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WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 5 -- U.S. Senator Bob Dole (R-Kans.) today said Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin is hopeful members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees can develop a farm program for the 1970's.

After a luncheon meeting today with Secretary Hardin, Dole, a member of the Senate committee, said, "This approach to farm legislation could produce a more acceptable and workable farm program than ever before. Instead of the Administration trying to push a program through Congress, Secretary Hardin is working closely with the House and Senate Agriculture committees in an effort to reach an agreement on a program."

"The Secretary is well aware of the diverse opinions on farm programs held by members of the committees and by the farmers themselves. It is his hope the committees can work out some of the key differences and agree on farm legislation early this year."

"Secretary Hardin," Dole said, "pledged his full cooperation and that of the Department in furnishing the Agriculture Committees with information and recommendations. Very properly, he feels Congress should more fully share with USDA the initiative and responsibility for a farm plan."

"In many ways," the Kansas Senator said, "this approach is far more flexible and sensitive to farm and rural needs than only asking the Congress to rubber stamp a hard farm plan solely developed by the Department."

"Despite differences of opinion among the various committee members," Dole said, "there is also a growing recognition in Congress that the legislative branch should assume <sup>a</sup> more prominent role in finding answers to nagging farm problems, rather than blaming the Secretary of Agriculture, whomever he may be, for program failures."

"At best," Dole added, "the path ahead for farmers is difficult. Congress is dominated by members from urban areas, many of whom fail to grasp the basic fact that a healthy agriculture is necessary if we are to be responsive to the needs of consumers in America and the free world."