

# Ag Leaders Say Farm Bill Is Working -- Sort Of

By **MARTHA SHELDON**  
New York Correspondent

**ITHACA, N. Y.** — Nobody wants to lay claim to having conceived the 1985 farm bill, but despite its "illegitimacy," it's doing the job it was designed to do — sort of.

That agreement was reached by farm leaders, politicians, university economists, and agribusinessmen who participated in a recent national televideo conference on "Midcourse Corrections in Agricultural Policy." The three hours of debate and panel discussions originated at the University of Maryland and were broadcast to 50 locations throughout the United States, where farmers, economists, and bankers watched, reacted, and phoned in their questions to the experts.

At least a half dozen panelists on hand disagreed with the prevailing thumbs-up appraisal of the '85 bill. Among them were Senator Thomas Harkin, D-Iowa, originator of the "Save the Family Farm Bill," and Senator Rudy Boschwitz, R-Minnesota, proponent of decoupling farm payments from production.

Problems with surplus stocks and depressed exports of corn and wheat have led people to ask "is the farm bill working," said University of Maryland professor Bruce Gardner in laying the foundation for the broadcast. The situation with rice and cotton, however, present more promising

evidence that the bill is doing its job, he noted.

The '85 bill looks better today when compared to what is being proposed by the fringes, said American Farm Bureau president Dean Kleckner in a debate with Cy Carpenter, president of the National Farmers Union.

"It's not doing that badly for its first few months, but it is expensive," Kleckner acknowledged. "It is sending the proper signals to our competitors around the world."

Kleckner cited cutbacks in wheat production in Argentina and Australia as evidence the signals are being received. The Gebhardt-Harkin bill would send the wrong signals, Kleckner maintained.

Judging the bill after less than one year is unfair, Kleckner said. It was designed to carry out its goals over a 5-year period.

"The bill has created a disaster level of damage," said Carpenter, "and we can't stand any more time to prove that kind of disaster." Those farmers who are facing foreclosure are calling for change, he said, citing statistics indicating that in some counties two farms collapse every month.

Even the bill's originators are asking for a 35 percent set-aside, Carpenter noted, and indication the bill is not doing the job. "The bill has forced the cost of crops below the cost of production. There is no replacement capability under this farm bill and also no inventory

replacement."

"It's the high-debt farmers who are going out," said Kleckner, "and no farm bill can deal with those, in my opinion."

Cornell economist Kenneth Robinson gave the bill a mixed report. Exports have not recovered, but with lower prices we should see other countries make production adjustments, Robinson said.

We need to address the dependency of farmers on government and the rigidities and perverse signals we are sending farmers, said Clemson University's Harold Harris. Farmers are farming the program quite efficiently.

"We are going to have to face the fact that about 20 percent of the farmers are not going to make it under the '85 farm bill, or any other reasonable farm bill that can be passed," Harris asserted. "We're not doing farmers any good by letting that hang on by their fingernails for another year."

With the \$30 billion now being spent on farm programs, it would be cheaper to buy out the

distressed farmers and retrain them, Carpenter asserted.

USDA Assistant Secretary for Economics Robert Thompson reiterated the administration's stand, calling for minor adjustments to the bill. The adjustments would: move further into decoupling by substituting a 0-92 program for the present 50-92; reduce deficiency payments by cutting target prices; tighten the limits set on payments to farmers;

and lower the loan rates to compete on the world market.

A spokesman for Harkin acknowledged that there is no real hope of making major changes to the present farm program within the next two years. Both Harkin and Boschwitz are aiming to stimulate Congressional discussion and position themselves action under a new administration in 1989.

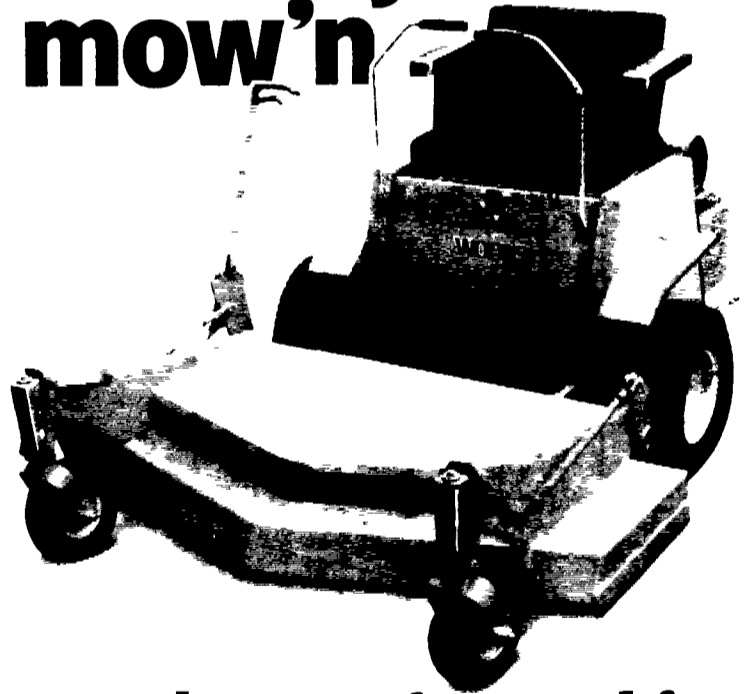


**NEED SOMEONE WHO  
CAN FILL THE SHOES?**

Try A Help Wanted Ad  
In Classified.

