



League of Women Voters of Minnesota Records

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Agriculture Study Committee Members

Janis Larson
LWV Fridley
3812 Lincoln St. NE
Columbia Heights, 55421
612/788-0728

Deanna Lederer
LWV St. Cloud Area
5811 Michael Ct.
St. Cloud, 56303
320/253-5704
e-mail: dlederer@cloudnet.com

Cheryl Lushine
LWV Edina
4600 Browndale Ave
Edina, 55424
612/925-4532

Connie Metcalf
LWV Fridley
860 W. Moore Lake Dr.
Fridley, 55432
612/571-3596
e-mail: cjmet@netO.net

Beverly Montgomery
LWV MEPH
18321 Ridgewood Rd
Minnetonka, 55345
612/470-1098
e-mail: wmontgomery@ieee.org

Helen Palmer
LWV Minneapolis
2405 Sheridan Ave S
Minneapolis, 55405
612/377-5972
e-mail: thepalmers@uswest.net

Linda Peck
LWV St. Cloud Area
12299 Sauk River Rd
St. Cloud, 56301
320/685-3365

Mary Phillips
LWV Owatonna
610 Carl Anna Pl.
Owatonna, MN 55060
507/455-2622

Jeanne & Gordon Prickett
LWV MNMAL
Hc5 Box16cc
Aitkin, 56431
218/927-2267
e-mail: gordnett@emily.net

Catherine Severin
LWV Duluth
720 Arnold Ave N
Thief River Falls, 56701
218/683-7201
e-mail: mahces@means.net

Grace Skaar
LWV Freeborn County
Rt. 3 Box 95
Hayward, 56043
507/373-5080

Peg Sundell
LWV New Ulm
311 N German St.
New Ulm, 56073
507/354-1261

Harold Swanson
210 E Florence
Glenwood, IA 51534
712/527-9895

Barbara Vaile
LWV Northfield
4151 320 St. W
Northfield, MN 55057
507/645-7315

Charmaine L. Wright
11513 Karow Tr.
Nerstrand, MN 55053
507/645-8853

Agriculture Study Committee Members

Gertrude Ulrich, Chair
LWV Richfield
7601 Aldrich
Richfield, MN 55423
612/866-8171

Jane Bennett, Vice Chair
LWV St. Cloud
4146 Pine Point Rd.
Sartell, MN 56377
320/252-8779
egarver@csbsju.edu

Eunice Biel
RR 1 Box 113
Harmony, MN 55939
507/937-3333

Adeline Blowers
LWV Austin
1905 SW 5th Ave.
Austin, 55912-1511
507/437-3547

Georgianna Campbell
LWV Northfield
10834 Farrel Ave.
Northfield, 55057-4463
507/645-7488

Suzannah Ciernia
LWV Northfield
905 Highland
Northfield, 55057
507/663-7876
e-mail: bciernia@lifeskillsed.com

Margaret Egli
LWV ROMAFH
705 Heinel Circle
Roseville, 55113
612/486-0177

Carolyn Garvin
LWV St. Cloud Area
624 Riverside Dr. NE
St. Cloud, 56304
320/252-7737

Nancy Gundersen
LWV St. Cloud Area
806 S 6th St.
St. Cloud, 56301
320/252-9651

Stephanie Henriksen
LWV Northfield
1866 130th St. E
Dundas, 55019
507/645-7086
e-mail: dkamis@informns.k12.mn.us

Kathy Iverson
LWV Edina
5410 York Ave S
Edina, 55410
612/929-2694

Yleen Joselyn
LWV Crystal/New Hope/E Ply
4068 Hampshire Ave N
Crystal, 55427-1498
612/533-9659
e-mail: 72162.236@compuserve.com

Laurie Jung
LWV Edina
5611 Concord Ave
Edina, 55424
612/922-2120
e-mail: LPJung@aol.com

Karen Langsjoen
LWV St. Cloud Area
911 N 36th Ave
St. Cloud, 56303
320/253-0801
e-mail: karenl@cloudnet.com

Brian

Proposed New Study on
Agricultural policies and their impact on sustainability

The League of Women Voters of the St Cloud Area recommends a new study as follows:

~~Study the impact of agricultural policies, regulations and practices on the sustainability of agriculture, rural communities and small farms. How do these policies also affect the diversity of products on farms, the diversity of food, and ultimately, the continuing availability and affordability of food?~~

(Rest of wording was deleted.)

