

NFU Leaders Explore Policy Issues With Canadians

CHARLOTTETOWN, Prince Edward Island — The president of the National Farmers Union and several state Farmers Union presidents explored current policy issues with their Canadian counterparts during the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's semi-annual meeting here.

The U.S. country-of-origin labeling, or "COOL" law, the current World Trade Organization talks and Canada's incidence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) were, expectedly, the hot topics.

NFU President Dave Frederickson began the discussion with a speech in which he addressed all three issues. On trade, Frederickson outlined a series of what

he called "myths" about trade policy. Included on the farm leader's myth list was the notion that "trade agreements create free and fair trade." It's not true, said Frederickson. "Often they ignore issues that directly impact competitiveness or distort production market signals."

Frederickson's second of such myths is the assertion that trade agreements will increase markets and income for farmers and ranchers. He says that since ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round WTO agreement, "U.S. market share has generally declined, imports of competing products have increased and net farm income at-

tributed to the sale of farm commodities, excluding government payments, has declined."

Frederickson's group has proposed a broader trade agenda. "Such an agenda should recognize the need to achieve domestic food safety and security for all countries," Frederickson said. "It should also address the prevalence of an agricultural commodity supply-and-demand imbalance that results in inadequate economic returns to producers, and we should consider the impacts of the concentrated market power that exists among a limited number of agricultural market participants."

The farm leader also discussed the mandatory country-of-origin

labeling law passed as part of the current U.S. farm bill. Frederickson said he makes "no apologies" for the law, noting that more than 60 countries have some form of country-of-origin labeling. "We are the largest market in the world and our farmers are not afraid to compete," he said. "But, one key element in that competition is providing the consumer with the information needed to be able to differentiate our products from those of our competitors."

Finally, on the troubling topic of the incident of BSE in Alberta earlier this year, Frederickson expressed sympathy with the plight of Canadian beef producers who are reportedly losing more than 10 million Canadian dollars a

day as a result of the closing of the U.S. border to Canadian beef imports. However, the farm leader said, "We do so only because we must take the steps necessary to protect our domestic beef industry, consistent with the similar restrictions that have been applied to other nations that have discovered a (BSE) case."

In addition to Frederickson, NFU board members attending the joint meeting were NFU Vice President Alan Bergman, North Dakota Farmers Union President Robert Carlson, Minnesota Farmers Union President Doug Peterson, Ohio Farmers Union President Joe Logan, Wisconsin Farmers Union President Sue Beilich and Missouri Farmers Union President Russ Kremer.

NFU Testifies On Impacts Of The Sale Of Farmland Foods To Smithfield Foods

WASHINGTON, D.C. — During a U.S. Senate subcommittee hearing, Missouri Farmers Union President Russ Kremer outlined the concerns of independent pork producers related to the potential acquisition of Farmland Foods pork division by Smithfield Foods and the competitive market implications of the proposed sale.

Kremer presented testimony before the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy, and Consumer Rights on behalf of National Farmers Union.

"The loss of our nation's largest farmer-owned cooperative is not only devastating to America's independent agricultural produc-

ers, but also furthers the goal of Smithfield Foods to gain greater control of the pork production and processing sector," Kremer said. "If this sale is approved by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court and the U.S. Department of Justice, Smithfield Foods will control 27 percent of the pork processing industry and the only market opportunities for independent producers in my area."

"The loss of family farms and other independently owned businesses is not inevitable. To allow this proposal to be approved prior to Congress conducting a thorough review to ensure anti-trust laws are adequate, would be like shutting the gate after all the pigs got out," Kremer said.

Kremer said that Smithfield officials have indicated that if the proposal is approved, they would continue to operate and maintain production levels at all Farmland plants. What has been left unsaid is the fate of the other plants purchased by Smithfield via previous acquisitions and mergers that may now be determined ineffi-

cient. National Farmers Union noted it is concerned about the ripple effects this acquisition will have on independent pork producers, local businesses, and rural communities if the proposal is allowed to proceed before Congress has time to review anti-trust laws.

In his testimony, Kremer high-

lighted 10 possible reforms that the subcommittee could create to update and strengthen current anti-trust laws. These reforms will help ensure fairness, transparency, protection, and bargaining rights for producers, which would restore and enhance competition for agricultural markets.

Etherton To Head Animal Science Society

PHOENIX, Ariz. — The American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) has announced that Dr. Terry Etherton, head of the Department of Dairy and Animal Science, and distinguished professor of animal nutrition at Penn State will serve as president for 2003-2004.

The announcement was made at the annual meeting conducted June 22-26 in Phoenix, Ariz. The American Society of Animal Science is a professional scientific society that represents more than 5,000 animal scientists world-

wide. Etherton is a native of Illinois and received his B.S. degree in agricultural science from the University of Illinois in 1971 and was awarded the M.S. degree in animal science from the University of Illinois in 1974. He received his Ph.D. degree in animal science from the University of Minnesota in 1978.

Etherton was an NIH postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Medicine at Stanford University from 1978 to 1979.

In 1979, Etherton joined the faculty in the Department of Dairy and Animal Science at Penn State. He assumed the position of department head at Penn State in 1998.

"I am excited about serving the leading animal science society in the world. There are tremendous opportunities for the society to

proactively communicate with consumers and policymakers about important science-based information that the scientists in our society discover," Etherton said.

Established in 1908, ASAS is a professional organization for animal scientists designed to help members provide effective leadership through research, extension, teaching, and service for the dynamic and rapidly changing livestock and meat industries. The society publishes monthly the Journal of Animal Science as a means of disseminating scientific and educational information; promotes research that discovers and expands knowledge in animal science; fosters high standards of education; promotes the profession and vocation of animal science; serves as a resource for information on issues of public concern related to animals; and interacts with other national organizations that have similar goals.

FSA Seeks Candidates

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Farm Service Agency (FSA) is looking for candidates for the farmer-elected county committee election to be conducted this fall. There will be 46 such elections across the state.

"It is crucial that every eligible agricultural producer take part in this election because county committees are a direct link between the farm community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture," said Richard B. Pallman, state executive director. Nomination forms can be obtained from FSA county offices. Completed nomination forms are due back to the FSA office by Sept. 5.

A focus on the latest forage varieties will be part of the Sept. 13 issue of *Foraging Around*. Also scheduled: update on pastured poultry research at Penn State and the latest haymaking and grazing information from various field days.

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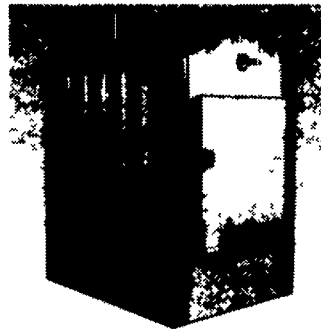
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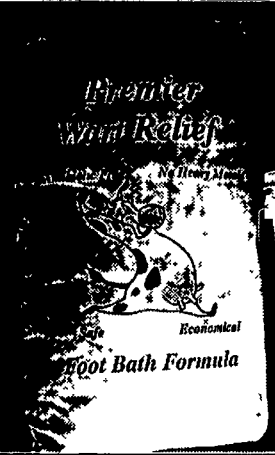
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