

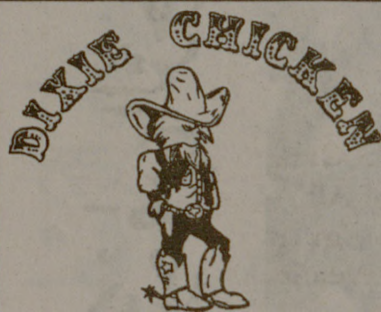
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Politics

Page 6A

THE BATTALION

Tuesday, November 20, 2001

Texas agriculture agencies seek economic safety net NFU proposes farm bill that ensures market prices

By ERIC AMBROSO
THE BATTALION

September's economic drought caused the Texas Farmers Union (TFU) to reiterate the need for a safety net to offset severe price fluctuations in farm products.

United States Dairy Association's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service reported that in September, farm prices took the largest one-month decline in 91 years. The 9.5 percent drop reflects downturns in prices for milk, soybeans, hogs, corn, broilers, cattle and lettuce.

"We need to be concerned when the markets are as low as they are today," said John Fouston, state executive director for the Farm Service Agency. "Farmers and ranchers feed us. All people need to be concerned when the agriculture industry is in trouble."

Wes Sims, TFU president, said the unprotected dives in the market hurt farmers, ranchers and the rural communities that

depend on them. Sims said that a safety net provision would protect farmers from low prices.

"This safety net is a vital part of the farm bill that must be completed this year," Sims said. "It is a critical time for this grassroots effort since the House Agricultural Committee has already sent an undesirable farm bill to Congress."

Sims said that the TFU hopes to convince members from the House and Senate to adopt a farm bill that provides a reasonable safety net for producers rather than continuing the failed "freedom to farm" policies.

The current farm bill was enacted in 1996 when total U.S. net farm income peaked at nearly \$55 billion, with only 13 percent, or \$7.3 billion coming from government payments.

By 1999, downward pressure on commodity prices resulted in the net farm income dropping to \$43.4 billion with nearly one half, or \$20.6 billion, of this amount coming from government programs and

emergency assistance.

The farm bill proposed by the National Farm Union (NFU) strengthens market prices and enables producers to gain more income from the market by increasing loan rate levels and establishing a limited farmer-owned reserve.

"We need a safety net that would guarantee a price on a product that would equal the costs of production."

— John Fouston
FSA state executive director

The NFU farm bill also addresses market concentration, the environment, energy resources and renewable fuels.

Sims said the NFU's legislative initiative provides a strong safety net based on a counter-

cyclical plan that equalizes commodity loan rates by adjusting them upward.

The bill establishes renewable fuels standards to create more demand for the nation's renewable commodities and aid the crisis.

Also, it provides incentives that adjust for the costs of production depressed commodity prices.

"Agriculture prices have been low for the past two years and the terrorist attacks had a big impact on the market," Fouston said.

Fouston said that if businesses, the prices are lower than they should be.

"We need a safety net that would guarantee a price on a product that would equal the costs of production," Fouston said.

Fouston said the safety net would not guarantee producers make a profit, but it would allow them to

Gore adds another job to his resume

WASHINGTON (AP) — Al Gore has accepted the job of vice chairman of a Los Angeles-based financial services holding company. The former vice president will help the firm find investments overseas as well as private-equity investments in biotechnology and information technology.

Gore will add the new job at Metropolitan West Financial to his other duties as college professor, guest speaker and writing a book with his wife Tipper about the American family.

That crowded resume does not address the biggest pending question about the former vice president and 2000 Democratic presidential nominee — his political future. "He hasn't made any decisions about

campaigns in his future and that's still true today," Gore spokeswoman Kiki McLean said Monday. Gore has formed a political action committee and has made trips to Iowa and New Hampshire to talk with old friends and political allies this fall.

Gore will not be moving to Los Angeles, but will travel between New York, Los Angeles, his teaching jobs in Tennessee and his home in the Virginia suburbs of Washington.

He will continue to serve as a research professor focusing on family-centered community building at the University of California-Los Angeles, and will continue to teach classes on the subject at Middle Tennessee State University and Fisk

University, both in his home state of Tennessee.

Neither company officials nor Gore would discuss what he would be paid in new job with the company.

Metwest is a fast-growing firm that is widely known outside the financial community, though it manages just over \$51 billion in assets through several affiliates. It is one of the biggest securities lenders in the country.

Metwest has clients such as California Public Employees Retirement System, Boeing Employees Federal Credit Union, Florida State Board of Administration and Microsoft. Several managers of the firm are former California state officials.

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HOUSTON (AP) Supreme Court intervene in effort university and th was College pces in educat The high court request from an appeal of that dissolved by the affiliation which lacks a law nation's renewable modities and aid the crisis. Also, it provides tives that adjust for the costs of production depressed commodity prices. "Agriculture prices have been low for the past two years and the terrorist attacks had a big impact on the market," Fouston said. Fouston said that if businesses, the prices are lower than they should be. "We need a safety net that would guarantee a price on a product that would equal the costs of production," Fouston said. Fouston said the safety net would not guarantee producers make a profit, but it would allow them to

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