

A - ~~Farm~~ Farm.
THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 15, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

Room 450
Old Executive Office Building

conclusion
freedom to farm

actually
1:00 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon; welcome to the White House. Lee, thank you for the award. Thank you for your comments. Thank you for your strength. Thank you for your leadership for our farmers. I've known him for years -- I don't think I've ever focused on what a good speaker he was before. He could have been a politician or a preacher in addition to a farmer. It was great.

I want to thank Secretary Glickman for his truly outstanding work, along with Rich Rominger, Carl Whillock and the others here from the Department of Agriculture, who really try to be your advocates every day.

We have at least NFU members who work at USDA -- Mike Dunn, Larry Mitchell, and John Stencil. And I thank them in particular. I want to thank Senator Dorgan and Congressman Pomeroy for coming and for being your vociferous advocates. I talked to Senator Harkin right before I came over here today and he has also been your great friend, along with Senator Conrad and Senator Daschle and Congressman Boswell from Iowa, who couldn't come this morning, but all these people have been up here working hard for you. And I wanted you to know that.

I also would like to say that the National Farmers Union has done a lot of good for this administration and for our efforts here in Washington, from helping to keep our food supply safe to working to expand health care to giving us the first balanced budget in 29 years in just a couple of weeks now. You have been with me every step of the way, and I am very grateful for that.

When I was a boy growing up in Arkansas I knew a lot about agriculture, but I didn't know much about the intersection of agriculture and politics. When I became a governor and served for a dozen years, many of them very, very hard years in the 1980s on the farm in my state, I came to appreciate what it was like when the national government had good policy, what it was like when it had bad policy, and what it was like when it had no policy.

I remember there were a couple of years when I was doing everything I could to be creative, and I think when you were head of the South Dakota Farmers Union, the state of South Dakota actually came to me and the governor then and asked me for a copy of the banking laws that I had changed in Arkansas -- because I changed our state banking laws to try to help the bankers keep more farmers on the farm. And when we had that terrible situation, when the price of land collapsed, all the collateral on the loans was no good, there was no way for people to finance their farms and they were losing them, and we were able to give some help to our farmers then. But through the whole thing I always felt so helpless that there wasn't an appropriate national response.

Now I feel especially bad for the farmers because it's been such a good time for the rest of the country. We've got nearly 17 million new jobs now and the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, and the lowest inflation in 32 years, the highest home ownership in history, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the smallest percentage of our people on welfare in 29 years. To somebody living in a city, to tell them that we have a farm crisis more extensive than we've had in decades, it's very hard for them to believe and understand.

You may note that in the local people today I was criticized for supporting a farm relief initiative in Congress. And Secretary Glickman said, don't be upset, this is good news because they have noticed that the farmers are out there.

Yesterday I had a chance to go to New York and speak with some of the leaders in the United States in international finance, from our nation's point of view, to talk to them about what I think we need to do to try to keep the global economy from further destabilizing, to try to help some of these countries help themselves that are in terrible trouble, to try to keep the global financial crisis from spreading to other countries, and to try to build an adequate trade and financial system for the 21st century that will benefit all Americans.

One, but -- not the only -- but one element of the farm crisis is that the farmers have felt first the crisis going on in the rest of the world. Because with roughly a quarter of the world's people in recession with declining economic growth, representing roughly a third of the world's economy, our agricultural, which depends so much on exports, have felt that quicker than the rest of the economy. But it's an important thing for Americans to be aware of what's going on on the farm today, and to be aware that since the farmers, in effect, are the foot soldiers in the front lines of America's march into the global economy of the 21st century, if we don't do something to help our farmers, eventually all other Americans will feel it as well.

And so I am delighted that you're here, and I thank you for coming. Let me also, once again, say I thank you for making available the opportunity for all of these young people to be here. I want them to see their country in action. I want them to learn -- much earlier than I ever did -- the relationship between the work that's done every day on the farm and the work that's done up here. I think it's very important. It will make them more effective citizens and more effective in farming in the years ahead.

Good
1480
=

Now, what's really going on here? I wanted to give this speech today -- I realize to some extent I'm preaching to the saved today. But what I hope will happen by your coming here and by this event unfolding is that, maybe, finally, we will break through the national consciousness and the consciousness of the Congress -- and our friends in the press corps -- not to panic, not to think that America's not doing well, but to say that at a time when our country is doing well, surely at a time when the rest of us are doing well, we can be more attentive to the genuine needs and the conditions on the farm in America.

