

New Priorities

DENVER, Colo. — Corn growers from around the country outlined the mission for the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and set the stage for future policy actions during the 1994 Corn Classic, February 27-March 1 in Denver, Colo.

During two days of voting delegate sessions, 260 corn growers considered hundreds of resolutions and amendments.

The mission statement of the NCGA and the National Corn Development Foundation captures the broad role that this organization plays: "to enhance corn profitability and usage to improve the quality of life in a changing world."

To achieve these goals, NCGA re-emphasized their commitment to activities, such as supporting programs that expand corn consumption and utilization, cooperating with other farm organizations to promote a more unified voice for agriculture and voluntarily adopting "environmentally-sound" soil management techniques.

Highlights of the voting delegate session:

- NCGA leaders continued their support for fair and open trade and encouraged Congress to ratify the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). They also offered support for USDA's Market Promotion Program (MPP), which can expand commercial export markets. The delegates

requested that Congress fund the MPP at the currently approved program level of \$100 million, rather than the \$75 million requested by President Clinton in his 1995 budget plan.

- With several exciting prospects for new corn uses on the horizon, delegates urged the NCGA and state affiliates to work with government, university and industry representatives to develop a comprehensive national corn research strategy before passage of the 1995 Farm Bill. They also urged Congress to fund Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization (AARC) program at the full level authorized by the 1990 Farmbill.

- When Congress considers future farm program legislation, NCGA delegates asked them to include initiatives that would assure opportunities for improved profitability, enhance demand for basic commodities and value-added products, establish a national policy to utilize agricultural products as renewable resources, provide income support, and reduce the complexity of farm programs.

NCGA went on record as supporting additional flexibility for farmers to rotate their program crop base acres to other crops for environmental benefits. They also encouraged discussion of revenue assurance as part of the 1995 Farm Bill without endorsing any spe-

cific proposal. The concept, which emerged from the Iowa Farm Bill Task Force, would guarantee farmers a portion (such as 70-percent) of their expected gross receipts.

This type of program would replace the current system of deficiency payments, crop insurance and disaster programs.

- Delegates devoted considerable time to discussing the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which has idled about 36.5 million acres. Unless Congress acts to continue the program, the first acres will start to come out from under their ten-year contracts in late 1995, and 22 million acres could be unleashed by 1997. NCGA encouraged lawmakers to continue implementing the program with the following guidelines in mind: extensions of expiring contracts should be subject to competitive bidding; encourage haying and grazing instead of crop production on expiring CRP contracts; tree planting should be encouraged; enrollment and renewal of contracts should be targeted to the most environmentally sensitive land such as field borders, large waterways and other areas needed for conservation compliance. Increased emphasis should be placed on water quality; target areas should be allowed to be managed in such a manner that would not disrupt the normal management of the entire field; and individual states should be allowed to



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start on conservation work prior to the land coming out of the CRP.

- Corn growers support increased funding for federal quality programs, including

USDA's Water Quality Incentive Program and nonpoint source pollution programs authorized by the Clean Water Act.

NAFTA Opens Up Markets

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "The best news we have had in some time is that U.S. corn producers will sell at least 2.5 million metric tons (mmt) (98.5 million bushels) of corn to Mexico every year," said Mark DeVore, upon returning from the U.S. Feed Grains Council's Market Assessment Mission.

DeVore represented the Nebraska Corn Board on the mission that traveled to Canada and Mexico to study opportunities to increase exports to these markets.

"The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and PROCAMPO open up new opportunities in Mexico for corn producers.

"There is still some questions as to who will receive the 2.5 mmt (98.5 mbu) duty-free quota," DeVore said. "However, based on our meetings, it looks like the wet milling industry and food industries will get the majority share."

The Mexican government and industry groups will deter-

mine which sectors receive the duty-free corn quota from the United States. Mexico's wet milling industry currently utilizes 1-1.5 mmt (39.4 to 59.1 mbu) of corn annually.

"They are already using U.S. corn, it is a matter of increasing the amount they use," DeVore said. "At the wet mill we visited, there were several trucks full of Nebraska waxy corn waiting to be processed."

"Almost as important as NAFTA is Mexico's new domestic agricultural policy, PROCAMPO," DeVore said. "Producers will be paid based on owned acreage, not the amount and type of crop they produce. There will no longer be the incentive to plant corn, for which they were guaranteed double the world price, and it is expected that corn acreage will decrease."

Mexico's old agricultural policy paid producers double the world price for corn and this encouraged its production at the expense of other crops.

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