Scope: The study would examine:

1. state government policies, practices, regulations, subsidies and research dollars involving agriculture.

2. the following topics of concern:

- social concerns such as:
 - the sustainability of communities
 - the accountability of farms to the communities they affect
 - stresses placed on communities as the size of farm operations increases
 - impacts on agricultural workers
 - changing demographics.
- health concerns such as:
 - the effects of pesticides, herbicides, hormones, antibiotics and other additives on human health, especially children's health
 - the transmission of disease from various animal waste products and through the ingestion of contaminated food and water
 - how the increased confinement and density of domestic livestock impacts not only animal health but also human health.
- natural resource concerns such as impacts on air, soil, and water quality from:
 - spraying chemicals
 - manure handling practices
 - location of concentrated livestock operations of various sizes.
- economic concerns such as the economic impacts of changes in agriculture
 - on the state of Minnesota as a whole
 - on family farmers and rural communities.

over ➤

Page 2, proposed new study on

Agricultural policies and their impact on sustainability

RATIONALE: The impacts of changing agricultural practices are in the public view with attention from the press and other media. Controversy exists over whether larger farm operations hurt or help farm businesses, nearby communities, and the Minnesota economy. Impacts on the environment and health, and availability and affordability of the food supply concern everyone. A study involving these and related issues would educate League members and the public. With a state position on agriculture, League members would be prepared to lobby on agricultural policy issues.

Comments and suggestions from other Local Leagues:

Your suggestion for a League study seems very timely and important to me.

Owatonna

The Richfield League is deeply concerned about the farm crisis, as all of us should be. However, the problem is so big, one hardly knows how to respond. The Richfield League is also aware of the fact that if the League is to be truly a state wide organization, we must address issues of concern to Leagues outside the metro area.

Richfield

Your suggestion and scope for agriculture are valid - but far too broad for our interest.

Arden Hills/Shoreview

We are in favor as we are still dependent upon our rural economy. Winona Unit

Looks good - certainly a vital subject, especially in Minnesota where agriculture is such a huge part of our resources.

Crystal, New Hope, East Plymouth

We discussed this today at our board meeting in Brainerd and all support it.

Our group feels that MN extension has been doing a lot of education on this issue - and that it is more an "education" issue rather than political so think extension is a better route than LWV....

Jackson Area LWV

Thank you for your fine work....

CMAL

Prepared by League of Women Voters of the St Cloud Area
April 1999

April 25, 2001

To: Carol Frisch, Sally Sawyer
From: Judy Duffy

Re-cap of Agriculture Committee Process and Recommendations

Following the meeting, Helen Palmer and a few members of the Ag Committee will reassemble and devise a media communication plan to announce the new LWVMN position.

That will occur after the LWVMN Convention and they will work with Andrea on the actual production of materials. They will need to provide the expertise on the project and produce the copy for Andrea to edit and distribute.

There were some lessons learned by everyone associated with this study:

1. A study should have co-chairs, as there is a good deal of responsibility with this position. Someone who can easily communicate with the office is essential and someone who will sit on the LWVMN Board in order to report on the progress of the study is also essential.
2. A study should have some likely prospects for funding.
3. The focus of study must be narrow and well defined.

My personal opinion is that Sally kept this study alive when I felt it should have been allowed to die a natural death. The committee was really an advocacy group and study/advocacy lines were continuously blurred. The committee could probably have been very effective in reviewing current League positions on agriculture and the environment that could allow more action --which was really what the committee was interested in. An update for members could have been produced much more efficiently.

For any future study, I recommend:

1. We find two co-chairs who can work together with divided responsibilities
2. The study budget reflect a committee of no more than 12 members + the chairs who are recruited by application and invitation (request some background information on potential committee members to determine interests and expertise.
3. Deadlines be set and met for:
 - a) funding
 - b) production of study materialA mid-year review of study progress and fundability occur with options defined on how to proceed.

There are probably a few more ideas that could be generated on this topic, but I feel these are essential for the future success and credibility of a League study.

