## National Ag Secretary Here For 1995 Farm Bill Forum

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"Many issues face us," Heffner said. "But one issue may determine the future of farming and agribusiness in Pennsylvania and this in many ways can be determined by our ability to adequately address farm related water quality issues.

"Pennnsylvania farmers, especially those in the Chesapeake Bay area, are among the nation's leaders in addressing non-point source polution. There is a cost involved here that for the most part cannot be made up on the milk check and higher commodity prices. It is generally recognized that the 1995 farm bill and the reauthorization of the clean water act will deal with many environmental issues facing farmers.

"As we move forward on the farm bill and the clean water legislation, we urge you to give consideration to several issues that are essential to establish a framework for agriculture in Pennsvlvania and throughout the nation to compete in today's global economy."

Heffner listed the following points for consideration:

1. We need to insure that ag is not unfairly singled out for disproportionate spending cuts

4. Any program aimed at agricultural non-point source pollution should be a voluntary incentive program based on an approach that will allow farmers to develop cost effective solutions.

John Haberen, president, Rodale Institute, said we are facing a soil health crisus. "One of our most important natural resources has been neglected or abused for much too long," Haberen said.

"The growing world population and the increasing demands for food and fiber magnify the strain on soil at a time when we can least afford it. Soil erosion is destroying 29 million acres each year. That amounts to tons of topsoil lost each year.

"A point we may be missing is the effects of the loss of soil and soil fertility in human and animal health. A critical relationship exists between healthy soil and healthy food, and healthy people. It becomes increasingly clear that what we cat and where it is grown has a lot to do with how healthy we are, how long we live, and how we feel."

Haberen's recommendations included:

1. The farm bill should expand research in the area of soil quality in relationship to human health.

2. Subsidy programs, if needed, should be based on the relationship between soil quality and crop quality.

3. Agencies such as the institute of health need to be included as primary players in the U.S. agricultural system.

4. A soil quality and a soil health index should be developed.

5. An extensive educational (Turn to Page 35)



in the federal budgets. 2. We should consider changing the conservation program to provide additional costsharing assistance to address agriculture's non-point source pollution.

3. We need to consolidate federal water quality programs where possible and send one clear policy signal to the states.

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