

Ag exec says U.S. must pressure other countries

MIAMI BEACH — A tougher trade policy and a substantial increase in the Food for Peace program can "end the depression that's sweeping like a prairie fire across our agricultural heartland," the chief executive officer of one of the nation's largest agricultural exporting companies told officials of U.S. farmer cooperatives here

The U.S. government must convince "mercantile governments" that their policies of dumping surplus agricultural products in world markets at below-cost prices "are not in anyone's best interests," according to Dwayne O. Andreas, chairman of Archer Daniels Midland Company, Decatur, Illinois.

And despite budget pressures, the government should double the \$2.5 billion now planned for the Food for Peace program for the next five years, he added, because it would save \$4.5 billion in price support expenditures and mean expanded farm export markets "and jobs for workers in processing, trucking, shipping and related industries." That, in turn,

would generate \$300 million in new tax revenue

"The only way to negotiate free trade," Andreas said, "is to use the predators' own weapons against them."

Charging that the "mercantile economies" dominate the world trading system and are "pushing American farmers out of business (and) destroying third world economies," Andreas called for aggressive implementation of new export assistance authority in the farm bill and more use of "mixed credits" to help exporters.

One of the recommendations of the President's Task Force on International Private Enterprise, which Andreas chairs, "mixed credits" are used by many countries to combine easy credit terms and aid to foster their exports. While American producers and exporters can't compete by borrowing at commercial rates and financing their buyers at lower rates, he said, "the mercantiles do it every day because they are governments; they don't have to worry about profit and loss, about shareholders or banks."

The requirement in the farm bill for \$2 billion worth of government-owned surpluses to be used to encourage exports, and a Reagan Administration request for \$300 million for mixed credits, make "a good start," he said. "It sends a

powerful message to unfair competitors that we aren't going to roll over and play dead. We're going to fight for our markets, and if the other fellow won't fight fair, then we'll just have to fight with his weapon."

An expanded Food for Peace program, he said, not only would be good business for U.S. farmers and industry, but also would help the U.S. fulfill its "moral and charitable duty to the world's hungry."

Improvements in the Food for Peace program mandated by the farm bill "may not go as far as our task force recommended," Andreas noted, "but it does put some muscle into our efforts on behalf of free enterprise worldwide."

While the U.S. should not try to introduce free trade unilaterally, he urged Washington to look at some of its own barriers to trade. He said Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev last month told him the Soviets have "a long catalog of complaints about America's trade barriers and our reliability as a trading partner."

He said he is hopeful "some of those barriers will come down and we can start doing serious business with the Russians; they represent an enormous market for America's agricultural and industrial production."

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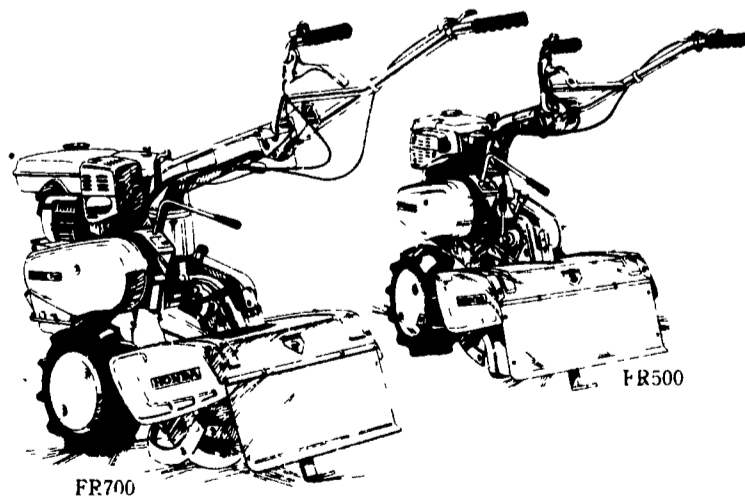
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