

Gov. Sends Ag Secretary

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eral Farmers Home Administration (FmHA).

The request was sent to Washington, D.C., and delivered to Lyng's office by state Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff, who was in Washington to brief the Pennsylvania congressional delegation on the need for federal drought-assistance legislation that will help state farmers recover from the crisis.

Gov. Casey said he wrote to Lyng today even though the state Agriculture Department had not yet officially received necessary information from the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) to support Pennsylvania's request for an

emergency declaration.

"I have personally toured representative farms and met with Pennsylvania farm leaders to witness the loss to our crops and livestock," Gov. Casey wrote in the letter. "For nearly one-half the state this is our second consecutive year of dry weather conditions."

The governor informed Lyng that drought assessment reports had been completed for all Pennsylvania counties and that the Food and Agricultural Council/State Emergency Board voted Tuesday to recommend a request for a statewide declaration.

Officials have indicated that preliminary assessments indicate Pennsylvania's crop losses from the drought will total \$300 million,

"far transcending the capacity of state government to deal with such a disaster."

Federal designation would make Pennsylvania farmers eligible for low-interest FmHA loans if they have federal crop insurance, experience serious crop damage and cannot obtain loans from other sources.

Normally, the designation also makes farmers eligible for feed assistance, but that was authorized by Lyng on a county-by-county basis earlier this summer as the drought became extensive.

In a small news conference in the Secretary's office Thursday morning, Wolff said that in addition to delivering the letter from the Governor he wanted to make sure Congressional members knew the seriousness of the drought in

Pennsylvania and to ask for a speedy passage of the legislation that would include all segments of agriculture. "Because of its wide-spread effect, we need emergency action," Wolff said. We figure that on the average size 52 milk cow dairy herd in Pennsylvania, the feed cost will increase \$8,000 because of the drought this year. And the 50 cents a hundred

increase in milk price support proposed by legislation will net the same size farm about \$3,000-\$4,000.

In addition, within the state the Governor has asked that weight restrictions be lifted on trucks hauling hay and that bankers be as lenient as possible on farm loan repayments in drought areas.

RCMA Plans Diversion

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last 26 Lancaster County farmers who became Farmland shippers since April. These farms were pinpointed on a map and three teams of volunteers and RCMA personnel planned to make personal visits to all the farms on Tuesday.

In a new move, RCMA announced it is prepared to offer whatever Farmland is paying plus the RCMA premiums guaranteed for six months. "Our milk should be worth just a little less than what it costs to ship it in," King said. "RCMA has come a long way but we must continue to work together."

Of the 25,000 dairy farms in the Northeast, RCMA claims 22,000 members through cooperative memberships as well as independent shippers who have voluntarily joined RCMA. According to King, the 3,000 non-members cause a loss of bargaining power for the organization. For this reason,

RCMA was able to bargain for only one third of what would have been available if they had the support of all dairy farms.

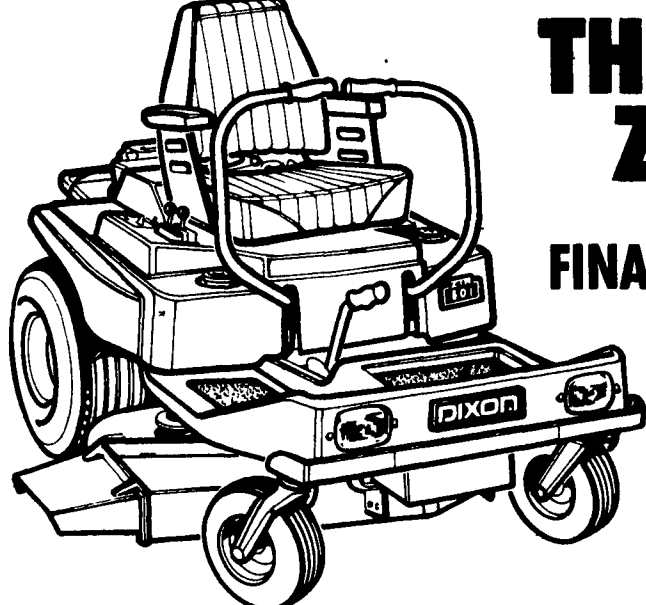
Donald Ranck, Lancaster County Representative, said later in the week that when they visited local farmers they found that many had joined Farmland not necessarily for price, but for other reasons.

While they did not press for these farmers to join RCMA at the time, Ranck said they were hopeful that many would cooperate in a goal to get all Farmland shippers to divert their milk on September 1.

Ranck used the analogy of the Amish ban: If a brother gets out of line in the Amish community, he is shunned until he comes back in line. "That's what we want to do with Farmland," Ranck said. "We want Farmland in our community. We hope the September 1 diversion program will bring them back."

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