

ASA Delegates Vote To Pursue Nationwide Soybean Checkoff

ST. LOUIS, MO. — In a special meeting, 272 farmers serving as American Soybean Association (ASA) Voting Delegates have voted to pursue a united nationwide soybean checkoff.

"U.S. soybean farmers and their profits are under attack," said ASA President James Lee Adams. "Malaysian palm producers are checking off equal to 7.7 cents per bushel, which will generate a \$14.4 million war chest. That's just one commodity's effort to take away our sales and profits. We soybean farmers must respond before it's too late."

Recognizing the challenge, ASA delegates acted based on nearly a year of research and study, 40 hours of farmer-leader debate, 275 pages of information and interviews with 2,005 ASA member and non-member farmers.

Adams said independent surveys conducted for ASA showed that U.S. soybean farmers overwhelmingly support a nationwide soybean checkoff.

"Two-thirds of the farmers polled said they favor a nationwide checkoff because it is fair," Adams said. "Everyone who benefits would invest in the checkoff. In addition to fairness, our delegates also supported four other principles that farmers say they want in a nationwide checkoff."

"These include: farmer-run with all decisions made by working farmers; an administrative cap where the law limits overhead costs to no more than five percent; a state-oriented program where 50 percent of funds would stay within each soybean state with farmers from the state controlling funds

through existing state programs; and a requirement for a farmer-referendum to approve continuation of the checkoff once it is established, as well as a farmer vote before the checkoff amount could be raised."

Adams said checkoff funds would be used to create and promote new uses for soybeans; to promote export expansion; to promote soybeans in the U.S.; and to conduct research to help cut U.S. soybean production costs.

The ASA President said the Association would ask that Congress prohibit using checkoff funds to influence legislation or to lobby on domestic farm policy issues.

ASA's Voting Delegates approved seeking a nationwide checkoff at one-half percent of the value of a bushel, or 50 cents for every \$100 in sales.

"The percentage approach is new, but fair," Adams said. "Farmers told us they like a percentage because it is fair among regions which have different prices because of the basis. They said they like it because when prices

drop, the checkoff amount drops. And, they said they like it because it would make ASA consider price as well as the number of bushels produced."

The next step involves seeking Congressional legislation to establish a nationwide soybean promotion and research program. If Congress approves legislation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture would write a marketing order outlining specific operational procedures for a nationwide soybean checkoff.


"We're probably two or three

years away," Adams said. "And that worries me. The Malaysians, Brazilians and other foreign competitors won't wait for us. They're out in the world today trying to steal our markets. We farmers must fight back. And we must work to capture the tremendous

market potential in the U.S., Soviet Union and China.

"We're at a crossroads. We have the opportunity to double the value of U.S. soybeans. But, if we don't act, there's a real potential to watch our crop wither to half its current value."

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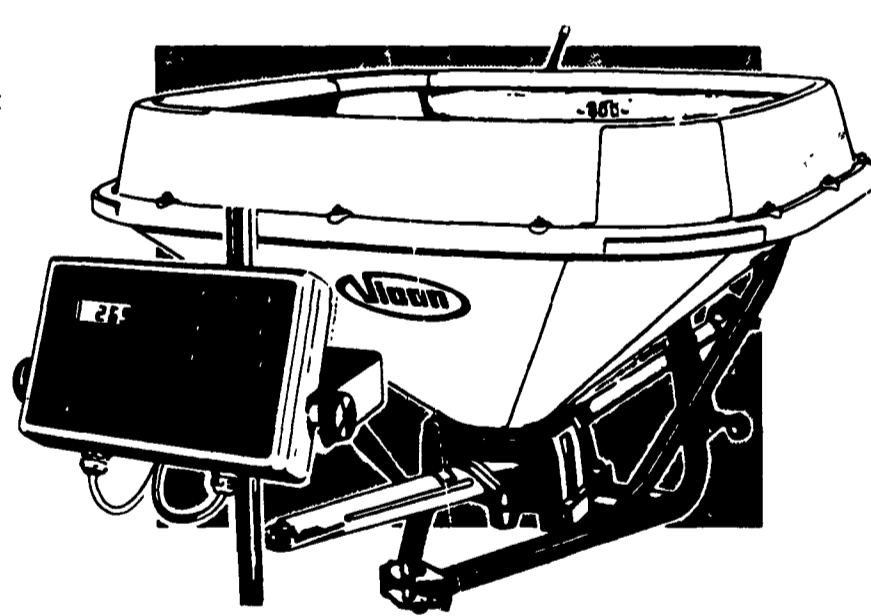
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