Events in the past year have strained many family farms to the breaking point. You know what they are: flood, drought, crop disease have wiped out entire harvests. Plummeting prices at home, collapsing markets in Asia -- where our exports are down 30 percent in one year because of the economic crisis in Asia -- these have threatened the livelihood of entire communities.

Many farmers this year will see their net incomes drop by more than 40 percent below what they've earned on average for the last five years. And, of course, in some places like North Dakota, the drop is much, much steeper. If we don't do something and do it now -- I want America to hear this, this is not a false alarm -- if we don't do something, and do it now, we could literally lose thousands and thousands of family farmers this year.

I want to come back to this and why it's not just about who's competitive in the market. The results are plain to see and painful to watch. Foreclosures and farm auctions are the order of the day already in many communities. I met a farmer named Deb Lungren not long ago who told me that in 1957 her grandfather made \$11,000 on their family farm. And in 1997, she made \$10,000 on the same land. The banks are ready to foreclose on the Lungren home. They don't see how they can possibly make it another year. I'll bet everybody here could tell me somewhere between one and a dozen stories just like that.

Now, again I say, I think every American has got a stake in rural America. Our farms feed the world and us at very low real costs, at very high quality. They also feed our sense of ourselves. They reinforce our values of hard work and faith and family and devotion to community and the land.

When I signed that Farm Bill, as Secretary Glickman said, in 1996, at a time when crop prices were strong -- and I would remind you the alternative was far worse; we would have been in even worse shape if I had vetoed it and we'd gone back to that decades-old law -- I tried to make it clear that sooner or later we would have to do more to provide a safety net for hard times; that all the good things in that Farm Bill could not possibly wipe away the fact that if we have a family farm structure in America with widely varying prices because of market developments around the world, and the inevitable march of nature and disease, that sooner or later there would come a time when we see that if you really wanted a strong market, you had to do more for the family farmers. Well, that time has arrived.

I want to thank Secretary Glickman for all that he's done. And in July, we announced that 80 million bushels of wheat, worth a quarter of billion dollars, would be purchased to help hungry people around the world and to help our farmers here at home.

I strongly supported Senator Dorgan and Senator Conrad's proposal to provide farmers with emergency assistance. Last month I signed into law new legislation to speed up farm program payments to help farmers who need the money now. And Secretary Glickman is doing everything else he possibly can to help.

I know him well enough to know that from his years in Congress representing Kansas, and his years as Secretary of Agriculture, if there is one, single thing buried in the laws and regulations of the Department of Agriculture that he can do that he has not yet done to try to help farm income, he will find it and do it. But with crop and livestock prices still in danger of dropping, with foreign markets still in danger of collapse, and with thousands of farms in jeopardy, we simply have to do more.

The first and most important thing to do is to help the farmers in greatest need -- those who have suffered significant losses of crop and livestock. I'll continue to press Congress to enact emergency assistance to do that; critical assistance to help thousands of farmers in keeping with the traditional budget rules that recognize the necessity of providing citizens help in times of crisis. We pass emergency bills for floods, for earthquakes, and we ought to do it for farm failure.

The next thing I think we ought to do -- indeed we have to do -- is to do what we talked about back in 1996. We've got to reinforce the safety net for farmers and ranchers. That's why last Thursday I announced my support for Senator Harkin and Daschle's proposal to lift the cap on marketing loan rates for a year. _

Yesterday our proposal was defeated in the United States Senate. Today it apparently is going to be voted on in its discrete elements. Whatever happens, we must find some way to provide emergency assistance to farmers facing dire circumstances so they have the resources now to plan for next year's crops.

And finally, let me say, we have to revive the rural economy through exports. The speech that I gave in New York yesterday outlining steps we need to take to try to limit and then resolve the global financial crisis, and then plan a better financial and trade system for the 21st century over the long-term, will have more immediate impact on farmers if we can implement all these steps than any other group in America.

Farm products from one of every three acres is sold abroad. We must continue to open new markets. We must continue to enforce our existing trade agreements. And we must give the International Monetary Fund the resources it needs to strengthen and reform the economies of our customers in Asia, and to try to protect the contagion from spreading to our friends in Latin America, so that others can continue to buy all of our goods and services, and especially our farm products.

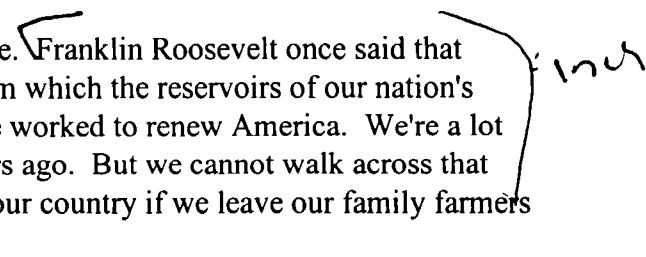
For nine months now, since I called on Congress to do this in the State of the Union, there has been no action. The Senate has passed the funding for the International Monetary Fund, but with just a few weeks left the House has still not acted.

