

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER,
SCOTT RICHARDSON 202/224-6521

DOLE PUSHES FOR NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TRADE AND EXPORT POLICY;
SENATOR SEEKS ANSWERS TO SOARING TRADE DEFICIT AND
DWINDLING EXPORTS
MAJOR AG GROUPS SUPPORT INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON -- Kansas Senator Bob Dole, concerned over the sagging U.S. agriculture export market, today called for the creation of a 35-member National Commission on Agriculture Trade and Export Policy.

Dole made his call for the trade panel in a joint House/Senate Resolution which he introduced on June 21, 1984. The Kansas Republican, whose positions on the Senate Agriculture and Finance Committees make him a key voice in international trade, said he understood general doubts about the effectiveness of Blue Ribbon Commissions, but stated that in this case the commission concept could do much more than just sweep a serious problem under a bureaucratic rug.

"The United States is export dependent. We all recognize that a 10 or 20 percent shift in world demand for U.S. agricultural products can result in a tremendous rise or fall in the prices our farmers receive for their hard work," Dole said.

"Farm exports are vital to our rural economy. The recent decline in foreign sales and shipments of U.S. agricultural products has been a substantial blow to U.S. commodity surpluses and farm prices. In fact, some farm groups have concluded that the United States is incapable of overcoming the forces which have cut into our farm exports, and are looking to retreat into mandatory production quotas and import protection," Dole said.

The commission would be comprised of 35 members, 10 each elected by the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. These voting members would come from the private sector and would include the president of the commission.

Twelve other members would be the Chairmen and ranking minority members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; the House Agriculture Committee; the Senate Finance Committee; the House Committee on Ways and Means; the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The remaining three members of the commission would be filled by the President from within the executive branch and would be non-voting members.

The principal objective of the commission will be to carry out a comprehensive study of the programs and practices that comprise U.S. agricultural trade and export policy, and to recommend ways in which they can be made more effective. Included in this broad mandate would be a review of the existing trade agreements program, and proposals for a comprehensive U.S. position on agricultural trade during any future round of multilateral negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

(MORE)

In addition, the commission would have the flexibility to examine export incentive and market development programs, the administration of the Food for Peace Program, the impact of the Export Administration Act on farm trade, and other current policies and legislation. Finally, the commission would look at the macroeconomic factors in the international arena which are having an increasingly important impact on demand for and sales of U.S. agricultural products, including the high value of the dollar against other currencies, the world debt situation, the need to expand economic growth and purchasing power in developing countries, and the competitive practices of other exporting countries.

Fifteen major farm groups have endorsed Senator Dole's initiative. In a letter of support dated June 21, the groups told Dole that the establishment of the commission "could be of vital importance to the future well-being of American agriculture."

The groups are:

- American Farm Bureau Federation
- American Feed Manufacturers Association
- American Soybean Association
- Cooperative League of the U.S.A.
- Farmland Industries
- National Agricultural Chemicals Association
- National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
- National Association of Wheat Growers
- National Cattleman's Association
- National Corn Growers Association
- National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
- National Grange
- National Broiler Council
- National Milk Producers Federation
- The Fertilizer Institute