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## Agriculture Groups Call For Action To Bolster Farm Safety Net

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — The American Soybean Association and 11 other agricultural organizations sent a letter to House and Senate leaders calling for Congress to take specific actions to boost agricultural exports and support farm income.

The letter cited the need to follow through on Congressional assurances made at the time the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act was enacted in 1996. Under FAIR, farmers agreed to accept reductions in income support payments based on government pledges to provide "safety net" policies to improve global competitiveness, enhance risk management, and expand agricultural research.

"In our view, it is essential for the administration and the Congress to recommit their support for basic programs that will ensure the viability and competitiveness of U.S. agriculture over the short and long terms," stated the letter signed by the American Soybean Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Barley Growers Association, National Cattleman's Beef Association, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council of America, National Grain Sorghum Producers Association, National Grange, National Oilseed Processors Association, National Pork Producers Council and National Sunflower Association.

Specific areas of concern identified in the letter include deterioration in support of U.S. agricultural trade policy, reduced government support for export assistance and promotion programs, and delay in providing adequate funding for the federal crop insurance program. The letter also cited the inability of Congress and the administration to agree on agricultural spending priorities, including national agricultural research initiatives.

The groups urged the following actions to address these concerns:

1. Fast Track negotiating authority must be

actively sought by the administration and approved by Congress;

2. Legislation to provide \$18 billion to replenish the International Monetary Fund should be immediately passed by the Congress;

3. The administration and Congress should modify U.S. sanctions policy to allow greater flexibility for food exports to restricted countries, including Iran and Cuba;

4. The administration should commit to seek agreement to end unfair trade practices in the next round of multilateral trade negotiations.

5. Congress should appropriate \$35 million for the Foreign Market Development program to allow continued operation at the current level;

6. Congress should restore funding to allow the Market Access Program to operate at its current level of \$90 million;

7. The administration should immediately expand the Supplier Credit Guarantee Program under GSM-102 and -103, and increase the amount of risk covered under the program to 85 percent from the current level of 50 percent. The GSM-5 Direct Credit Sales Program should be reactivated;

8. Budget baselines equal to annual outlays permitted by the WTO should be provided for the Export Enhancement Program. EEP should be used to combat unfair trade practices, or unused funds should be shifted to other WTO-legal export programs.

9. Congress should immediately pass the Conference Report on the Research Title of the FAIR Act (S. 1150) providing \$470 million for delivery of federal crop insurance and \$600 million for national agricultural research objectives;

10. Income averaging for farmers and ranchers and full deductibility of health insurance premiums should be made permanent in the next tax bill;

11. Farm and Ranch Risk Management (FARRM) accounts should be authorized in the next tax bill

## Sandy Lake Man Appointed To Board



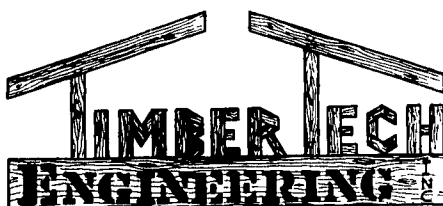
H. Robert McQuiston

BOZEMAN, Mont. — H. Robert "Bob" McQuiston, Sandy Lake, has been appointed to the 16-member board of trustees of the American Simmental Association (ASA).

McQuiston owns and operates Haven Woods Farms, an operation of 200 Simmental brood cows on 800 acres. He's also president of Flexospan Steel Buildings, Inc., president of McQuiston and Company, and secretary-treasurer of Clark Development Corporation.

Five other new trustees, including Bob Finch, Ames, Iowa; Jerry Ayers, Snyder, Okla.; Tom Nelson, Wibaux, Mont.; Lora Rose, Colville, Wash.; and Verlouis Forster, Smithfield, Neb. were also installed at that meeting.

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