

News from Senator

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DOLE PAYS TRIBUTE TO U.S. FARMERS IN AG DAY REMARKS

Washington, DC -- Kansas Senator Bob Dole today paid tribute to American farmers in prepared remarks for delivery on the Senate floor celebrating National Agriculture Day - a day, according to Dole, which celebrates "the spirit of modern agriculture and the men and women who are part of our nation's foremost industry."

In his remarks, Sen. Dole said, "Today, we salute almost 23 million people whose hands are daily committed to the production, marketing, processing and distribution of food. American farmers and agribusiness men and women are a vital link to ensuring that a stable supply of reasonably priced food and fiber is available to all of us. American agriculture is, in effect, a chain linking millions of lives together around the world.

"Recently, this productive sector of our society has come under scrutiny. The cost of federal farm programs has been higher than expected - \$25 billion per year - due to low farm prices.

"Before we single out the cost of farm programs, we should remind ourselves that federal agriculture outlays are only 2.8-percent of the 1987 budget. This compares to 5-percent back in 1955. We should also remind ourselves that consumer grocery bills now take only 11 cents of each dollar of disposable income compared to 16-1/2 cents a decade ago. I would suggest that the American farmer is providing an indirect subsidy to the American consumer.

"America's farmers, and the sectors of our economy which support our farmers, are unsurpassed in their ability to produce efficiently. Each American farmer feeds 116 people - 86 in the U.S. and 30 in foreign countries. American farmers deliver 80-percent more crop output on an acre of land than did their fathers. In fact, one hour of farm labor produces 16 times as much food and other crops as it did in 1920. Agricultural output

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per hour increases about three times as fast as industrial production. And although U.S. exports have fallen from their 1981 peak of \$43.3 billion, they are still a key ingredient to U.S. farm income. Every one billion dollars in farm exports generates 35,000 jobs and creates another \$1.4 billion of economic activity in the United States. As we celebrate agriculture, those who work the land deserve our admiration.

"Each of my colleagues in this body represents a farm constituency. Many of us have first-hand experience of the economic hardships and personal agony farmers and their families are experiencing. We all want to find ways to alleviate the problems and the suffering in rural America.

"It is our role to develop a coordinated, effective policy. But I'm not sure the answers are in Washington or can be found by Congress rewriting the 1985 Farm Bill. The current legislation obviously has faults - it provides large payments to large farmers; it doesn't address or respond fast enough to local problems; and, it is costly.

"Meanwhile, the problems besetting agriculture and rural communities continue to exist. We need to move quickly to deal with a variety of pressing needs - for an adequate supply of credit for spring, for job re-training and vocational planning at land grant universities, for investment incentives to diversify the economic bases of small towns and cities, and for financial and social counseling for farm families.

"Our problems in agriculture are not a result of a particular administration or a particular party. Rather, they are the result of years of shortsighted economic policies which have sent confusing signals to farmers. Unfortunately, some farmers may not be able to endure the present circumstances long enough to see agriculture and rural America healthy again.

"But it is our obligation and responsibility to address the current problems. If we provide assistance where we should and establish a long-term direction that makes economic sense for farmers and others in rural America, we will have made great strides to bolster all of agriculture - the hands that feed and clothe America and countless others around the world," concluded Dole.