❖ FARM FORUM ❖

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member of the Board of Directors of the National Assoc. of Convenience Stores, said higher milk prices could impact his industry. Well, Mr. Markham, I do not agree. I am a shift supervisor for a local convenience store, and can tell you that the bulk of what goes out of a C-Store is not dairy products. Most of our gross profit is from convenience foods such as pizza, subs, and soda. Let's not forget gas, cigarettes, and "novelty" items such as an over-the-counter, highly volatile drug called Ephedrine. I have been told the reason our stores are still carrying this item is because it is a high profit one. (So much for ethics.)

I have no idea what other C-Stores carry for product, but ours has a pizza franchise. This represents a huge chunk of our profits — and I do know that on the nights we are low on milk products — the pizza, subs and soda still fly out the door at an amazing rate.

Mr. Markham — your industry will always have some control of the pricing of your products. We sell our pizza for a profit — it would be self-defeating not to — right? Well, that is all dairy farmers are asking — to be able to have a profit margein to work with. They are still desperately trying to operate their businesses (farms) while being paid at the same level they were in the 1970s. How long could your industry survive at those prices? How many employees would you have if you only paid them the minimum wage of 1975??

I was proud of our store and the compliments we receive from customers, but now I am ashamed to represent an industry that is obviously not for the family farm. I would also like to mention that a lot of C-stores got their humble beginnings by selling their family's farm products — how soon we forget. (Wawa, Turkey Hill — do these ring a bell?)

I would like to suggest that anyone involved in agriculture to boycott C-stores. Cook at home — get your gas at the neighborhood station (there are still some left). STOP PAYING FOR CONVENIENCE — THEY ARE NOT HELPING YOU ONE BIT!!!!

Deborah L. Mitchell
Wife & Mother
Dairy Farmer
Shift Supervisor
Mellerton, PA

Editor:

The Farm Act of 1996 removed farm support programs and eliminated disaster relief for crop loss. To offset the blow these provisions would have on the agricultural community, the government promised to expand the Federal Crop Insurance Program so that Crop Insurance would be a sturdy safety net for farmers in distress.

If the proposed legislation that is currently before Congress should pass, the government promises to stand behind the Federal Crop Insurance Program will be broken. Congress has proposed the following:

• CAT Crop insurance policyholders pay either a $60 administrative fee or 10 percent of the premium for the 1999 growing season.

• Higher 1999 Catastrophic Coverage Premiums.

• CAT coverage reduced from 60 percent of the established price to 55 percent of the established price.

• Service Fees to insurance carriers reduced.

In short, growers will be paying more money for reduced coverage and reduced service. This policy will impact high dollar farmers (apples, grapes, cranberries, blueberries, potatoes, cotton, citrus, tomatoes) much harder than most other growers (corn, soybeans). See illustrations following this letter.

The vote for this bill is currently being delayed, due to increasing support from growers across the nation. It is critical that you contact your senators and representatives immediately and make these three points:

1) Contrary to the notion that it impacts only the large wealthy farmers, this policy actually discriminates against farmers growing high dollar crops (apples, grapes, cranberries, blueberries, potatoes, cotton, citrus, tomatoes). Most growers (corn, soybean), will not be impacted by this policy.

2) The proposed change in government policy would break the government's promise that crop insurance will replace farm support programs. Crop insurance is the only safety net for the agricultural community.

3) The change in policy will unintentionally undermine the Federal Crop Insurance Program by forcing the larger, more progressive growers to drop out of the program and self-insure their crop. With the majority of the remaining growers being the higher risk farms, either rates will have to be increased or subsidies will have to be increased. As taxpayers, we find both of these options unacceptable.

4) Believing that specialized servicing would increase the quality of the service, the government transferred the servicing for crop insurance policies from the FSA to private insurance carriers. Like farmers, private insurance carriers have to allocate their resources based on profitability. In short, reduced service fees to carriers mean reduced service to farmers. This government mentality will destroy the Crop Insurance delivery system.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. This issue is vital to the agricultural community. If you have any questions, please call me at 1-800-422-8335.

Bernard C. Morrissey
Ephrata

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