Our farmers and ranchers have a bigger stake in the short-run in the passage of this than any other group in America. So I ask you to support that as well, and tell the Congress we have to do it and do it now.

Now, these are the steps that I think we have to take. I'd just like to take one step back before I close and say that there has been a debate in America for decades that underlies the skepticism of those who don't support what I propose; who say, well, farmers ought to be subject to the market like everybody else -- a guy running a dry cleaner, nobody brings the clothes into be cleaned, he goes out of business. The people who basically believe that -- in the face of all the evidence that we have the most productive agriculture in the world -- don't understand the intersection between global impacts on farm prices, the financing challenges that family farmers, as opposed to big corporate farmers, face, and what can happen to you just by getting up in the morning if it happens to be a bad day.

I know a lot of you feel like Job -- you know? Test my faith, Lord; I didn't mean it that seriously. But we have an opportunity here -- we have an opportunity to break through a kind of euphoria that's out there about the condition of our economy and let people know what's going on on the farm. We have an opportunity to tie the global financial crisis to what's going on on the farm. We have an opportunity to convince congressmen who come from suburban and urban areas that the welfare, the health, the strength of their citizens' -- their citizens' -- economy rests in lifting the whole American economy and doing the right thing beyond our borders. And they can see it in your stories, in your lives, in your experience -- nothing more fully embodying the best of America than you do.

So let me say -- I don't know how else to say this: There is suffering on the farm. There is agony on the farm. This is a horrible affront to everything we have worked so hard to achieve to lift the economy for all Americans. And we cannot afford to walk away from this session of Congress -- I don't care if there is an election; I don't care what else is happening -- we can't afford to walk away until we do something to stave off the failure of thousands of productive family farms in America. We cannot do it. _

Now, let me leave you with one beautiful quote.  Franklin Roosevelt once said that American farmers -- and I quote -- "are the source from which the reservoirs of our nation's strength are constantly renewed." For six years I have worked to renew America. We're a lot better off in virtually every way than we were six years ago. But we cannot walk across that bridge into the 21st century -- we cannot truly renew our country if we leave our family farmers behind.

So let's go up to the Hill and tell everybody that we all want to saddle up and go together. Thank you and God bless you.

END

1:20 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 21, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN RADIO ACTUALITY ON THE AGRICULTURAL PROVISIONS OF THE EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 1999

"We are living through the longest peace-time expansion in our nation's history, the strongest economy in a generation, the lowest unemployment in nearly 30 years, over 18 million new jobs since 1993.

Our farmers and ranchers helped to create this new prosperity, giving us good, inexpensive food at home and exporting a lot abroad. Unfortunately, today, too many of them are not reaping the benefits of the prosperity they helped to create. In fact, many of our farmers and ranchers are in the grip of the worse crisis in over a decade. We have to do more to help them.

Three months ago I called on Congress to give farmers the loan assistance they need to start the spring planting. Congress didn't act then and every day they waited brought more farms closer to foreclosure.

So in March, our administration took extraordinary action to make \$300 million in loans available to America's farming families now, instead of at the end of the year when they normally would have come up. Congress, Friday, acted to provide funds for those loans and more. On Friday, I signed an emergency appropriations bill that will restore the \$300 million to the loan program to help our farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

But with thousands of them still in danger of failing, we must continue our efforts. My balanced budget for next year includes additional help for agriculture. Unfortunately, next week the House of Representatives will vote on a bill that would gut some of those commitments and the Senate is considering even deeper cuts. Our farmers and ranchers feed us. They've helped us to get this prosperity we're enjoying. Now they're in need and we should help them.

After passing a bill that will do so much good, it would be a real shame and a bad mistake for Congress to reverse course and cut back on our commitment to America's farming and ranching families. I'm committed to working with the Congress to give them the support they need."

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Embargoed For Release Until 10:06 A.M. EST

Saturday, December 12, 1998

RADIO ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE NATION
The Roosevelt Room

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This month, as Americans begin to prepare for winter, our nation's farmers begin to prepare for the spring planting ahead. But this year has been very hard on farmers -- for some, the hardest in nearly two decades -- and many are strained to the breaking point. Today I want to talk about what we're doing to help America's farmers weather these hard times, and to build a stronger safety net to protect them for years to come.