4/23/01 Agr Study +

6/2
376972

Suppose
fielding

more publicity for position -
Kate Perry - SPP
Stuck

Other sug's:

Land Stewardship

Rural Communities

Develop a Communications plan

Consensus Questions

4/25/01 - Conversation w/ Helen Palmer:

a few members of Committee will work w/
Andrea on a media plan (to take place
after Convention)

Lessons learned abt Study process:

Co-Chairs

fundability

focus of topic must be narrow
and well-defined.

I also emphasized how SS had kept
Study alive when it should have
died a natural death (in my opinion)

The Study Committee was really an
advocacy group and Study/advocacy
lines were continuously blurred.

I recommend next Study: 1) have Co-Chairs

(mutually agreeable)

- 2) The study budget reflect a Committee of no more than 12 + Chairs)
 - Membership on Committee by application / invitation
 - 3) Deadlines met for:
 - a) funding
 - b) production of study materials
- A mid-year review of study progress and fundability

Forum tackles changing face of agriculture

By Joy Powell
Star Tribune Staff Writer

*Speakers urge more public debate
on industry that affects everyone*

Public debate is needed to

methods will be hurt by a Minnesota Agriculture Department proposal to cut funding to those programs by \$370,000 in the next



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OF WOMEN VOTERS**
MINNESOTA EDUCATION FUND

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (651) 224-5445 FAX (651) 290-2145

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November 2, 2000

To: Local League Agriculture Study Committees

From: Judy Duffy and Gertrude Ulrich, Agriculture Study Committee Chair

Enclosed is the Agriculture Study publication. We know the delay has caused you concern for the completion of your work. We apologize for the delay; however, we believe this has allowed us to prepare a more useful resource for you.

The Committee has been hard at work finalizing this document. The consensus questions are yet in draft form and will need final approval from the LWVMN Board. We are trying to call a special meeting of the board for next week and will forward the questions to you at that time.

For now, here is the publication for you to begin. If you have any questions, please give us a call. We will get the consensus questions to you ASAP. Thank you for your patience!

DRAFT CONSENSUS QUESTIONS ON AGRICULTURE**

1. Do you agree with the goals of state agricultural policy as stated in the Minnesota Corporate Farm Law preamble, as follows: "to establish the family farm as the most socially desirable mode of agricultural production, contributing to the stability of rural communities?" [pp. 10, 13]

___agree ___disagree ___no consensus

2. Should the state of Minnesota provide the following (check if yes):

- a___ support for all sizes of farms with emphasis on sustainability [p. 4]
- b___ research directed to moderate-sized farm operations [pp. 4, 10, 12]
- c___ support for beginning farmers [p. 2]
- d___ support of innovative practices and crops for moderate-sized farms [p. 4]
- e___ crisis supports based on need [p. 11]

3. Industrialized agriculture and consolidation of the industry are on the rise. Check whether the state should or should not

		<u>should</u>	<u>should not</u>	<u>no</u>
		<u>consensus</u>		
a	favor agribusiness through governmental policy [p. 9, 12]	___	___	___
b	ensure access to markets for all producers [p. 9, 12]	___	___	___
c	more actively enforce antitrust legislation	___	___	___
d	more actively enforce Minnesota Corporate Farm Law [p. 13]	___	___	___
e	repeal legislation allowing limited liability corporations [p. 13]	___	___	___
f	monitor contracts [p. 14]	___	___	___[pp. 4, 14]

4. Should Minnesota's agricultural policy include the following (check if yes):

- a ___ incentives for sustainable farming practices [p. 4]
- b ___ incentives for green spaces, contributions to clean water and air and healthy soil; conservation of wildlife [p. 6]
- c ___ support for the preservation of agricultural land
- d ___ shared liability for environmental damage (caused by agriculture) between

- farmers and businesses under contract [pp. 7, 13]
- e ☐ stricter standards for animal confinement operations [pp. 3,6,14]
- f ☐ promotion of exports [pp. 2,9,10,12]
- g ☐ certified labeling of organic foods [p. 12]
- h ☐ labeling of genetically modified foods [p. 15]
- i ☐ support for value-added and niche products [p. 12]
- j ☐ promotion of cooperatives [p. 9]

5. Should the state of Minnesota support the following for rural communities (check if yes): [pp. 5-6]

- ☐ infrastructure
- ☐ education (including educational development to meet needs)
- ☐ liveable wages for workers
- ☐ crisis help
- ☐ development of leadership skills
- ☐ community and regional planning
- ☐ networking with farmers and community leaders
- ☐ research into viable and sustainable rural communities

6. What priorities should guide state agricultural research policy? On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate highest priority with 5 and lowest priority with 1.

