

U.S. Agriculture/Rural Organizations Unite Warn World's Farmers Subsidy Elimination Alone Not the Answer

“New Research Suggests Reform of U.S. Policy Would Benefit Farmers Worldwide”

WASHINGTON, Sept.3, 2003 – “We stand here united in Washington, D.C., to tell the world’s farmers, their governments and their trade negotiators that U.S. farm policy is not working for farmers anywhere in the world. We are all going to Cancún, Mexico next week because it is time to talk realistically about these problems,” said John Dittrich, Senior Policy Analyst of the American Corn Growers Association and a farmer from Tilden, Neb.

“We urge all those interested in global food production, global family agriculture, and developing countries to read the groundbreaking research report we will carry to Cancún and beyond,” said Dittrich. He points to the newly released study, *Rethinking U.S. Agriculture Policy: Changing Course to Secure Farmer Livelihoods Worldwide*, by the Agriculture Policy Analysis Center (APAC), part of the University of Tennessee, a land-grant university. “This report goes comprehensively to the heart of the ever more contentious trade issues of farm subsidies in developed countries, low world commodity prices, and global poverty.”

“We ask the world community to thoughtfully review this research. It concludes that even if the difficult task of negotiating the elimination of global farm subsidies is completed, family-based agriculture will continue to spiral downward as a result of continued low commodity prices,” added John Hansen, Secretary of National Farmers Union. “Farmer-oriented policies and international cooperation are the real solutions.”

Dittrich and Hansen were joined by Katherine Ozer of the National Family Farm Coalition, Lorette Picciano of the Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, Ben Lilliston of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, and Bill Christison of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center. In addition, other organizations present and supportive of the initiative include the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, the National Farmers Organization, the Soybean Producers of America, and the American Agriculture Movement. “We are united in our message and will be traveling to the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial in Cancún to participate in the agriculture policy negotiations scheduled for next week,” said Dittrich. “At that time we will also present an *Open Letter to Farmers, Farmworkers and Rural People of the World* calling for a dialogue with our counterparts across the globe based on the findings in this research.”

Professor Daryll E. Ray, Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy and APAC Director, was also in attendance and followed the news conference with a detailed presentation of the study. “U.S. policies heavily influence the fate of farmers well beyond our borders. Therefore, policy addressing the needs of U.S. farmers also should recognize our larger global influence,” said Ray. “We have found conclusive evidence through our analysis that international trade policies have indeed led the way for the global downward spiral of farm prices and farm income. However, we can also predict with a significant degree of accuracy that the elimination of U.S. farm subsidies without real price-enhancing reform of U.S. policy will destroy our farm and rural economy, and---surprisingly---would perpetuate the problems facing farmers in developing counties rather than alleviate them. We offer a blueprint of one example of how U.S. farm policy could be reformed. This is not a farm bill proposal, but an analysis and discussion of one possible solution to the serious problems facing farm families and their communities worldwide.”

APAC’s analysis and blueprint for discussion includes acreage diversion through short-term conservation uses and longer-term acreage reserves, a farmer-owned food security reserve, and price supports as a replacement for the current and expensive policy of direct government subsidies. It also explores the use of non-tradable energy crops as a viable alternative to short and long-term acreage diversion options.

A presentation of the study and its background will be presented in Cancún at Casa Maya on Thursday, Sept. 11 at 8:00 p.m. MEX. For more information contact Dennis Olson at (612)870-3412.

For more information about the study or Dr. Ray’s presentation, please go to <http://agpolicy.org/blueprint.html> or contact APAC by calling (865) 974-7407.