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## **Newsletter - 1981-11-19**

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# NEWSLETTER

97-822

19 November 1981

Washington, D.C.

FOOD FOR THE AMERICAS. During our recent debate on the farm bill I pointed out that our nation can buy all the guns and ships and tanks and missiles and submarines it wants, it can launch the Columbia and bring it back, but without food, everything else is insignificant.

The Administration has said it wants to cut back on farm programs even more drastically than the House and Senate agreed upon earlier this month. The President is threatening to veto a farm program he considers too expensive. I think it is necessary to put our national priorities in perspective. America's economic ills should not be cured at the expense of the already burdened agricultural sector.

As I told my colleagues, foreign countries are not buying our cars, radios, or television sets. They are buying our agricultural commodities. Our farmers are not a drain on the economy or the budget. On the contrary, they bring back dollars from abroad. The Department of Agriculture has just reported that agricultural exports were up eight percent this fiscal year over 1980, setting a record for the 12th year in a row.

In South Texas we are close to one very important source of foreign export revenue. When I spoke at an agribusiness conference in San Antonio this month the emphasis was on Mexico, whose steadily rising gross national product and burgeoning oil production and construction industries have made it a prime trading partner for the U.S.

According to government reports, in 1980 Mexico ranked as the third largest export market for U.S. farm products, after Japan and the Netherlands. Mexico receives as much as 90 percent of its import needs from the United States. Through Mexico's government agency, Conasupo, we exported millions of tons of corn and sorghum into Mexico last year, as well as wheat, beans, soybeans and many other commodities.

On the other hand, the U.S. imported more than \$1 billion in agricultural products from Mexico, our primary imports being fruit, nuts, and vegetable products.

The Mexican Government has made agriculture its No. 1 priority with the aim of attaining self-sufficiency in staple crops such as corn and beans. The current climate for foreign investment is good, with Mexico establishing incentives for foreign capital projects in rural areas. Trade restrictions between our two nations are minimal.

If you look at the continuing growth along our common border area you see what agricultural trade has meant to the U.S. and Mexico. I bring this up to show how important our farmers are to the nation's economy as well as our border economy. We hope the Administration recognizes that.

\* \* \*

OTHER MARKETS IN LATIN AMERICA. Mexico is not the only country in Latin America where the potential for increased agricultural trade is bright, even though 40 percent of the 15 percent of total U.S. farm products bound for Latin America winds up there.

USDA reports that our farm exports to the Caribbean and Chile hit record levels last year. We are the major supplier of grain to the top three South American grain buyers ---- Brazil, Venezuela and Chile --- since their normal supplier, Argentina, has been concentrating lately on sales to the Soviet Union.

Although we have had a negative trade balance with Brazil because of our imports of coffee, sugar, and cocoa, we are trying to offset that by selling them more wheat. We supplied 58 percent of Venezuela's agricultural needs last year, principally grains and oilseeds, and the outlook for exports to this country is especially promising for coming years, according to USDA.

\* \* \*

WELCOME TO THE VALLEY. We are proud to welcome American Airlines to Harlingen airport. The prominent airline company is starting daily service between Dallas/Fort Worth and Harlingen beginning December 1, and in doing so acknowledges that our area is growing up and has an expanding tourism and commercial importance.

American will operate two 727 nonstop roundtrip flights a day. The flights are approximately an hour and 15 minutes long.

\* \* \*

NATIONAL FARM-CITY WEEK. Appropriately enough, November 20-26 marks National Farm-City Week. The purpose of this week is to show the vital interaction between farm and city dwellers. Without farms to provide food and fiber cities would be barren and without the products and services of cities, farms would be primitive.

It is appropriate that this particular week has been set aside since Thanksgiving falls on November 26. City dwellers can be thankful for the turkey and fixings farmers have put on their tables, and each farm family must appreciate those city-built ovens and roasting pans.

\* \* \*

VISITORS FROM HOME THIS WEEK WERE: R.M. Duffey Jr. of Brownsville; Susana Lopez and Mr. and Mrs. Raul J. Gacia of Falfurrias; and Mr. and Mrs. Glen Roney and son Mark from McAllen.

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