

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**March 26, 2001**

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LAST WEEK

FEDERAL FARM COMMODITY PROGRAMS – On Thursday March 22, 2001, the House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, TX) held a full committee hearing on federal farm commodity programs. The witnesses were representatives of the livestock community, including the National Pork Producers Council, American Sheep Industry Association, Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, Perdue Farms, and the National Cattleman's Beef Association. The Committee asked the witnesses to provide details on the direction they would like to see farm policy take in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The livestock witnesses stated that the primary goal of commodity programs should be to provide economic stability and opportunity for producers over time consistent with a responsible view of market realities, resource sustainable and food security and safety issues. They feel that 1996 Farm Bill continues to serve the nation's producers, farmers and ranchers well. The livestock community would like to reach parity in benefits with row crop growers. Questions included the concerns with air and water quality, research, disease control and increasing overseas market development.

HOUSE RESOURCES BRIEFING –On Tuesday March 20, 2001, NRCS staff conducted a briefing on invasive species for the staff of the House Resources Committee. Doug Williams, National Forester, and Dr. Beth Sauerhaft, National Ecologist Climatologist, led the discussion on agency issues and current program activities regarding invasive species. Subjects discussed included plant materials, the PLANTS database, WRP, WHIP, EQIP, EWP, and technical assistance to private landowners. Staff asked questions regarding the scope of the problem with invasive species, the interaction with other agencies and departments, and how to address the issue through locally led efforts on a national scale.

FARM BILL FIELD HEARING–On March 24, 2001 the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Acting Chair Harkin, IA) held field hearings in Lewis, Iowa and Spencer, Iowa on the future farm bill and agricultural and rural issues.