Phone: 717-394-3047 or 717-626-1164

## If you're particular about your mow'n



### Woods mow'n machine is the particular mower for you...

- True 360° zero turning
- Finger-tip control of speed, direction and braking
- Maneuverability that lets you trim as you mow
- Convenient 'out-front' mowing
- Choice of 44", 52" or 61" cutting widths
- Easy-on, easy-off attachments — snowblower, brush and dozer blade

*...come in for a demonstration*

**WM. HOBENSACK'S SONS**  
Ivyland, PA  
215-675-1610

**MANOR EQUIPMENT INC.**  
Sinking Spring, PA  
215-678-0828

**KELLER BROS.**  
Lititz, PA  
717-626-2000

**THOMAS POWER EQUIPMENT**  
Avondale, PA  
215-268-2181

**R.S. HOLLINGER & SON, INC.**  
Mountville, PA  
717-285-4538

**KELLER BROS. TRACTOR CO.**  
Lebanon, PA  
717-949-6501

**LAMBS FARM MACHINERY**  
Thorndale, PA  
215-269-2676

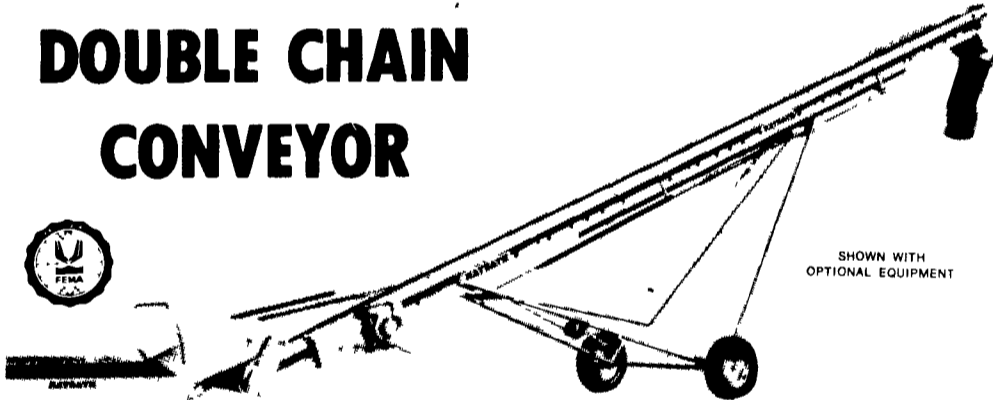
**PIPERSVILLE GARDEN CENTER**  
Pipersville, PA  
215-766-0414

**SCHREIB & SON**  
Bath, PA  
215-837-7681

**N.H. FLICKER & SONS, INC.**  
Maxatawney, PA  
215-683-7252

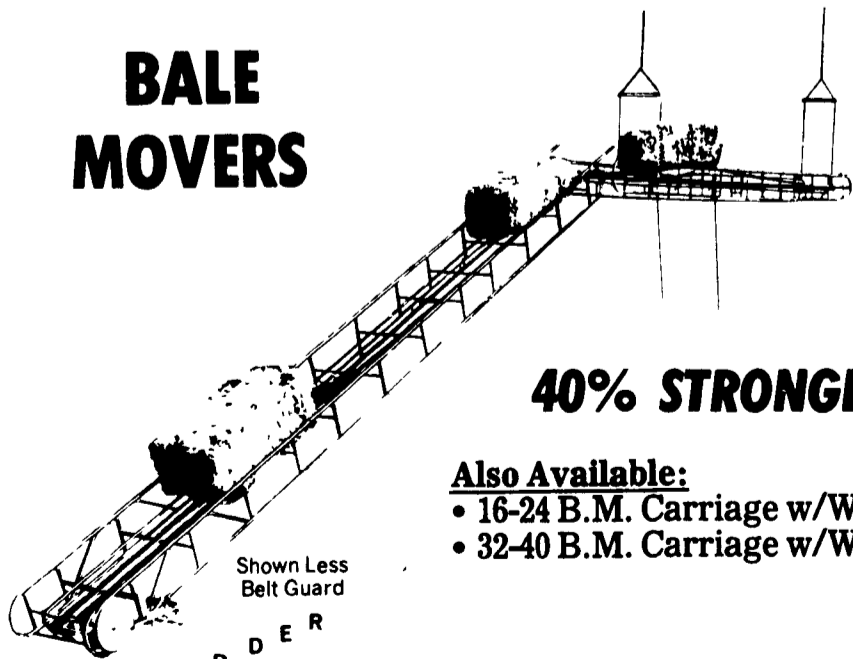
## ALL PURPOSE DOUBLE CHAIN CONVEYOR

### MAYRATH INDUSTRIES, INC.



- Galvanized Construction
- Patented Interlocking Joints
- Spring-Loaded Chain Tightener
- Clutch On Engine And Electric Mounts

## BALE MOVERS



**40% STRONGER**

**Also Available:**

- 16-24 B.M. Carriage w/Winch
- 32-40 B.M. Carriage w/Winch

Shown Less  
Belt Guard

HANDLES LIKE A L A D D E R

## RYDER SUPPLY CO.

539 Falling Spring Road  
P.O. Box 219  
Chambersburg, PA 17201-0219  
Phone 717-263-9111