

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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NATIONAL FARM ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT DOLE
WHEAT GROWERS, CORN GROWERS SAY HIS APPROACH
TO DISASTER AID MORE REASONABLE

WASHINGTON -- Both the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) have written Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan) urging more favorable treatment for program crops than contained in the current Democratic proposal.

"Its clear our position is gaining momentum at the grassroots level. Most family farmers who comply with numerous ASCS regulations and restrictions believe they should have priority attention in receiving disaster aid since program crops like wheat and cotton are funding the disaster relief effort from unspent deficiency payments," said Dole.

The letters were sent to Dole after Senate Ag Committee Democrats voted Tuesday, 10-9 along party lines, against a Republican effort led by Senators Richard Lugar (R-Ind) and Dole to provide program crop producers payments at last year's rates with payments made to other crop farmers from a re-estimate of additional budget savings this fall.

In responding to the Democratic proposal, NAWG stated, "In endeavoring to cover all crops which might be subject to a loss, the measure cuts the amount of assistance available to program crops with known disasters...we feel strongly that wheat growers as well as producers of other program crops should be eligible for the same level of assistance that was made available in 1988."

"We strongly believe that there is a clear difference between program and non-program crops which is magnified by the finite amount of funding (\$870 million) that is available. Producers of non-program crops, by definition, are not subject to the rules and reporting requirements that growers of program crops must meet," stated the NAWG letter.

The Corn Grower letter added, "with respect to non-participating crops, there are just simply too many such crops -- some estimate well over 600 in the United States -- over which available funds would be spread for any appreciable disaster assistance....program crops suffering from demonstrable loss and damage such as wheat and cotton should have first priority on the receipt of the bulk of these funds."

"We believe the disaster assistance circumstances in 1989 fully justify the proposals offered by you and Senator Lugar," concluded the Corn Grower's letter.

Dole had argued that the winter wheat losses were already documented and that Kansas farmers and their bankers needed help as soon as possible. Committee Democrats instead opted to send the full Senate a disaster package that drastically reduces payments to program crop participants in favor of spreading assistance to over 600 crops.

Yesterday Dole outlined a compromise proposal to restore last year's funding rates to program crop producers enrolled in crop insurance while scaling back assistance to nonprogram crops. Dole's package would allow a 1000 acre wheat farm with crop insurance to receive 27 cents/bushel more on a 50% loss and a 200 acre corn farm to receive 19 cents per bushel on a 50% loss.