

USDA Develops New Dapple Apple Test

Washington, D.C. — National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) supports increased planting flexibility within a farm program system using more realistic yield statistics to make U.S. agriculture more market oriented, said NCGA President Steve Wentworth in congressional testimony on June 27, 1989 of the United States House of Representatives.

Before the Subcommittees on Wheat, Soybeans and Feed Grains and Cotton and Sugar, Wentworth, on Oreana, Ill., corn grower, stressed NCGA's support of market-oriented agriculture. "I think it's an emphasis on market factors that has helped to make the 1985 Food Security Act such a success."

He noted NCGA supports planting flexibility that allows producers to follow market signals more closely. "The so-called '10-25' option in last year's drought-relief bill was a good start toward a farmer flexibility program. It allowed farmers to plant soybeans and sunflowers on 10 to 25 percent of their base acres without losing base credit. However, that option was flawed, in my opinion, when USDA was allowed to limit the number of acres that could be switched, in order to keep soybean prices above \$5.49 per bushel." Farmers were finally given authority to switch 80 percent of the land they

signed up. "A true farmers flexibility program should set parameters for acreage substitution like the 10 to 25 percent range allowed this year and let farmers freely choose how much to switch," Wentworth said. He went on to point out that such true farmer flexibility would eliminate numerous trips to local ASCS officers and let farmers freely alternate among crops in any one growing season.

NCGA therefore, has real concerns that some of the so-called flexibility concepts, including the "triple base" proposals, would simply be used as a back-door to farm program spending.

"We recognize the need to cut government spending at all levels and feel the feed grains programs have contributed to the savings thus far," Wentworth added. "But let's not use the honorable goal of responding to market signals as a cover for unintended cuts in the programs so important to the nation's farmers."

NCGA also promotes the use of actual proven yields as the basis for program payments. "Although farmers were allowed to prove their actual yields earlier this decade, they have not been able to update their yield data since 1986. Many farmers painfully felt the result last year, when their disaster payments were based on USDA's established yields for their farm,

which were substantially below their actual yields," Wentworth said.

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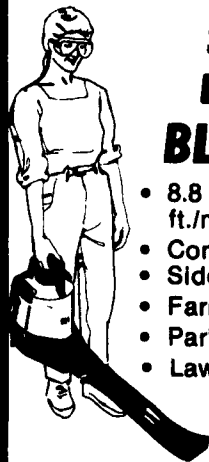
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