We're living in a remarkable time of prosperity and even greater promise for our future. Our economy is the strongest in a generation, with more than 17 million new jobs, family incomes rising, the lowest unemployment in nearly 30 years, the lowest inflation in more than 30 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years and the highest home ownership in history.

America's farmers have helped to build this new prosperity, but far too many of our farming communities are not reaping its benefits. Flood and drought and crop disease have wiped out entire harvests in some parts of the country. Plummeting prices here at home and collapsing markets in Asia have threatened the livelihood of some farming communities.

Wherever we live and whatever work we do, every American has a stake in the strength of rural America. America's farmers are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our land. Our farming families stand for the values that have kept our nation strong for over 220 years -- hard work, faith and family, perseverance and patience. We can't afford to let them fail.

Last summer we took action to ease the immediate crisis on our farms. We began buying millions of tons of wheat and other food to ease the burden of dropping prices here at home, and to feed hungry people in Africa, Russia and all over the world. I signed legislation to speed farm program payments to farmers, who need the money now to start planning for next spring. And I called on the Congress to take action to help farmers survive this year's one-two punch from Mother Nature and the marketplace.

I am pleased to say that this October, as part of our balanced budget, I signed legislation that included a \$6 billion plan for farmers in need. This November, we started putting the plan into action, with nearly \$3 billion in income assistance to farmers who have seen their profits wither as crop prices fell. Today, I am pleased to announce the next major step to ease the crisis on our farms: nearly \$2.5 billion in emergency aid for farmers who have lost crops and

livestock. But with too many farm families still in danger of losing their land, and with crop prices still far too low, we know we must do more to strengthen the safety net for our nation's farmers. Government has an important role to play in meeting this challenge, but it's not something government can do alone. Ultimately, America's farmers will keep America's farms growing strong.

We know that no one can fully predict the changing weather or changing prices, but every farmer knows that crop insurance is one of the best ways to protect against the worst risks of farming. In good times, crop insurance gives farming families the security they need to thrive and grow. And in hard times, crop insurance can mean the difference between a spring planting and a spring sale of the family farm. But far too many farmers don't have crop insurance at all, or only buy the bare minimum -- not enough to withstand a really devastating year.

We need to do more to enable family farmers to fully protect themselves in hard times. That's why I am pleased to announce the funds we're releasing include \$400 million in new incentives for farmers to buy crop insurance. We'll give farmers a one-time premium discount of up to 35 percent when they expand their crop insurance, and that will give our farming families greater security and more peace of mind.

Together, these steps will help thousands of farmers around our country to recover from this difficult time and plant a seed of hope for the future -- not only for stronger farms, but for a stronger America in the 21st century.

Thanks for listening. END

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 22, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN RADIO ACTUALITY

Oval Office

11:47 A.M. EDT

in Oct, PC. under
THE PRESIDENT: Today, I am signing into law the Agriculture Appropriations Bill. ~~This legislation provides critical funding for the Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration programs, including basic farm support programs, WIC, food safety efforts and other measures to protect and support our rural communities.~~ *VA Mgmt, -*

to It also provided emergency funds to assist our nation's farmers and ranchers who are suffering the second year in a row of plummeting crop prices and, for many, record livestock losses from severe drought and flooding.

Let me say that I am disappointed that Congress didn't come through with more assistance for farmers and ranchers who suffered this year. This summer's drought and Hurricane Floyd and other natural disasters have inflicted literally billions of dollars in agricultural damage, and we need to do more to help those farmers who have incurred these losses through no fault of their own.

Congress also has not responded effectively to the crisis facing many farms because of the sustained low prices of most commodities. *(This is the second year in a row that substantial federal assistance has been needed above and beyond our regular farm programs.*

Now, while these additional funds have been absolutely critical, the very fact that we've needed them points out the underlying flaws in the 1996 Farm Bill. For all its positive features, that bill simply did not do enough to help our farmers and ranchers cope in crisis. It doesn't give the USDA the tools it needs to help farmers and ranchers thrive in the short and long terms. It doesn't direct payments to where they're most needed. And it's providing payments to those who aren't even farming anymore.

The bottom line is this: we need to revise, revamp and improve the 1996 Farm Bill. It is not providing adequate support that our farmers need to prosper. So, once again, I urge Congress to work to fix the Farm Bill permanently, so American farmers can have an adequate safety net -- just as the Vice President and I have worked hard to reinvent government and give government more impact and more effectiveness, even though we have the smallest federal government since 1962. We must take those kinds of steps, the necessary steps to rewrite this flawed farm legislation. The men and women who work every day to give us the world's most affordable and abundant food supply deserve nothing less.

