

Ag Policy Group Cautions Policymakers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — America's efficient production of food and fiber can be seriously jeopardized by emerging environmental and food safety regulations, according to a new report commissioned by the Washington, D.C.-based Agricultural Policy Working Group.

Speaking on behalf of the coalition of food and agribusiness firms, author and economist Dr. Bruce L. Gardner said that, despite U.S. agriculture's efforts to consistently meet consumers' demands for wholesome and economical food, that ability may be threatened by unreasonable environmental and food safety goals.

"Policymakers and the public need to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of the U.S. agricultural economy before they consider changes in regulatory policy," he cautioned.

The Agricultural Policy Working Group released an extensive study by Dr. Gardner and colleagues that explores a series of regulatory options and their consequences to food and fiber production. Included are regulations aimed at species and habitat protection, land use, water quality, chemical use, food safety, con-

sumer and worker safety, and biotechnology.

"Legislative and regulatory actions on environmental issues have such substantial potential costs to U.S. agriculture, farmers, agribusiness, and rural communities that such actions should be carefully structured to minimize effects on farm costs, while ensuring the desired environmental benefits," Dr. Gardner said. "Moreover, the cumulative impact of these regulations makes it equally important that they not be carried out in a piecemeal fashion."

Consequences of restrictive environmental regulations, according to the APWG study, could include: 1) higher consumer food costs of up to \$250 per household, with heaviest burden falling on lower income families; 2) net farm income losses of up to several billion dollars; 3) falling farm asset values that could force many farmers out of business; 4) job losses in environmentally sensitive rural areas; and 5) declines in U.S. exports of up to \$10 billion annually, opening opportunities for U.S. competitors to expand their food and fiber production.

With the study in hand, the

Agricultural Policy Working Group today called on Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy to conduct an agricultural impact statement on the effect of major environmental bills on the agricultural economy, prior to their consideration by Congress.

These agricultural impact analyses should be sent to the chairmen and ranking minority members of the House and Senate agriculture committees to ensure that producers, agribusiness and consumers are fully aware of the economic impacts of each major environmental bill pending before Congress, members of APWG emphasized.

They noted that each analysis should include economic impacts of the legislation on costs of production, farm income, exports, food prices, rural employment, and asset values, plus estimates of cumulative effects.

APWG members emphasized that House and Senate members need to be fully informed of the economic impacts on agriculture.

Copies of the full APWG report, entitled "The Impacts of Environmental Protection and Food Safety Regulations on U.S. Agriculture," are available from: APWG, c/o Leshner & Russell, Inc., 1919 S. Eads Street, Suite 103, Arlington, Virginia 22202. Telephone: 703/979-6900.

Juniata County Bus Tour

MIFFLINTOWN (Juniata Co.)—The Juniata County Conservation Service field day bus tour to Franklin County will leave the Ag Service Center at 8:30 a.m. First stop is the Clifford Hawbaker farm at Chambersburg and then on

to Nathan Burkholder farm at Mercersburg. Return back to the center is planned for 3:30 p.m.

For bus reservations call the Conservation office by Nov. 1. Phone: (717) 436-6919.

Pa. State Grange Adopts

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43; Crawford No. 26; and Perry No. 69.

Douglas Bonsall, community service coordinator for the State Grange, said the awards recognize those Granges who have made a significant contribution to their communities.

"The community service awards demonstrate that these Grange members care about their hometowns and are trying to make a difference in the world they live," Bonsall said. "The community service award is a tribute to their dedication, perseverance and hard work during the past year."

Community service award winners are judged based on a notebook they keep during the contest year. Included in the notebooks are to be written articles about their projects, photographs, and media coverage.

Also honored at the banquet was Dr. Joseph Fotos, a retired superintendent of the Clarion Area School District, who received the Grange's Community Citizen Award, for being instrumental in arranging this year's convention to be held at the Clarion University.

In other business, Gordon Hiller, master of the Pennsylvania State Grange, opened the convention by reviewing the past year's accomplishments while offering a vision toward the future.

"One of the first steps when I took office was to implement our Grange initiative for the 1993 and Beyond campaign," Hiller said. "The program has been well received across the state and we

look for the Grange to continue to grow as we approach the year 2000."

More timely, Hiller said that there were several legislative accomplishments made during the past year. He cited the creation of the Nutrient Management Act; sales tax exemptions for manure storage facilities; reform of workers' compensation; tax relief for conservation easements; and securing funding for the University of Pennsylvania Veterinarian School.

"In the coming year, the Grange is expected to chair the revamped Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources Ag Advisory Board, a very influential body advising DER on agricultural policy, regulations and enforcement. Current laws and new legislation will be monitored according to Grange policy," he said.

According to Hiller, the past accomplishments of the Grange coupled with a vision will guide the organization.

"Many opportunities for Grange involvement are presenting themselves across the state," Hiller said.

"Research and legislation is brewing that will affect our lives and livelihoods. Health care, for humans and animals, water regulations, labor requirements, rural development, transportation, education, taxation and a whole host of pertinent issues are on tomorrow's horizon."

In addition, more than 130 resolutions were discussed during the convention, including issues such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), conservation of Agricultural Security Areas, organ donor legislation, emission inspections, and federal estate tax.

The policies of the Grange begin in the form of resolutions made at the local level, which are then considered at the county level, the state level, and ultimately at the federal level.

Neither the results of the delegates' voting on policy, nor any of the election results were available by presstime.

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