- ☐ Promotion of and research into GMO technologies [pp. 8,14]
- ☐ Promotion of and research into methods which will benefit environmentally sound, family-sized farms [pp. 6,14]
- ☐ Evaluation of the impacts of widespread use of GMO technologies [pp. 8,14]

7. In Minnesota animal agriculture, what values should receive priority? On a scale of 1 - 5, indicate highest value with 5 and lowest value with 1. Values may be equally weighted and need not be prioritized.

- ☐ maximum production [pp. 3,14]
- ☐ animal wellbeing [pp. 3, 14]
- ☐ environmental and eco-system health [pp. 3,14]
- ☐ worker and community health and safety [pp. 3,14]

****Questions mulled over and put together by Deanna Lederer , Jo Anne Rohricht, Nancy Gundersen, Stephanie Henriksen, Barbara Vaile, and myself. I and did some editing for clarification.--Helen Palmer**

MINNESOTA FARMING 2000

A Report of the Agriculture Study Committee of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota

INTRODUCTION: CHANGES IN FARMING

It is a truism to say that farming is changing. Farming has been changing for decades. But it is the accelerating pace and the profound nature of the current changes which have caught the attention of the public.

One indicator of change: The percentage of families earning their living from the soil has dropped steadily since the mid-1930s (LWVUS 8). In Minnesota from 1980 to 1995 the number of farms decreased by 20%, with about 5% of state citizens living on farms in the early 1990s (Minnesota, Corporate Farm Task Force 24; von Sternberg A30). "Currently, Minnesota is losing approximately four farms a day. These are mostly small, family-run farms" (MPCA, *Feedlot*).

This decline in small and medium sized farms has been caused by many factors: droughts, large farm loans, poor harvests, over-abundant harvests, low commodity prices, U.S. grain embargoes, restricted opportunities to market crops, increased production in foreign countries, young people unwilling or unable to enter the business, policies and laws that benefit big producers more than small producers, economic advantages of scale.

Nevertheless, economically, agriculture is still very important to Minnesota. The state is seventh in the nation in income, \$8.2 billion, derived from agriculture (Minnesota, Dept. of Agriculture. *Producers' Guide* 3). One-third of rural jobs are directly affected by agriculture, while 22% of all state jobs are in some way involved with it (Minnesota, Dept. of Agriculture. *Agricultural Profile* 1). The present study represents an effort to understand the impact of agricultural policies, regulations and practices on the long term health of agriculture and rural communities.

BACKGROUND

What is a farm?

Family farm. Commercial farm. Small Farm. Corporate farm. Hobby farm. Minnesota farms vary greatly, as does the terminology applied to them.

A land holding is considered a "farm" in Minnesota if it has a gross agricultural income, including government payments, of at least \$1,000 (Minnesota, Dept. of Agriculture. *Agricultural Profile* 1). The federal government has for statistical purposes divided farms into three groups: 1) large operations, grossing \$250,000 or more per year, 2) medium-sized farms, grossing from \$100,000 to \$249,999 per year, and 3) hobby farms or small commercial farms, grossing \$100,000 or less in farm income (U.S., USDA 29).

The National Commission on Small Farms, in the USDA report *A Time to Act*, categorized all farms with gross receipts under \$250,000 per year as "small farms." Under that definition small farms comprise 94% of all farms in the U.S., represent 75% of total productive agricultural assets (mostly in land), and account for 41% of total agricultural earnings (U.S., USDA 28).

The "average" Minnesota farm in 1998 contained 361 acres and grossed \$119,420, with a \$15,754 net return ("Rural" 4A). This portrait is derived from a large number of very small farms with gross incomes from agriculture of \$50,000 or less, a significant number of farms with gross incomes up to \$250,000 per year, and a small number of farms with gross incomes of \$250,000 or more a year. At present there are 81,000 farms in Minnesota, covering, in 1998, 59% of Minnesota's total land.

In the United States as a whole approximately 6% of farms earn almost 60% of agricultural income (U.S., USDA 28). In Minnesota around one fourth of the largest farms are at present responsible for 80% of the state's agricultural output (Runge).

Who is farming?

As of 1992, 90% of Minnesota farms were held in individual or family sole proprietorships, a very high level of independent ownership (Minnesota, Corporate Farm Task Force 22).

