

Farmers Union Backs Congressional Call For Price Investigation

WASHINGTON, D.C. - National Farmers Union (NFU) recently praised the 35 members of the U.S. House of Representatives who have called on U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to immediately investigate possible market abuses by the

dairy processing and retail marketing industries. The letter asks the Department of Justice to investigate the widening gap between the price dairy farmers are paid for their product and what consumers pay at the grocery store,

in the light of unprecedented concentration in the processing and grocery industries. "Farmers are receiving the lowest prices for milk in 20 years while consumers are seeing record high prices," said Leland Swenson, president of

NFU. "The merger mania that is sweeping our national and international markets is providing great economic windfalls for food traders. However, it is not providing the competition that allows farmers to receive a fair price for what they produce and families to find a fair price as they put food on their tables."

The top eight milk processors now control almost half of the national market. In some areas of the country, one processor controls as much as 70 percent of the milk processing market. This has led to the lowest price levels paid to farmers in two decades.

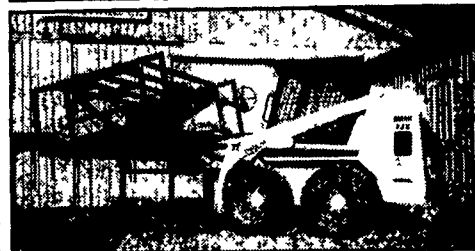
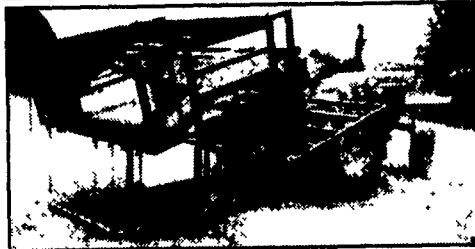
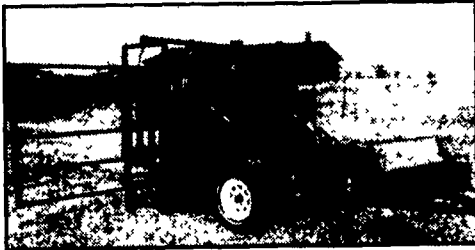
Meanwhile, skyrocketing retail milk prices are the reality

in the highly concentrated grocery market. Five firms hold 42 percent of the grocery store market. In the Chicago grocery market, where two grocery chains dominate the market, stores are changing more than one dollar more per gallon of milk than in areas where more competition exists.

"This summer, while producers were experiencing 20-year low prices, consumers in Chicago were paying record high prices," said Swenson. "This is contrary to what happens in a fair and open market. We applaud the members of Congress who are calling for this urgently needed investigation."

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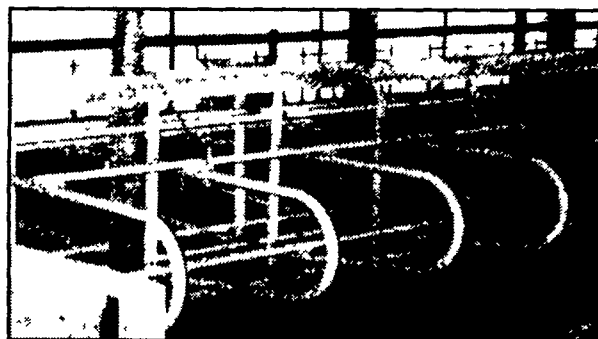
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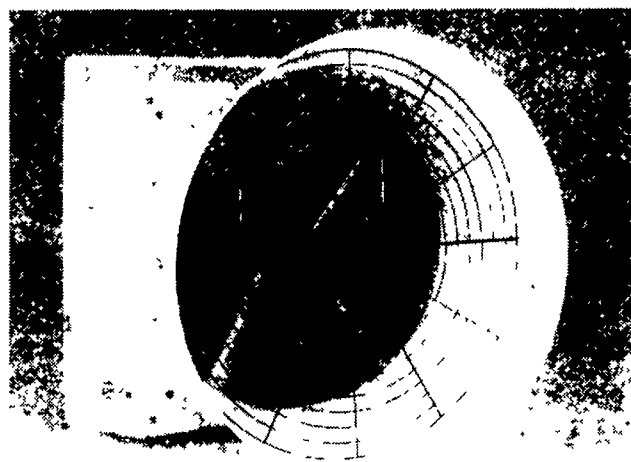


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