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NEWSLETTER

100-1170

25 August 1988

Washington DC

PROTECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE HEMISPHERE. The amazing productive capability of U.S. agriculture (and that of Mexico and Canada) is in large part attributable to our successful battle against natural forces that are inherently dangerous to some plant and animal life.

In the frontlines and trenches of this battle, science is our best strategic weapon. Through agricultural science we have learned methods of scotching the growth of dangerous pests and encouraging beneficial production environments.

Last week, your Congressman returned from a 3-day tour of scientific facilities in Mexico which are cooperatively financed and managed with the United States. Our trip, on behalf of the House Committee on Agriculture, involved on-site examination of **screworm, fruit fly and Africanized bee facilities in Mexico.**

My tour of the U.S.-Mexico sterile screworm fly facility in **Tuxtla Gutierrez** (the capital city in the far southern state of **Chiapas**) was timely. Only recently I had made the keynote speech at the USDA's research laboratory in Kerrville, Texas, where we re-dedicated the lab in honor of Dr Edward F Knipling and Dr R.C. Bushland who were the pioneers in developing the male sterile screworm fly production technique.

Eradication of screworms (and their larvae which act as parasites on livestock) are of paramount importance to cattle ranchers. I was pleased with the excellent work which continues at the U.S. and Mexican facility.

Our tour of the fruit fly facility located in the city of **Tapachula** (also in **Chiapas** state, and on the Pacific coast in the far corner near the Guatemalan border) was equally rewarding. Here are produced sterile fruit flies released into the environment to hold in check the reproduction of virulent flies. The larvae of the fruit fly--as is so well known to our Valley fruit growers--can eat away and destroy a citrus orchard unless restrained.

And our third stop was a new facility--one to begin work on possible sterilization techniques for the **Africanized honey bee**. This facility was also located in **Tapachula**. The work is being conducted by the Mexicans and our USDA is providing its share by manning several installations in a 100-mile zone across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to try and blunt the expected northward migration of these injurious bees. These genetic mutants--if allowed to breed with and interrupt established honey bee colonies in North America--can ruin U.S. honey production. Again--we are pleased with the progress being made.

These Mexico-based science facilities are excellent examples of **how two nations can cooperate and achieve results--and I am committed to ensuring these programs continue.** Each year when our U.S. House Committee on Agriculture submits budget recommendations for the U S Department of Agriculture, we do everything possible to ensure that scientific research and application receive enough funds to continue our vital job of protecting hemispheric agriculture.

Without the success of science, we could not ever hope to adequately feed the hundreds of millions of people who live in the Western Hemisphere.

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KIKA DE LA GARZA, 15TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

UPDATE ON TAX LEGISLATION. Your Congressman was among the first to introduce legislation which would repeal the upfront diesel fuel tax collection procedures on farmers and ranchers--and it was made a part of the big tax bill H.R. 4333.

Also, we in the House included a provision which would allow livestock producers to **immediately deduct the pre-productive expenses of certain farm animals instead of capitalizing those costs over the life of the animal.**

The House passed H.R. 4333 shortly before departing for the traditional late August Congressional recess. We sent our bill to the Senate where it is still under consideration.

As I write this letter, it appears doubtful the Senate will retain all the features of our House-passed legislation. There is the possibility the Senate will remove the provisions on deduction of livestock pre-productive expenses--but we are very optimistic the Senate will keep our repeal of the diesel fuel tax item. And that is very important to South Texas and I am pleased to report the success we have had so far in correcting this situation.

We will continue our efforts in talking with the Senate and working towards a final package that will correct many deficiencies in the IRS Code.

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A DROUGHT PROGRAM IN RECORD TIME. Congress can be quick when the nation's security is at stake. Consider this: on July 12, your Congressman introduced his comprehensive national drought relief legislation. On August 9th, the Congress gave final approval to the finished product and I attended the Presidential signing ceremony in the White House Rose Garden on August 11.

In less than four weeks, we engineered a major piece of new legislation aimed at a problem becoming more serious each week: the drought. Now that President Reagan has signed the legislation (which officially enacts it), the legislation (now called a public law) goes immediately over to the Secretary of the U S Department of Agriculture. He and his lieutenants must now get to work and implement the programs which our law requires be done.

How long will that take? Preliminary and unofficial soundings of the USDA seem to indicate it will be no earlier than October 1st before all the major drought relief programs are in-place and underway. That's a little more than eight weeks compared to less than four weeks for Congress to do its part.

Here's what your Congressman is doing to help the process along: I am making contact with high-level officials in USDA to offer any interpretive assistance that might be needed in terms of getting the **farmer disaster payment formulas worked out and the cost-sharing on livestock feed implemented.**

On a special note for livestock producers in South Texas--I am pleased to advise that my amendment which would require the USDA to cost-share on the burning of prickly pear cactus (thus rendering another source of food and moisture for cattle) was approved by the full Congress in our relief package.

Also--as mentioned in our legislation--the USDA and the Department of Labor will do all they can to provide some emergency assistance to migrant farmworkers who have travelled away from home to pick crops that sadly were not there to harvest due to the weather.

We have compassion for the plight of field workers whose lives have been thrown upside down by acts of mother nature--and our extended helping hand we know will be appreciated by those who **bring the food from the field and onto our tables.**

So to our farmers, ranchers and farmworkers, we pledge our continued efforts on the drought relief program by urging USDA to observe no speed limits in implementing our Congressional drought assistance program.

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VISITORS FROM HOME. Mary and Richard Cantu of Mission & Edinburg; Mr and Mrs Wayne Billings, and Jason, of Three Rivers; Mr and Mrs John Cypher and family of Kingsville; Rafael H. Flores & family, and Sharon Burgess--all of McAllen; Jack E Speake of Kenedy.

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