

# PA Farm Leader Meets With President On Drought Relief

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "We need to move quickly in assessing the drought damage and then design a financial assistance program to help farmers, who are experiencing the worst drought in more than 50 years," said Keith W. Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA). The state farm leader made these comments prior to a meeting today at 2 p.m. with President Ronald Reagan.

Eckel, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Board of Directors, is

attending a national meeting in Washington D.C. of Farm Bureau state presidents, and they have a meeting scheduled with the President Reagan to discuss the weather crisis. PFA is the state affiliate of the American Farm Bureau.

"We believe that help for drought stricken farmers is imperative," Eckel stated, "because the agricultural economy can not withstand the disastrous hardships created by this widespread drought. Diversity and geographic distribution of our agriculture has been our salvation in the past

against destructive weather, but this drought knows no boundaries. It's the worst drought in history."

"Emergency legislation," the state farm leader said, "should be guided by three principles: (1) it should be based on a proven product loss; (2) it should apply to all commodities, not just those already involved in government programs; and (3) It should be designed to meet the present emergency." Eckel stated there is no need to make it part of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1985.

The Farm Bureau presidents and

Eckel met with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Richard Lyng, Vice President George Bush, and member of the House and Senate Tuesday. "We were assured by the Administration and Congressional leaders that drought relief is in the works," Eckel said.

There have been at least 11 bills introduced in Congress, but the one that drew the highest praise of the Pennsylvania farm leader is the legislation that was introduced by Senators Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) and Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.).

"This proposed legislation meets all of our guidelines and it's designed to get the job done," he said.

Senators Lugar and Leahy announced the introduction of their bill Tuesday. The proposed assistance program would provide direct assistance to drought stricken farmers, who have a proven 35 percent loss of a particular crop; it would avert the 50-cent deduction in the dairy support price expected in January, 1989, and it would make emergency feed grains available to farmers.

## Vegetable Growers To Vote On Marketing Referendum

HARRISBURG — The state's vegetable producers will vote this month on a proposal to establish a marketing program to fund research, promotion and marketing for Pennsylvania-grown vegetables, state Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff announced this week.

The Secretary said that approximately 2,500 ballots will be mailed this week by the state Department of Agriculture. Producers who grow one acre or more of vegetables for sale and greenhouse operators who devote 1,000 square feet or more of greenhouse area to vegetables for sale are eligible to vote in the referendum.

A copy of the proposal and a return envelope will accompany each ballot. Completed ballots must be received by the state Department of Agriculture between July 19 and 4:00 p.m. Aug. 1, Wolff said.

The referendum is the result of a

public hearing held May 6, when 80 percent of the individual producers present, as well as the Pennsylvania Farmers Association and the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, reacted favorably to the program.

The proposal calls for a flat fee of \$25 from each vegetable producer and a contribution of \$1.50 for each acre over 10 in vegetable production. For greenhouse vegetable producers, the assessment would be \$1.50 for each 1,000 square foot over 10,000 square feet planted to vegetables.

Wolff estimated that the program would raise more than \$100,000 annually for research, promotion and marketing.

"The most important feature of the program," the Secretary said, "is that it would be administered solely by a 13-member commodity-marketing board composed of and elected by the growers.

"This is in keeping with Governor Casey's pledge to place control of commodity marketing programs in the hands of producers."

Producers' control of marketing programs was severely limited before passage last year of the Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act, which was backed by the Casey Administration.

The vegetable marketing prop-

osal represents an attempt by growers to replace a Vegetable Research Program established in 1982 and terminated by a review referendum last year.

The former program restricted the use of funds to research activities only, and during last year's referendum the Vegetable Growers Association urged producers to terminate the program in order to

establish one of broader scope.

"The proposed program and the sentiment in favor of the July referendum are an expression of the desire for a better operation," Wolff said.

Producers who fail to receive a ballot or wish additional information should call the department's Bureau of Marketing Development at (717) 783-9948.

## National Corn Growers Assess 1988 Crop

ST. LOUIS — "The drought of 1988 is real--and it is potentially devastating for U.S. corn and livestock farmers, agribusinesses and the nation's strengthening economy," says Keith Hora, president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA).

Hora, a Riverside, IA corn farmer, reflected the views of the NCGA Board of Directors at a recent new conference held during a meeting of the association's

leaders.

At the meeting, the 56 board members present estimated the 1988 corn crop would average 70 bushels per acre, a 42 percent decrease from 1987 production levels.

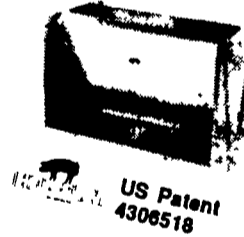
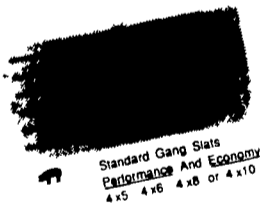
"The yield could drop even more as each day passes and we do not receive rain and the temperature remains at record levels," adds Hora.

Hora emphasized that the

survey was a small sampling of only 56 corn growers, but what they see on their farms is indicative of what is happening to the corn crop nationwide. Growers participating in the survey were from 19 states that produce 95 percent of the nation's corn crop.

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