Commodity Groups Commend Bush For Food-Safety Goals

WASHINGTON, DC — Five major U.S. commodity organizations recently commended President Bush for the principles of his new food safety initiative.

The American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council and U.S. Rice Producers Legislative Group said in a joint statement that the President's goals "demonstration is committed to building consumer confidence in our food supply, which is already the safest food supply in the world."

Principles of the President's food safety program include:

— protecting the public from exposure to harmful substances in our food system;

— improving the certainty of pesticide use regulations for both farmers and the public;

— assuring that pesticides proven to be unsafe are not used and helping speed the development of alternative pest control sources, and;

— bolstering public confidence in the U.S. food supply now and in years to come.

The groups reiterated their support for the food safety legislation, H.R. 3292, introduced by, among others, Reps. Kika de la Garza (D-TX) and Edward Madigan (R-IL). However, they noted similarities in substantive sections of both the President's initiative and H.R. 3292, including streamlining of the cancellation process for chemicals scientifically proven to

pose unacceptable risks and steps toward uniformity of federal and state pesticide laws.

In addition, the organizations stressed that most any food safety proposal could reduce the availability of some pesticides, perhaps threatening farmer profitability, and noted they may disagree on the specifics of the President's or any other initiatives. "But we are committed to achieving the goal of providing an abundant, reasonably-priced supply of food and fiber while protecting the health of our citizens and our environment," the groups said.

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The five organizations also expressed hope that the Administration's sensitivity to concerns of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in developing a single, balanced, proposal could be followed in Congress. "We are confident that House and Senate, using the de la Garza/Madigan proposal, can address recent public concern over pesticide safety in a similarly rational approach," they said.

Full inclusion of the Department of Agriculture in the Administration's efforts to craft a food safety measure was also praised by the groups because of USDA's wealth of scientific capacity, both through the system of land-grant colleges and universities and through USDA's own in-house analytical resources. "USDA must continue to be fully involved in future Administration discourse on pesticide issues," the groups said.

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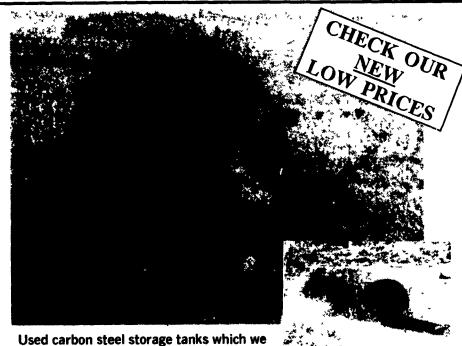
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