

Emu Producers: Prepare For Competitive Global Market

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Clayton Yeutter, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, encouraged the emu industry to "develop your own product niche" and to prepare for the "inevitable regulatory challenges" and the emerging opportunities in a more fairly structured global agribusiness marketplace.

Yeutter who has held Cabinet positions under three presidents, keynoted the 5th annual meeting of the American Emu Association. About 1,300 emu ranchers and farmers gathered at Bally's Las Vegas for the three-day convention and exposition.

"GATT (General Agreement on Trade & Tariffs), which focused on unfair trade practices of other nations in agriculture . . . will over the next six years . . . move agriculture to a free and open trade environment on a global basis," he said. "That affects what we do with our farm legislation in the United States. We've got to reduce ag (production) subsidies at about 20 percent a year.

"I believe this is a good thing,

probably to your advantage. To the degree that production subsidies hold the prices for grains, you will benefit from taking out that artificial stimulant. The fewer distortions that are there in the way of government export subsidies programs around the world, the better off we are all going to be, particularly because the Europeans spend a lot more money on meats than we do."

Yeutter, who holds a PH.D. in agricultural economics, is "of counsel" to a major law firm in Washington, D.C. He said Congress now "has to formulate a 1995 Farm Bill that will fit into that overall global picture, because we are obligated by the (GATT) agreement to do that.

"Frankly, I think we may have one more farm bill after this, and early in the next century we will see government essentially out of agriculture in the United States," he said. "Even though governments may be out of the business of artificially stimulating prices, the marketplace may bring a price

stimulus in itself."

Yeutter, who recently chaired a session on "Regional Accords and a New World Order" at the World Meat Congress in Denver, was instrumental in steering the 1990 Farm Bill through Congress, moving U.S. agriculture toward a more market-oriented policy structure. He served as U.S. trade representative and helped the 1988 Trade Bill through Congress while launching the 100-nation Uruguay round of GATT negotiations which led to the historic North American Free Trade Agreement.

Yeutter predicted emu products "will have a very successful niche in the food markets of the United States and the world. NAFTA should help you in Mexico and Canada," to deliver a combined (with U.S.) population of 400 million persons. "You should consider that your domestic marketplace.

"Health food is the niche you are selling," with the heart-healthy, low fat red meat, he said. "Those types of products are doing very, very well, and are just as

big outside the United States. Your industry may have more than one niche: meat, oil, hides (leather), feathers and others not yet discovered.

"Get the necessary research results to back-up what you are saying about your products in terms of healthcare. Support it with data and the necessary research so you can support your case at the local, state, national and . . . to meet the standards on a global basis."

He also noted that the general consensus is that the current world population of 5.5 billion people will be closer to 10 billion by the year 2050, and most persons will live longer. "Somebody is going to have to produce an awful lot of food to take care of the nutritional needs of the world."

"Regulatory challenges will be a major issue for the next 10 to 30 years," Yeutter said. "That's regrettable, but a fact of life today. We have so many organizations out there that are so well financed today that they will file lawsuits to challenge what you are doing. Recognize the challenge; minimize the risk."

Yeutter said the emu industry "clearly has one of advantage" in producing a natural product without using growth hormones. "Take advantage of that from a marketing standpoint. Get the emotionalism and sensationalism out of this business and focus on what is rational and objective," he

said.

Yeutters praised "the enthusiasm and energy of this crowd. The leadership you have been able to generate over a short period of time is remarkable." The industry is less than 10 years old.

Emu raising is one of the fastest growing, most dynamic agribusinesses in the nation, with a remarkable interest being shown internationally, according to the Dallas-based, nonprofit trade organization which has 6,000 members.

In less than six years, this once-fledgling industry has grown to more than 10,000 families raising an estimated 1.2 million to 1.5 million emus in 48 states, based on a 1994 census. The AEA has 33 state chapters; an increasing number of national and regional cooperatives, and numerous research studies building a scientific knowledge base on emus and their products.

The convention continues through Saturday at 4 p.m. with the exhibit area open to the public free of charge on Saturday afternoon. Everything from cooperatives, incubators, ranches, jewelry and artwork, to rare publications, software, fencing, feeds and fashions — including leather swim wear, jackets and full-length western duster are featured.

For free industry literature, call the AEA at (800) 295-EMUS.

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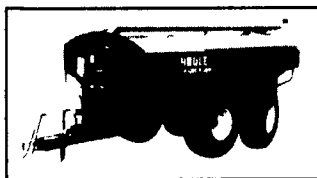
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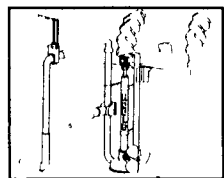
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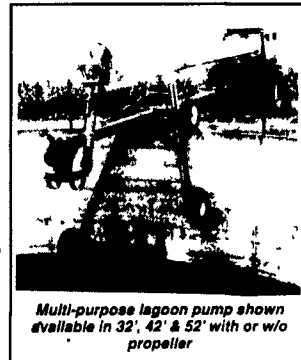
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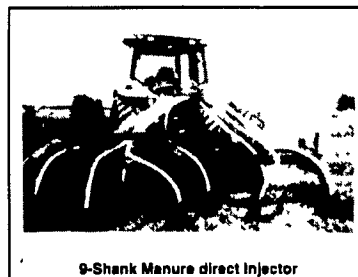
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