In addition, there are family farm corporations, along with authorized farm corporations and partnerships. Some farmers are forming cooperatives--not for grain elevators or electric power as in previous times, but for making ethanol out of corn, processing soybeans into products, canning local vegetables, or raising hogs.

Hobby farms may be operated by a transplanted urban family living on a farm and growing a garden, caring for horses and chickens, maybe working a small field or two. Other small farms may be operated by farmers who live entirely on the income of their farms. Some of these constitute a segment of the rural poor. They may be old or be young parents (or a single parent). Perhaps they live on a reservation and have substandard land. Almost certainly they do not have a cushion of capital.

Some farmers also work off the farm, sometimes driving many miles back and forth to work because their immediate rural area has few off-farm jobs. Somewhere between 40 to 60% of family income for these farms comes from off-farm employment.

As existing farmers grow older and retire, fewer farms are being passed along to the next generation. (The average age of commercial farmers in Minnesota was 50 in 1998 (Minnesota, Dept. of Agriculture 3)). Some young people, of course, want non-farm careers, but it may be difficult for even young people interested in farming to inherit family operations, despite years of "sweat equity," because of high taxes, high prices for land, or their parents' lack of financial security for retirement.

Making a living

Historically, the average farmer's income has been below that of the average city dweller (LWVUS 11). According to a recent study by the Center for Rural Affairs, for the years 1988-95, in the six Midwest states studied (which included Minnesota), one out of three households in rural counties made less than \$15,000 a year. In the same region's cities one of five households had equally low incomes ("Rural Areas"1A). It is not unusual for a farmer to gross \$200,000 in farm income, but to be left with \$15,000 to \$18,000 for the family to live on for the year (Hanners 6A).

There is a saying about farmers: They are the only businesspeople who buy retail and sell wholesale. This may apply to other businesses as well, but it is true that farmers need to purchase many things to conduct business--seeds, fertilizer, machinery, agrochemicals, animal feeds, antibiotics--and these items are expensive. They need to borrow to buy machinery or to put in a crop, and they need to finance buildings for their livestock and their grain storage. Yet when it comes time to sell what they produce, they may have to sell it cheaply. For example, in late 1988, it cost on average \$100 to raise a 250-pound pig--a pig that sold for \$20. A bumper crop of corn can cause the selling price to fall below production costs.

Farming is a risky business, and always has been. There is always the weather to frustrate farmers. If it is too wet, they can't get into the fields to plant, or they get the crop planted, but then it rots in the ground. If it is too cold, the seeds do not germinate, or after they germinate the plants are killed by frost. If the weather is too dry, the crop does not grow, or it grows poorly, and there is not enough hay for the animals. Hail may come and destroy farmers' crops. Disease may hit, such as the wheat scab of the Red River Valley in recent years. Even floods are a possibility.

These days, too, farmers are competing in a global market, and one in which, for the past few years, there has been a combination of excess supply that pushed commodity prices down, and Asian and Russian financial crises that reduced the market for both grain and meat (Zielenziger 5). In the global marketplace some countries can produce

goods at a lower price than the United States in part because they impose fewer environmental restrictions. Others, like the European Union countries, place restrictions on imports. Wage disparities from country to country are wide, and are affected by currency exchange rates, differences in labor laws, and local cost of living.

Getting bigger

To raise anything at all, of course, farmers need land, long the largest capital expense in agriculture. There have been pressures to get bigger, to own more land, since at least the end of World War II. At that time, when manufacturers no longer needed to produce war machines in great numbers, they turned to peacetime uses for their industrial capacity, including production of large, specialized farm equipment. This equipment became available at the same time as pesticides and herbicides that made it easier to control insects and weeds, and chemical fertilizers that increased yields. Fossil fuel was also cheap, so it could be used to make these chemical products as well as to power farm vehicles.

Farms were thus able to grow larger, amortize the cost of machinery over a larger crop, and still be worked by the same number of people, or even fewer. In some ways this became a cycle: more land required more machinery, and more machinery needed more land to justify its expense.

