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CONTACT: BILL KATS
(202) 224-6521

FARM BILL DIFFERENCES BEING BRIDGED, DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) announced today that significant progress has been made toward removing Administration objections to the omnibus 1981 Farm Bill drafted by the Senate Agriculture Committee two months ago. Dole's comments came after the senior committee member met with key officials of the Department of Agriculture in an hour-long session in his Capitol Hill office.

"I believe that both the committee and the Administration have had to make some sacrifices -- both budgetary and in terms of basic farm policy approach -- in fashioning a reasonable bill," Dole said. "We are hoping to provide adequate safeguards for the producer within the overall framework and philosophy of the President's economic plan.

"Our principal differences at this point are on support levels for wheat, feed grains, rice and sugar, and our discussions today convince me that these issues can be resolved before consideration of the farm bill by the full Senate in mid-July."

Representing the USDA at the meeting were Dr. William Leshner, assistant secretary of agriculture for economics, and his principal aide, Randy Russell. Leshner's office has taken the lead in presenting the Administration's position on agricultural programs during congressional consideration of new farm legislation.

Dole has been engaged in drafting a successor to the current 1977 Farm Bill since hearings were initiated in early March.

"At this point," he said, "there is a strong possibility that the House version of the farm bill may not meet congressional budget requirements, or that they won't complete work on their bill on schedule. In either case, it is essential that we pass the most balanced legislation possible in the Senate, a bill that will stand on its own if necessary, without further amendment."