

Farm Groups Call For Emergency Disaster Assistance

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Farmers Union and 11 other farm groups recently sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman urging the administration's support of and active engagement in securing emergency disaster assistance for farmers and ranchers.

The organizations commended Veneman for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's timely announcements and actions to address natural disasters devastating crop and livestock production in 2001 and 2002. However, the farm organizations pointed out in the letter that there is still a desperate need for

emergency programs to "reduce tragic weather-and disease-caused economic impacts experienced by farmers, ranchers and their communities throughout much of rural America."

National Farmers Union President Dave Frederickson said the 2002 farm bill was a leap forward for rural America in providing a safety net for producers, but that the new farm law fails to provide emergency disaster assistance.

Congress has enacted production loss disaster assistance each of the last four years, but not for producers who suffered losses in 2001. Last year, drought conditions devastated large portions of

Maine, Vermont, California, Tennessee, South Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, New York, New Mexico, Wyoming, Virginia, Washington and Idaho, and the entire state of Montana.

In 2002, the drought has persisted in Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming and has spread to Colorado, Arizona, South Dakota, Nebraska and Texas. In addition, army worms have infested New York and Maine crops, and more than two million birds have been struck with avian flu in Virginia. Recently, Minnesota agriculture producers have been struggling to stay afloat due to flooding.

ASA Strongly Opposes Amendments To 2002 Farm Bill

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — The American Soybean Association (ASA) joined other farm organizations recently at a press conference in Washington, D.C., to express strong opposition to any amendments to the 2002 Farm Bill.

ASA First Vice President Ron Heck, a soybean producer from Perry, Iowa, spoke at the press conference about the need to maintain the spending allocations as outlined in the new Farm Bill.

"After two years of uncertainty over new farm legislation, and historically low prices, farmers now need stability to make long-term plans for their operations and their families," Heck said. "The last thing we need is for congress to reopen the 2002 act and start reducing or modifying our safety net."

ASA was a strong supporter of provisions outside the commodity title of the 2002 Act that benefit

U.S. soybean producers. These include increased tonnages under various food aid programs, and higher funding for the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program and Market Access Program (MAP).

ASA also supported the expanded scope of conservation initiatives, including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the conservation security program for working lands. In addition, ASA expects soybeans to benefit from provisions of the energy title of the bill, including incentives for increased use of biodiesel and other soy-based bioproducts.

"ASA is opposed to reducing spending in the Farm Bill to fund other programs, including disaster assistance," Heck said. "ASA joins other farm groups in strongly opposing amendments to the 2002 Farm Bill."

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Land O'Lakes Joins Mitsui In Cheese And Protein Venture

TULARE, Calif. — Land O'Lakes, Inc., Arden Hills, Minn., and Mitsui and Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan, recently launched Cheese and Protein International, LLC, a joint venture cheese and whey production facility in Tulare, Calif.

Chris Policinski, Land O'Lakes executive vice president and Dairy Foods chief operating officer, said the facility is "where the processing, supply chain management and marketing capabilities of Land O'Lakes and Mitsui and the milk production capabilities of Tulare-area dairy producers meet the opportunities we are seeing in the cheese markets."

The plant's location in the nation's number-one milk-producing county, and the fact that U.S. per capita cheese consumption has increased by more than 20 percent since 1990 pointed to its investment potential, Policinski said.

Masayoshi Sato, chief operating officer, Foods Unit, Consumer Products and Services Group, Mitsui and Co., Ltd., added that

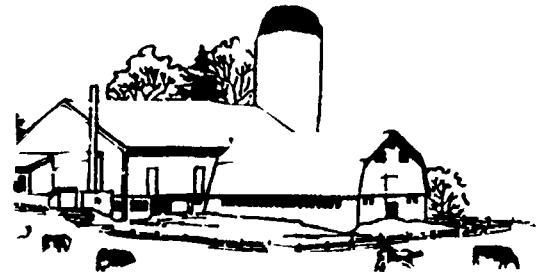
his company sees tremendous potential for the new plant.

The plant, with an initial capacity of 3.4 million pounds of milk per day, is producing mozzarella cheese, dried whey, and whey fractions. Construction on the approximately \$150 million facility began in November 2000, and was completed on-time and on-budget. A significant expansion, bringing the plant's capacity to approximately six million pounds of milk daily, is anticipated.

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