

1. POLICY POSITION

URGING THE FORMULATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND ENDORSEMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE RAW BULK FARM COMMODITY EXPORT PLAN

Background

The United States Department of State and the United States Department of Agriculture do not have a comprehensive program to stimulate the export of domestic raw bulk farm commodities. In previous years the agricultural industry has helped to maintain a favorable balance of trade. Historically, the United States has exported technology, expertise, money, equipment and seed which helped to increase the agricultural production of our foreign allies.

Currently, the domestic agricultural industry is in disarray due to a changed political climate and to the increase in worldwide agricultural production. In 1986, rice exports dropped twenty percent and cotton exports dropped twenty-nine percent from the previous year. Other crops have suffered similar declines in their percentage of exports. No section of the United States economy is suffering as much as the agricultural community.

The domestic agricultural industry deserves to have a federally mandated comprehensive export plan to assist in regaining a greater percentage of the world market. It has been the policy of this country to subsidize and protect various facets of our national economy from disparate foreign competition through the use of statutes, tariffs or international agreements.

The Southern Legislative Conference proposes that the United States Department of State and the United States Department of Agriculture formulate a comprehensive plan to increase the volume of agricultural products exported to world markets. This plan should be designed around incentives to other countries to purchase raw bulk agricultural commodities from the United States farmer. Any system of tariffs or barriers and any attempt to solve the problem by forcing the farmer to reduce prices to third world country competition levels would be unfair to the farmer.

Recommendation

The Southern Legislative Conference urges the United States Department of State and the United States Department of Agriculture to formulate and implement a comprehensive long term raw bulk farm commodity export plan.

Further, the Southern Legislative Conference urges the National Democratic and Republican parties to include a plank dealing with the export of farm products as part of their 1988 platform.