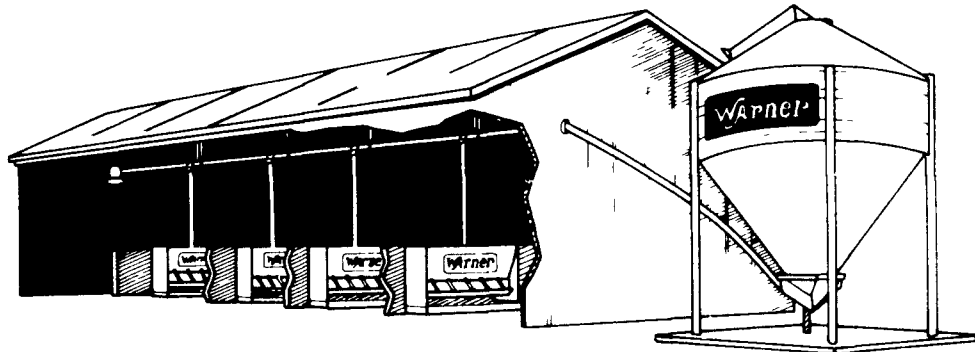
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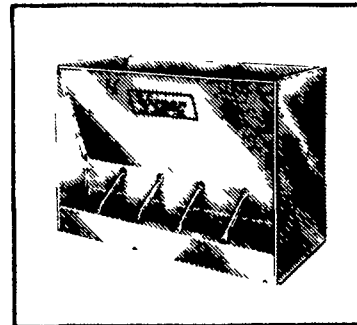
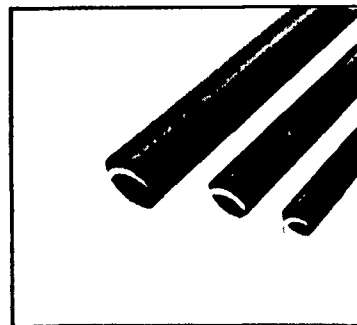
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