

Can '85 Farm Bill save family farm?

NEWARK, Del. — Family farms can be as efficient as larger ones, but because of current economic pressure they're rapidly disappearing. The 1980s could well be the decade of decision for the family farm.

"Study after study points to U.S. tax policies as a chief cause of the family farm's decline," says University of Delaware extension farm policy specialist Gerald F. Vaughn. "Current tax provisions favor larger farmers and wealthy investors. You can't blame a taxpayer in any bracket for using available tax advantages, but the present system enables high-bracket farm owners to convert their before-tax losses to after-tax profits, at commodity price levels that put lower-bracket farmers out of business."

If family farming is to survive and thrive, Vaughn believes U.S. tax policies must be corrected. "Without unbiased tax policies," he says, "the upcoming 1985 Food and Agriculture Act and other measures can do little to save family farming."

Policy observers also are concerned about American agriculture's recurring instability, which is caused by heavy dependence on unreliable foreign trade, wide annual fluctuations in farm production and prices, dim outlook for commodity price improvement (at least in the short run), and the trend toward fewer and larger farms.

"This instability may warrant a 1985 Farm Bill aimed at reducing price variability and stabilizing,

Commodity papers available

NEWARK, Del. — Background papers are now available on each of the 14 farm commodities for which federal price and income support programs are in operation. According to University of Delaware extension farm policy specialist Gerald F. Vaughn, farmers on Delmarva should find the papers on corn, soybeans, dairy, wheat, barley and oats of particular interest. Other papers deal with honey, sorghum, peanuts, tobacco, rice, cotton, wool and mohair, and sugar.

Free single copies of these commodity background papers are available from: Gerald F. Vaughn, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19717-1303. When writing please specify the commodity (ies) of interest.

rather than increasing, farm income," Vaughn says. "Taxpayers and federal budget planners are not inclined to support a new round of expensive farm programs."

Four-year farm legislation usually has been written to fit conditions which exist when a bill is drafted. This ignores the inherent instability of agriculture, the specialist says. "Conditions in agriculture seldom remain unchanged during the four-year span

and may change substantially. The PIK experience showed how incapable the 1981 farm law was of dealing with such changes."

Vaughn hopes drafters of the 1985 Farm Bill will make it as flexible as possible. He believes it should authorize the widest possible range of options, so that federal programs can respond more quickly and effectively to changing needs than they have in the past. "Flexibility and quick

response are critical to achieving greater economic stability in farming," he says.

Along this line, he feels the new bill should include authority for supply management. "If farm commodities are to have a steady and dependable flow into domestic and world markets without programs of enormous cost to the U.S. treasury," Vaughn says, "farmers must have the opportunity to vote mandatory

acreage allotments and/or marketing quotas on themselves."

To sustain agriculture, the specialist urges three priorities for farm policy:

- * Stronger measures to aid family farming, including correction of U.S. tax policies.

- * Measures to stabilize farm income.

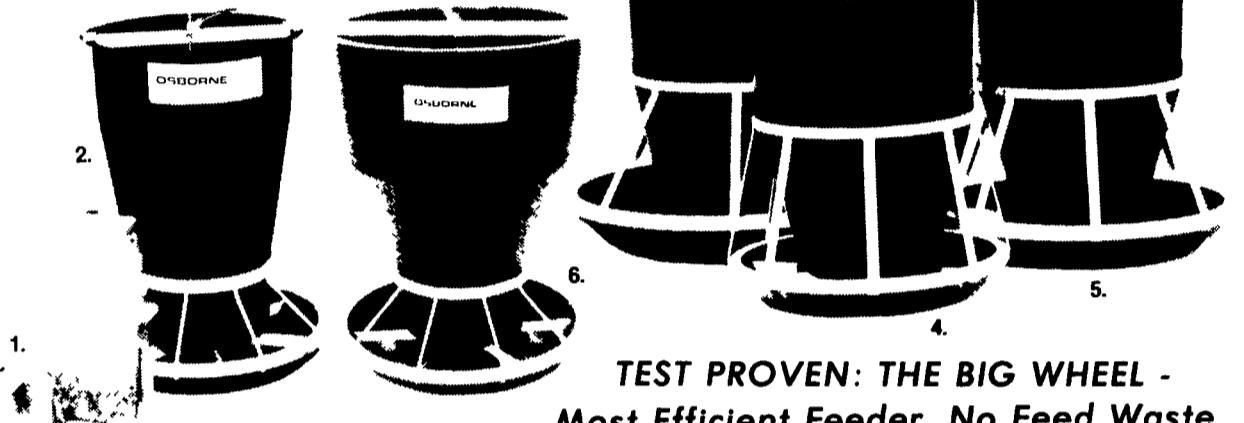
- * A wide range of program options and broad discretionary authority to use them.



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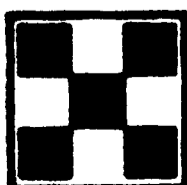
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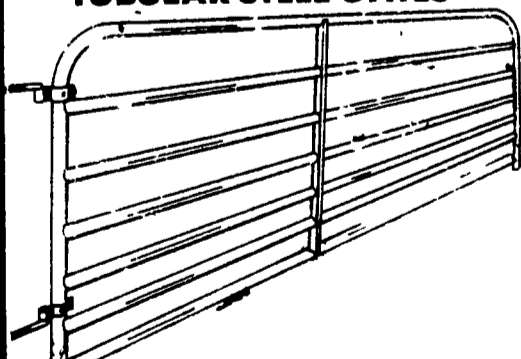


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