This push to get bigger continues today, driven in part by the global economy. As some farmers have taken on more and more land and turned increasingly to mechanization and technology to help them handle the work, they have borrowed money to expand. What happened in the early 1980s provides an example of the risks in so doing. From 1975 to 1982, as farmers attempted to modernize their equipment and add land to their holdings, total U.S. farm real-estate debt doubled. Banks encouraged borrowing, and the price of land shot up. By the early 1980's interest payments on debt exceeded net farm income (Ritchie and Ristau 7).

On Oct. 6, 1979, the Federal Reserve raised the cost of borrowing money, attempting to control inflation. This had immense consequences. From 1981-1986, the value of U.S. farmland fell more than 40% in the Midwest and Plains states. In addition, land, which was being used as collateral on the farm loans, was suddenly not worth what it had been a short time before, and farmers found themselves vastly overextended in the eyes of their lending institutions. Despite government bailouts and loan forgiveness, numerous farms failed, as did many small town banks.

Renting land enables some farmers to gain the benefits of size without the burden of debt. Frequently, however, competition for land produces high rents, which can be fixed at the beginning of the season--long before anyone knows what the crops will be like or what price crops will bring. As a recent farm study in southwest Minnesota revealed, rural landlords can make more money than can the farmers to whom they rent (Levins, *Swift* 5).

Coping strategies

Many farmers have taken steps to improve their operations. They have studied agriculture at technical colleges and universities, read farm publications, talked with extension agents, made farm financial plans, purchased a computer, put their records on it, and hooked up to the internet to get the most recent farm information. Perhaps they have an accountant and a lawyer. In many cases both husband and wife are deeply involved in the business of the farm.

Factory farming

Some farmers have turned to economies of scale. Beginning in 1970, when Congress, at the urging of agribusiness and pharmaceutical companies, passed legislation excluding farm animals from the Animal Welfare Act, farmers began raising large numbers of chickens or hogs in a small space. These large animal-confinement operations, or factory farms, put as many as 12,000 pigs or 100,000 egg-laying hens together in a single building under controlled conditions (Adcock 1-5).

Industrialized animal agriculture began with chickens and spread to cattle, which no longer went from pasture to slaughter, but were shipped to distant feedlots where they were fenced together by the tens of thousands, feeding intensively in preparation for slaughter. In Minnesota the decade of the 90's saw rapid growth in large animal feedlots, particularly swine facilities. From 1964 to 1997, the number of swine in Minnesota increased from 3.4

million to 5.5 million, while the number of farms decreased from 55,000 to 10,800 (Minnesota. Office of the Legislative Auditor).

Such practices have yielded a uniform product at low costs for the consumer while maximizing efficiency, productivity and profits for corporate agriculture. The intense confinement of animals, however, is considered by its critics to be both cruel and unhealthy for the animals. Moreover, human health may also be endangered by factory farming practices: Industrial-style farms increase the risk of water pollution, and may yield noxious if not toxic air in their vicinity.

Sustainable farming

Some farmers have turned in another direction. They have attempted to earn at least a partial living with sustainable agricultural techniques--techniques that do not require massive amounts of fertilizer, insecticides, and herbicides, techniques that can result in up to 35 times less soil erosion and contamination runoff from pasture land. Such practices also reduce the use of petroleum and single-purpose machinery.

Sustainable farms generally are diverse operations, with a variety of crops and animals. In a sense, sustainable farmers have gone back to the best of agricultural practices from the first half of the 20th century and continued to add to that knowledge with new techniques, growing perennial forages and grasses, diversifying and rotating crops.

They are raising free-range chickens, small numbers of hogs (perhaps 50) living outdoors, and moderate numbers of dairy cows (maybe 50-60) that are allowed out to pasture when the milking is done. Hoop housing (a special method of housing hogs that involves outdoor shelters and plenty of straw), controlled pasture grazing, and other such "natural" methods are used by these farmers.

It has been established that sustainable operations can be efficient and productive. In recent years, the problem has been finding a profitable market for these operations, because they tend to be small, whereas traditional buyers generally want to buy from large producers. However, there are niches for sustainable farmers, such as organic products, and animals raised for antibiotic- and hormone-free meat. As consumer demand for these products has increased, for some farmers sustainable methods have proved profitable.

Contract farming

Yet another means of coping with the changing nature of farming has been for farmers to enter into contracts with large companies, contracts in which the farmers agree to grow the companies' chickens or hogs, or to sell fruits, vegetables, and grains to them. It is estimated that nationally about 90% of the chicken industry is under contract, 65-70% of the hogs, about 40% of the fruits and vegetables, and approximately 10% of the grains ("Contracts" 11). Dairy cow operations are not under contract yet, but Gene Hugoson, Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture, believes a lock-in price will also become common for them in the future (Nistler 18).

