

RELEASE FROM NATIONAL COUNCIL OF FARMER COOPERATIVES

Re - Report on HEW Administration  
of Pure Food and Drug Laws

In view of the alarming methods employed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the matter of public pronouncements concerning the use of agricultural chemicals and drugs since November 9, 1959, the three general farm organizations, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and seven of the farm commodity organizations met in December 1959, in Washington, D. C. Purpose of the meeting was to determine and pursue an immediate action program to forestall continuation of the HEW's ruinous techniques.

All agreed that the food industry has no quarrel whatsoever with positive protection of public health through the enforcement of laws and regulations governing the use of agricultural chemicals and drugs. However, there was just as much unanimity in the belief that Secretary Arthur S. Flemming's demonstrated techniques of "headline" trial and conviction in the public mind was arbitrary, capricious, and completely unnecessary.

Accordingly, a proposal was drafted in a series of meetings held in late December and early January which had two purposes, immediate and longer-range. The first purpose is to put an immediate stop to the HEW techniques demonstrated in the cranberry and poultry incidents. The second is to provide a mechanism for a longer-range solution to the problems inherent in the present situation.

The proposal was laid before Secretary of Agriculture Benson and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Flemming on Monday, January 11. Secretary Benson expressed favorable interest; Secretary Flemming did not oppose it. Further steps already are being taken to pursue the proposal to an immediate implementation, or rejection.

The proposal is this: to remove the daily threat of irresponsible public statements concerning agricultural chemicals and drugs and to provide a mechanism for a complete review of the problems in this field, the establishment of a public fact-finding body is recommended.

Responsibilities of this public fact-finding body would be (1) to evaluate pertinent facts relating to the use of agricultural chemicals and drugs in the production, processing, marketing, and distribution of food; (2) to study existing laws and procedures providing for the approval and use of agricultural chemicals and drugs, and the administration of those laws and procedures by Federal departments and agencies involved; and (3) to recommend changes in existing laws and procedures, including additions thereto and deletions therefrom, on the basis of the findings of the group.



The fact-finding body would be appointed by the President of the United States, preferably after consultation with Congressional leaders. This action avoids delay and is designed to avoid public hearings. The fact-finding body would be made up of seven men not in government who should have scientific knowledge in this field and if possible, a practical working knowledge of the problems involved. Membership of the group could be appointed from persons nominated by such impartial groups as the National Academy of Sciences; land-grant colleges; American Medical Association; university research institutions; and private research organizations.

The three general farm organizations, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and seven of the farm commodity organizations representing producer interests in the food industry support this proposal. It seems to accomplish what is needed immediately in this matter as well as in the near future, and at the same time avoids many of the pitfalls. We trust this report brings you up to date. We shall keep you posted on developments as they occur.

It will be observed that these recommendations are in line with Council policy adopted at our 1960 annual meeting in Atlanta. In addition to the above proposal, and again in line with our recently adopted policy, we urged in each conference that immediate steps should be taken to prevent the sudden and drastic type of administrative procedures which virtually wrecked the cranberry industry, and which could wreck almost any other industry overnight. To this end we proposed that there be established an informal review committee composed of representatives of HEW, USDA and national farm organizations which would discuss any possible future "crack-down" by HEW, review any enforcement problems involved, and work together to solve the problem before drastic action is taken.

Any action which can be taken by member organizations to help implement the proposals and plans herein outlined will be most helpful.

Sincerely,

/s/ Homer L. Brinkley  
Executive Vice-President

HLB:FBC

NOTE: If such a plan, as outlined above, had been in effect on November 9, 1959, the cranberry catastrophe would never have happened.

George C. P. Olsson, President  
Ocean Spray Cranberries, inc.