

Budget cuts could drastically alter extension

ITHACA, NY — Five major programs and as many as 300 Cooperative Extension positions across New York State face elimination if President Reagan's budget cuts become effective Oct. 1.

The president's executive budget proposes a 59 percent cut nationwide for the Cooperative Extension system. However, New York's funding would be reduced 67 percent because of cuts in specific programs, according to Lucinda A. Noble, director of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The federal allocation to New York would be slashed from \$11.3 million to \$3.6 million.

"A reduction of this magnitude will require drastic personnel reductions at regional and state levels," Noble said. "We will have to adjust allocations to county Cooperative Extension associations, regional programs, and college departments and administration," she explained.

"All segments of Cooperative Extension in New York State will be affected," she said, "but hardest hit will be the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and sea grant, integrated pest management, renewable resources, and urban gardening programs."

Cornell Cooperative Extension

programs serve more than six million New Yorkers each year. There are more than 1,600 extension personnel across the state, including those at Cornell University, in every county of the state, and in New York City.

Nationally, \$200 million in Cooperative Extension budget cuts could mean the loss of more than 10,000 positions in counties and land-grant institutions, Noble estimated.

"Reagan's cuts would drastically alter the complexion of Cooperative Extension as the nation knows it," she said.

Under the federal mandate that established Cooperative Extension, funding is shared by the federal, state, and county governments.

The \$11.3 million from the federal government for the current fiscal year is about 27 percent of the total Cornell Cooperative Extension budget. The state provides \$48.9 million, or about 21 percent, and county governments support the local offices with \$20.2 million, 48 percent of the total budget. Program fees provide \$1.6 million, about 4 percent.

"Elimination of 67 percent of the federal commitment undermines the confidence vested in the federal partner that has made it possible for Cooperative Extension to thrive in the state and nation,

and to grow from a predominately rural organization to a system that now provides research-based knowledge to consumers, youth, agriculturists, and just about every segment of the population," Noble said.

Noble was one of 22 people on a national panel that developed a guide for the future mission, scope, priorities, and policies of the Cooperative Extension system through the end of the decade.

The Joint USDA-National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges Committee on the Future of Cooperative Extension, in a 28-page report issued in 1983, recommended increased educational programs; improved farm and home technology; more translation of research results particularly for family farms, agribusinesses, families, and communities; a continuation of home economics programs; and emphasis on 4-H youth programs.

One USDA official said this week that states have the option of picking up the federal funding for programs being eliminated. This could keep alive the farm financial management program, for example, according to Gene Spory, director of management staff for the extension service.

"This has been a very successful program, but we have to set

priorities even at a time when survival (of the family farm) is an issue," Spory said in a telephone interview.

This is not the first time that the extension service has had to deal with cuts, he added, but the Gramm-Rudman budget balancing bill "compounds the situation."

The first Congressional hearings on the president's cuts in extension funding are scheduled for March 20, according to Dale Stansbury, director of government relations for agriculture and natural resources programs at the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

"The Senate budget committee is already seeking information on the impact of these cuts," he said Tuesday. "I have a strong feeling that Congress won't accept the cuts at this level."

One solution to the funding problem that has surfaced would

see extension reverting to agricultural programs only.

"That's alright for Kansas, perhaps, but not in a state like New York with nontraditional programs dealing with food and nutrition, local governments, and urban gardening," Stansbury said. "They might wind up being sacrificed if there is no proof of public support for them."

Noble said timing of the cuts is especially ironic. The first extension agent in New York State was employed 75 years ago this spring, making this the diamond jubilee of Cooperative Extension in the state.

Three of the state-supported colleges at Cornell, New York's land grant and sea grant institution, provide the backbone of Cooperative Extension programming in the Empire State. They are the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Human Ecology, and Veterinary Medicine, all located in Ithaca

Hay, silage production up

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania farmers produced more corn for grain, hay and potatoes during 1985 than 1984, based on acreage and production data.

Keystone farmers produced virtually the same amount of soybeans as during 1984 but fewer tons of corn silage. Corn for grain production totaled a record high 151.8 million bushels, two percent above last year. Corn acres harvested for grain amounted to 1.38 million and yielded a record-tying 110.0 bushels per acre. Corn for silage production at 6.52 million tons was six percent below 1984 production. Acres harvested totaled 395,000 with a record-tying yield of 16.5 tons per acre.

Alfalfa hay production at a record high 2.77 million tons, was three percent above last year. Acres harvested totaled 840,000 with a record yield of 3.3 tons per acre. All other hay acres harvested totaled 1.15 million acres which yielded a record 2.2 tons per acre for a record high production of 2.53 million tons.

Fall potato production at 5.72 million cwt is 11 percent more than 1984 production. Acres harvested amounted to 22,000 and yielded a record high 260 cwt per acre. Soybean production at 5.95 million bushels was unchanged from last year. Acreage harvested was 170,000 and yielded 35.0 bushels per acre.

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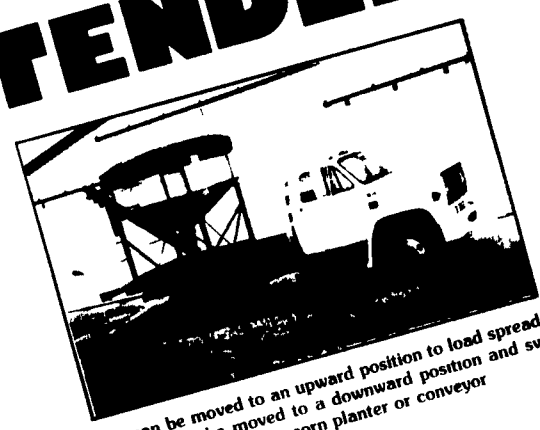
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