Hum and
~~So this is not a perfect piece of legislation;~~ *but I am signing it*
because our farmers are facing a true emergency and they can't wait. Their livelihoods -- in some cases, their very survival -- depend upon getting this bill signed and assistance delivered ~~now~~.

Franklin Roosevelt once said that our farmers are the source from which the reservoirs of our nation's strength are constantly renewed. We must strengthen and support our farms and farm families, just as they have sustained us throughout our history and will into the future.

Thank you.

END

11:50 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 31, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN
RADIO ACTUALITY ON FARM AID

THE PRESIDENT: As America's farmers look ahead to this year's harvest, what should be a time of reward and satisfaction is instead becoming a time of disappointment -- and for some, for too many, a time of ruin.

From dropping crop prices to diminishing foreign markets to devastating droughts in some parts of the country, many of our farmers and ranchers are facing the worst crisis in a decade. My administration has done what we can to ease this crisis, from increasing our food purchases for humanitarian aid around the world, to speeding up farm program payments, to ensuring \$6 billion in emergency aid last year to help farmers in need. To really help our farmers and ranchers, we have to fix the underlying problem.

Let's just face it: the 1996 Farm Bill simply does not do enough to help our farmers and ranchers cope in hard times. It doesn't give me or the United States Department of Agriculture the tools we need to help farmers and ranchers thrive over the long term -- from providing critical income assistance to farmers who need it most in bad years, to making it easier for farmers to buy crop insurance and improving our crop insurance program, to continuing our efforts to expand markets abroad and ensure fair practices here at home. That's the right way to help our farmers and ranchers over the long term.

My Dad was a NP
I am committed to working with Congress to provide the resources to help our farmers and ranchers by dealing with today's crisis and by fixing the Farm Bill for the future. We must do so in a way that maintains the fiscal discipline that has created our prosperity and that now makes it possible for us to save Social Security, to strengthen and modernize Medicare with a prescription drug benefit and to pay off our national debt, guaranteeing our long-term financial prosperity. These things are good for America's farming and ranching families, too, and they're good for all Americans.

NOTE: Sound from this statement is available on the White House Press Office Radio Actuality Line at 202-456-5671.

###

Domestic Issues

Improve the Safety Net: Good that have obtained money the past few years for emergency needs, but we need to fix the safety net to eliminate the ongoing need for emergency assistance. We need targeted assistance for those farmers with the greatest need.

Congress instead opted for a system that links payments to producers' acreage going back nearly a decade and yields going back two decades. As a result, payments will be made based on conditions that may no longer exist. Some farmers will be compensated for a crop that's doing quite well...others for a crop they don't even plant anymore. And some farmers will be receive money for the corn they didn't plant while they are receiving payments for the soybeans they did plant. Meanwhile, some producers who endured the most economic stress and hardship this year will get short-shrifted.

Ultimately, the lesson to be learned from this emergency assistance bill is that our underlying farm policy is flawed and must be reformed.

The 1996 Farm Bill cut a hole in the safety net, providing insufficient cushion for farmers and ranchers during years when the farm economy goes south.

It left us with a shell of a farm policy forcing ad-hoc payments which are increasing rather than decreasing government support. As I said earlier, 1999 farm payments are now projected to approach \$22.5 billion, the highest ever.

Lurching, ad hoc style, from one patchwork emergency bill to the next is not the most effective way to help farmers.

And we shouldn't wait until the expiration of the Farm Bill in 2002. The fact is, with two years of emergency payments to farmers, Congress has already seriously amended the farm bill. What is needed now is a thought-out, well-balance farm bill that we can work on if we address it early in the year -- before we are looking again emergency farm legislation.

Assistance Checks

USDA is trying to get all assistance checks out as quickly as possible. The supplemental AMTA payments (\$5.5 billion) were sent out shortly after enactment of the agriculture appropriations bill. In fact, USDA started issuing payments only one business day after the President signed the bill. Hundreds of millions of dollars were in the mail within days.

USDA will likely make preliminary crop loss payments (\$1.4 billion) next month. Final payments will likely be made in the spring when we can finally assess the year's total crop losses.

Agriculture Concentration

Justice will shortly announce the appointment of a Special Counsel to Assistant Attorney General (Antitrust) for Agricultural Enforcement

Should I
hold out?

Stake

South
South
South
weight
#

new

Two major actions.

Required substantial divestiture in Cargill/Continental merger. It was the first major agriculture monopsony case

Major divestiture in tractor business. Case/New Holland 2 of few major companies merged.

Price Reporting legislation passed and was funded with \$4.7 million for implementation. This will help address the effects of concentration by making available to all farmers the prices paid by processors for their livestock purchasers from all customers.

Price report