World Leaders Agree On Value Of Domestic Farm Programs

MANILA, PHILIPINES -More than 300 farm leaders from around the world, agreed that included within the upcoming World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations should be provisions that enable governments to continue domestic farm

The discussions were held here May 27-June 4 at the International Federation of Agricultural Producers' (IFAP) semi-annual World Farmers Congress.

"Farmers throughout the world realize that trade is important but that farm income is more important," said conferparticipant National Farmers Union (NFU) President Leland Swenson. "Trade is just one component of a healthy agricultural economy. As farm leaders, we agree to work to ensure that farmers worldwide receive a fair price for their products. It is each government's responsibility to establish and maintain a safety net in agricultural policies to provide a stable food supply, a fair price for producers and a healthy agricultural economy."

Swenson noted that NFU is pushing U.S. lawmakers to improve the safety net for family producers by removing the cap on commodity loan rates and extending the loan period so farmers are better able to market their crops.

The Asian financial crisis has taught us all that sound farm policies must be maintained to ensure farmers receive a fair price for their products regardless of international market conditions beyond their control," said Swenson. The final IFAP policy paper adopted during the conference stated that trade rules should enable governments to work to secure a sufficient income level for farmers worldwide.

According to Swenson, one of IFAP's goals has been to finalize a common policy on trade-related issues to present during the next round of WTO negotiations in 1999. The diverse group of farm organizations agreed that WTO negotiators must accept that domestic measures are necessary to secure farm income. IFAP and NFU plan to participate in the next WTO negotiations to represent farmers' views on agricultural trade issues.

Established more than 50 years ago, IFAP is comprised of members from 85 farm organizations, representing 500 million farmers in more than 60 countries. NFU, representing 300,000 U.S. family farmers and ranchers, is a founding member of IFAP.

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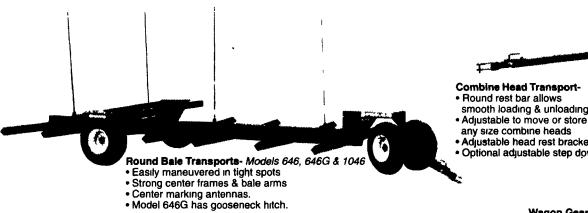
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