

Industry Leaders To Consider Positions On International Trade

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Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Representatives from most major dairy industry and other commodity and support organizations with ties to Pennsylvania met Wednesday with a representative of U.S. Sen. Harris Wofford, D-Bryn Mawr, in a room at the state agriculture building in Harrisburg to discuss positions on international trade.

The meeting was the first of what Russell Redding, special assistant and agricultural policy advisor to Wofford, said may result in an ongoing roundtable between his office and Pennsylvania agricultural organizations.

Redding had called the meeting specifically to address the federal program of trade preferences for developing nations called the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

As a program, the GSP is up for review this year. Depending on fact finding and testimony, it may be abolished, continued, or amended.

Currently through this program, any of 130 eligible counties may petition the United States to have all trade barriers removed, except for normal customs control.

The reason for the meeting was partially because of a nationally publicized problem with import-

ing of Goya cheese, a cheese product used as a filler for Italian cheeses.

Representatives of the domestic producers of Goya were threatened with what they and the rest of the dairy industry claimed was unjustified dropping of tariffs and duties on imported Goya cheeses from Argentina, Uruguay and Hungary.

It the petition would have been fully approved, as was sought by the Bush administration, it would have opened up a duty free glut of Goya into the United States, destroying the domestic competitiveness, according to spokesmen for The Dairy Trade Coalition, a group which was founded as a result of the incident.

Estimates, which had been ridiculed by some national columnists based out of Washington D.C., were that domestic losses would have been considerable: a 30-cent-per pound drop in cheese price; a 76-cent-per hundredweight loss to the price of milk; and a \$1.15 billion loss from the dairy industry.

This was estimated based on the amount of milk now used to make domestic Goya cheese and the diversion of that milk for domestic cheddar cheese production.

Further, it was said that because the extra cheddar cheese would reach surplus and support level prices, the Commodity Credit Corporation would be forced to buy

the surplus cheddar and farmers would be assessed an estimated 18 cents per hundredweight to pay for the purchases.

The petition for Goya has failed twice, even after receiving presidential support, because of pressure from congressmen and the dairy industry.

However, the incident points to the need for some change, according to Mario Castillo, representative of the Dairy Trade Coalition. Discussion also ran to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).

Although some organizational representatives, such as Pat Wolff, legislative liaison for the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association, stated that their organization has established some policy on the matters (PFA's policy is for the abolishment of the GSP), most representatives did not offer such solid positions during the discussion.

The apparent bottom line consensus was for the groups to take a more aggressive role in international policy making.

Redding said that he didn't come away from the meeting with a sense that any consensus was formed.

"I'm not sure that there was (a consensus). I think there was consensus from the perspective that

we need to better understand these trade agreements.

"But there was no consensus that NAFTA is good for agriculture," Redding said. "One thing clear to me, coming out of that meeting, in Congress our challenge is to inform the people who are to be directly affected. That's a big challenge.

"Likewise, all of these organizations — farm organizations or commodity groups have a challenge to inform their membership."

The reason for calling for a meeting was two-fold, according to Redding.

"From our perspective, we wanted to bring (the organizations) up to date on what happened with the 102nd (Congress) and what is coming with the 103rd, and to focus on pending dairy issues.

"This was our first attempt to bring together some of the real leaders in the dairy industry to have a dialogue on trade issues and for Sen. Wofford to go out and reach out. We're faced with trend setting and shaping issues that we need their input on," he said.

As far as the success of the meeting, those attending nodded in agreement when Redding asked if there should be future roundtable discussions.

"For the first time doing it, it was a good first attempt," he said.

"We started with 20 to 25 people who ideally would like to be there. We sent out the letter and (he got a) 98-percent response, which is indicative of the interest that is out there. These people are looking for a forum to present their concerns. The message to me is, we have to do it more often."



GIGANTIC SELECTION

IN Lancaster Farming's CLASSIFIEDS

Producers

(Continued from Page A31)

• J. Kenneth Miller. Miller farms in partnership with son Kervin, and operates under Maplebrink Farms. He milks 85 cows and has 155 head of young cattle. Miller owns two farms, for a total of 175 acres, and rents an additional 150 acres.

Also, new producers were recognized. They are Richard C. Elliot, Gary L. Mase, Lawrence Z. Good, Brookshire Farm (Dennis L. Stoner and Jay M. Good), Marvin S. Nolt, Jay M. Martin, Earl S. Weaver, R. Bryan Balmer, Richard L. Myers, Gary Fomey, David Heagy, Robert and Linda Sensenig, Jay and Mildred Nissley, and Wilson L. Eberly.

Top 10 producers for fiscal year 1992 are Kenneth E. Zurin (5.7 million pounds), John Landis (5.3 million pounds), and James and Luke Brubaker (4 million pounds). Also, Risser Brothers, Arlin Benner, Harold Brubaker, J. Richard Groff, Merle King, George Rohrer, and Ken Balmer.

Honor roll members, who will receive bonuses of 10-20 cents per hundredweight, included Amos Conley and Clair Hollinger.

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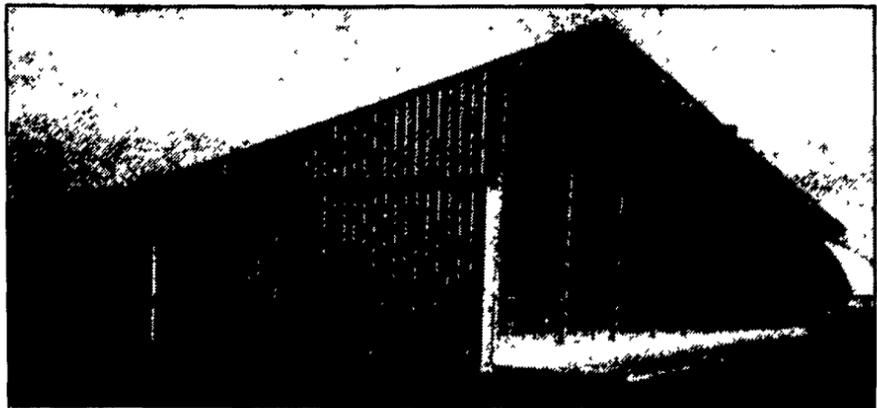
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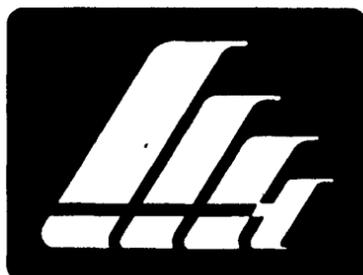
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