

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER,
DALE TATE 202/224-5358

DOLE CALLS FOR COMPETITION-BASED FARM LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today announced that he is preparing farm legislation designed to move the U.S. quickly into a competitive position for world agricultural markets. "We simply can't afford to continue waiting for our farm products to become price-competitive," Dole said. "Our stocks are too high, and will only increase with this year's anticipated big crop if we don't act soon. Those of us charged with developing new farm policy must take the bull by the horns. We need a program that moves U.S. products into the export market -- not one that uses costly incentives to cut back production or stores surpluses in government or farmer-owned reserves."

Dole's remarks came one week before the Senate Agriculture Committee is scheduled to begin drafting legislation to replace the Food and Agriculture Act of 1981, which expires with 1985 crops. So far, about half a dozen proposals have been introduced, ranging from mandatory production controls to sharp reductions in price and income supports. If Congress does not reach agreement on a new bill before October, farm programs will revert to statutes dating from 1938, including the wheat referendum scheduled for July.

On the possibility of introducing a farm bill proposal, Dole said "I am looking at a program under which the government and the farmer would share responsibility for getting prices to levels where we can compete in the world market. With U.S. commodity prices now 20-30 percent above the world market, considerable resources must be marshalled to achieve price-competitiveness. We must also provide adequate income protection for mid-sized producers during the necessary transition period, recognizing the already fragile condition of the farm economy."

"The budget deficit reduction plan developed by the Senate leadership and the Administration now pending on the Senate floor provides enough flexibility on farm program spending so that we will be able to write fair and workable legislation this year," Dole said.