

## NFU Pleased Senate Ag Committee To Hold Hearing On Concentration

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Farmers Union (NFU) President Leland Swenson applauded the decision by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Ind., to hold a hearing to examine concentration in agriculture.

The hearing will take place Jan. 26. On Nov. 18, NFU wrote leaders of the Senate and House agriculture panels requesting hearings to investigate the effect of consolidation on producers. The request followed news of a proposed merger between the nation's two largest

grain purchasers, Cargill, Inc., and Continental Grain Company.

"Several members of the agriculture committee have expressed concerns about the challenges of widespread concentration in the farm sector. We applaud Chairman Lugar for making this issue the first order of business when Congress reconvenes," said Swenson. "We hope the hearing will shed some light on merger mania and its ramifications for the nation's farm communities."

Every major sector of agriculture, including the seed, packing,

chemical, transportation, grain and livestock industries, has undergone consolidation in recent years. Four packers control roughly 87 percent of the cattle slaughter business and five firms control more than 60 percent of the pork packing industry. Recent acquisitions of major seed interests by Monsanto and consolidation in the railroad industry have significantly reduced the number of players in those sectors as well.

"Concentration has virtually eliminated competition in many regions of the country, leaving

farmers with few buyers for their commodities. We will press the committee to investigate the relationship between concentration and low commodity prices as well as the growing spread between prices farmers receive and prices consumers pay for food at the retail level," Swenson said.

NFU has been a leader in the effort to call attention to the problem of concentration in agriculture. In recent weeks, NFU has:

- Asked President Bill Clinton to immediately form a presidential commission to investigate the

trend of concentration in the industry.

- Called on President Clinton to issue an executive order placing a moratorium on farm sector mergers pending the outcome of net farm income impact studies.

House Agriculture Committee Lary Combest, R-Texas, has previously announced plans to hold a similar hearing, although no date has been set.

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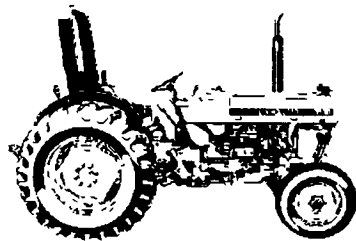
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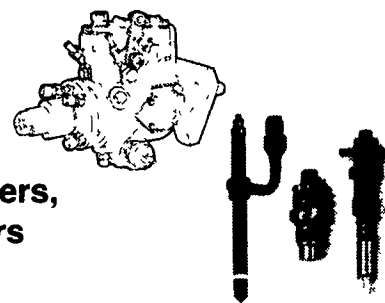
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