

National Farmers Organization Joins U.S. General Accounting Office In Calling For Safe, Imported Foods

AMES, Iowa — Emphasizing the importance of safer foods for America's consumers, National Farmers Organization joins with the General Accounting Office in its recommendations to Congress to upgrade and expand food inspection and import procedures.

While imports increase at a steady pace, Food and Drug Administration testing of individual products coming into this country has fallen from about eight percent in fiscal year 1992 to 1.7 percent in 1997. Out of about 81 million cases of foodborne illnesses,

up to 9,100 deaths occur each year, according to GAO.

In a comprehensive review of federal programs aimed at ensuring safe food imports, the GAO recently made recommendations to more adequately prevent unsafe

food from ending up in American supermarkets, restaurants and homes. Costs for medical treatment and productivity losses associated with foodborne illnesses and deaths range from \$6.6 billion to \$37.1 billion, according to USDA Economic Research Ser-

vice. National Farmers is forwarding a letter of support for the recommendations to the U.S. Senate subcommittee which requested an evaluation of the food import system. The letter will also be sent to the Director of Food and Agriculture Issues for the GAO.

"The GAO has taken the lead in creating solutions to imported food safety concerns, and we urge Congress to move ahead in instituting the agency's recommendations," National Farmers President Gene Paul emphasized.

The GAO review found that procedures need to be more consistent and reliable to prevent safety risks caused by foods brought in from outside the U.S.

GAO recommended that FDA receive greater authority to require countries to have food safety systems equivalent to that in the U.S. before their foods would be imported. "At National Farmers we have long-supported equal quality standards for imported and domestic products to assure healthy food for consumers," Paul said.

"If the U.S. provides countries with better reasons to produce food under the same high a better economic and competitive situation," Paul said.

GAO also called for FDA and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to better target inspection resources on foods posing greater health risks. Currently, the agencies' computer systems are not designed to single out those foods, but may more often address issues not directly impacting consumer safety.

FSIS has jurisdiction over meat, poultry and some egg products, while FDA regulates all other foods. Both agencies work closely with the Customs Service and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Top Horses To Gather For Children's Show

QUENTIN (Lebanon Co.) — More than 200 of the top American Saddlebred horses in the country, including a number of reigning world's champions, will gather here July 22-25 to raise money for central Pennsylvania's needy children.

The ninth annual Children's Benefit Horse Show will pit more than 200 American Saddlebred, Morgan, and roadster horses and Hackney ponies from 20 states against one another in contests of animation, speed, and brilliance.

The show, presented by the United Professional Horseman's Association (UPHA), Chapter 15, benefits the Community Action Program of Lancaster County. It

carries the American Horse Shows Association's highest, or "A" rating, and for three years in a row has been voted one of the top shows in the county by UPHA members.

The majority of the horses competing at the show are of the American Saddlebred breed. They have been called "the world's most beautiful horse" and the "peacocks of the show ring" because of their high action, lofty head carriage and thrilling performances.

The funds raised by the show benefit the Community Action Program of Lancaster County. Half the money goes to the Shelter

for Abused Women, which provides shelter, counseling, recreation and tutoring in a violence-free atmosphere for the children of abused women.

The remainder of the money is donated to the Community Action Program Child Care Center, which provides development day care for the children of low-income families. The money raised in 1997 was used to subsidize the cost of day care for low-income families.

In addition to four evenings of top equestrian competition, the show will feature an academy show beginning at 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 25. The academy show is for beginning riders who

take lessons but do not own a show horse.

"The academy show gives beginning riders, both children and adults, the opportunity to try showing in a relaxed, low key atmosphere," said Marty Waldman, UPHA Chapter president. "The classes are designed to allow riders of all skill levels to compete. Riders compete on the same horses on which they take riding instruction, and dress codes are relaxed, to enable riders to give the show ring a try without making a big financial commitment."

Saturday, July 25 will also feature a Model Horse Show, in which toy horses are exhibited in much the same way as their live counterparts. Throughout the run of the show spectators will also enjoy a shopping village, a number of food stands serving refreshments, and a playground for children. A limited number of box seats in the covered grandstand are available for \$5 each, and spectators are invited to bring lawn chairs and a picnic to enjoy at ringside.

Admission is by donation: \$5 for adults, \$2 for children ages 5 and over is suggested. Children ages 4 and under are admitted free. For more information, phone (717) 898-5874.

Land O'Lakes/Dairyman's Plan Major Cheese Whey Plant

ARDEN HILLS, Minn. — Two dairy cooperatives officially merged this week, Land O'Lakes and Dairyman's Cooperative Creamery Association.

Recently they also announced plans to equip and operate a large scale cheese and whey fractions facility in Tulare, California.

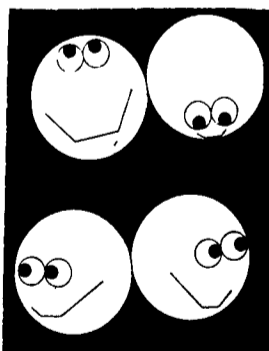
A 300,000-square-foot food processing facility was recently acquired in Tulare by Dairyman's in anticipation of a business venture with Land O'Lakes. Plans are now in place to remodel and expand the 15-year-old building into a cheese plant and next generation whey fractions facility. Whey fractions are being used extensive-

ly as a high protein ingredient in sports and nutrition drinks and prepared food mixes. Cooperative officials indicate the planning, developing and equipping of the plant will be handled on an expedited basis.

"As Land O'Lakes and Dairyman's come together, we have a clear vision of what we will accomplish in the years to come. At the top of the list is the development of this facility to add value to member's milk and meet our customers' demands for cheese and high value whey products," said Jack Gherty, president and chief executive officer of Land O'Lakes. "Our still new cheese/whey facility in Perham, Minn. is

already operating at its capacity, so we are confident of the need for additional volume."

Jack Prince, president and chief executive officer of Dairyman's, said, "This is an exciting development and it's indicative of Land O'Lakes commitment to matching its long history as a national marketer of value-added products with an equally extensive system for procuring and processing milk nationally."



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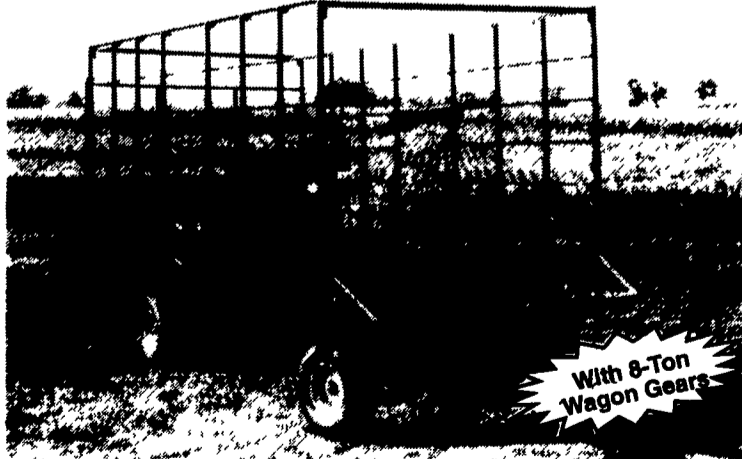
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