

U.S. Senate Ag Committee Solicits Testimony

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Livestock producers will finally get their day before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee.

Urged by farm groups and Midwestern senators to hold a hearing, Senate Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Ind., has scheduled June 10 for his committee to hear testimony on low livestock prices and market concentration in the livestock processing sector.

"Two weeks ago, National Farmers Union (NFU) joined the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in requesting that a hearing be held on livestock market opportunities for U.S. producers," said NFU President Leland Swenson.

"We are glad that Chairman Lugar has responded to the dire straits of many of the nation's producers of livestock."

The request made April 17, by NFU and the other two organizations, asked that the Senate Agriculture Committee explore a wide spectrum of issues impacting livestock prices. A let-

ter sent to Lugar asked that the hearings address the need for better price reporting, country-of-origin meat labeling, export sales information, market concentration, expansion of trade opportunities and the impact of the Asian financial crisis on livestock prices.

"Concentration in the livestock industry is one of the biggest concerns of Farmers Union members nationwide. We need markets that are fair, open and competitive," Swenson said.

According to Swenson, many cattle producers have gone out of business and over the last several years because raising cattle is no longer profitable.

National Farmers Union is a general farm organization representing nearly 300,000 family farmers and ranchers nationwide. NFU serves its membership by assisting with education, by providing stimulus and know-how for farmer-owned cooperatives, and by presenting the organization's policies to lawmakers at the local, state and national levels.

Ritchey's Dairy Is For Ice Cream Lovers

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dairy demands.

"It's difficult to find someone willing to drive a truck during a snowstorm at 2:30 in the morning," he said. "Too many kids have been raised watching television. We always look for good farm boys."

Ritchey's has 25 full-time and seven part-time employees. "And," Oliver continued in regard

to problems, "I'm convinced we have too much government today. We pay a decent wage, but when we make out the checks they shrink so drastically with the withholdings that I feel sorry for the employees. I wonder what the government expects them to live on."

"The government inspections have also gotten more stringent. We never thought of looking for antibiotics 20 years ago. Now, all milk is checked and dumped if

there is a slight detection of any antibiotic.

"Government even gets in our hair over labeling. We have to be certain every label reveals the fat, caloric, and protein content of every carton of milk. Those labels can run in the thousands of dollars."

"Then, of course, we always have a machine breaking down and the whole process slows down or stops until it is fixed. I guess it's what keeps life interesting," Oliver smiled.



Oliver Ritchey checks the meters on computerized milk and ice cream production machinery.



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Jay currently serves as chair of both the Agricultural Law Committee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Estate Planning Section of the Lancaster Bar Association. He is a frequent speaker on estate planning and agricultural issues to the public and to lawyers.

E-Mail Address

JClark@PaEstatePlanning.com

1907 Division Hwy. (Route 322)

Ephrata, PA 17522

717-355-2800

Web Page

www.PaEstatePlanning.com