The majority of the contracts, called marketing contracts, specify simply that farmers deliver a certain quantity and quality of produce to the buyer on a certain date for a specified price or specified price range, depending on quality. If farmers lock in a price that assures a fair profit and an amount that they can deliver, such contracts can be helpful, giving farmers some assurance of the price they will receive for what they produce. Also having a contract may help farmers borrow money from the bank to produce their crops.

If, however, they have a poor harvest and cannot deliver as much as they have contracted for, they may have to purchase whatever is contracted for from others to satisfy the agreement, perhaps at a significantly higher price than they are going to be paid.

Under another legal agreement, the production contract, farmers raise animals or fowl for a big company. The farmers finance and construct new buildings to the company's specifications, raise livestock by the company's methods, feed and vaccinate by the company's plan (perhaps using the company's feed and medications). Then at a specified time, the chickens, turkeys or hogs are delivered to the buyer for the price in the contract. Sometimes producers are paid a bonus if the quality is particularly high. The buyer does all weighing and grading.

Dick Gladly, chief economist and vice president of public affairs for ConAgra, a large agribusiness based in Omaha, Nebraska, cites the potential advantages of contracts for his company. With production contracts, his company can control the type of animals they are getting, making for a uniform product (lean breeds of hogs, for example), and they know that on any given day they will have enough supply to keep their large packing plants going. They also know how much they will have to pay the farmers and can more easily make the financial calculations necessary to running a successful business (Nixon 12).

For the farmer, a production contract means--for the duration of that contract--an assured buyer and price for the livestock he raises. But it also means dependence on continuing contracts to help pay off loans for building the necessary chicken or hog barns and the risk that the company will withdraw from an area whenever it is a good business decision to do so. In 1997, for example, the Campbell Soup Company closed its chicken processing plant in Worthington, leaving 36 area contractors with half-paid-for barns and no chickens to raise (De Vore 10). A final disadvantage is that under most production contracts the farmers have no rights to question the companies' assessment of quality. There is no governmental oversight.

Rural communities

Both Minnesota policy and public opinion value rural communities and their way of life. The emphasis on preserving family farms is partly historical, stemming from the belief that a nation of small landowners is a healthy society, where families can feed themselves, sell some of their produce to others, and live a good life. The early colonists came from Europe, where large landowners controlled the means of production, and where nearly everyone else was a serf, artisan, small shopkeeper, or household help. Early political leaders saw this idea of wide land ownership as a means of promoting democracy.

Yet many rural communities are going through very hard times. For one thing, out-migration is increasing, an effect evident in the 1980s, when non-metropolitan counties lost an average of 11% of their population; among 18-34 year-olds, the loss was 17% (Amato 39-40). Businesses have been abandoned or moved elsewhere; schools have closed or consolidated. Though some counties showed a little growth in the 90s, the projections are for continued decline in counties outside the Twin Cities suburban area (Minnesota, Minnesota Planning). It will take some major changes for many rural communities to become good places to live again.

One group less likely to leave the small town is the retirement-age population. Although some older people choose to move to warmer climates or more urban locales, many do not. From 1980 to 1990, this population grew 18 percent in rural areas and only 15 percent in metro areas. It is projected that this group will continue to grow faster in the rural areas than in the metropolitan areas, with a concomitant need for services such as transportation, health care, senior housing, social services, and long-term care. Yet the tax base to provide them is decreasing (Minnesota, Minnesota Planning).

Most rural counties' gross income used to come largely from agricultural sources; today, however, agriculture provides only a small percentage of county income. A study in Swift County provides one example: In 1975 farmers and farm employees earned 30 percent of the total personal income for the county. In 1995 it was 1.63% (Levins, "Swift" 3). The picture is similar for many counties. Even in good years much of the money farmers receive leaves the county to pay seed companies, landlords, equipment dealers, and chemical companies beyond the borders of the county. As farms become larger, this trend is exacerbated. In 1991 University of Minnesota economists John Chism and Richard Levins found that the percentage of money spent within a twenty-mile radius of the farm declined dramatically with an increase in the size of the operation (Chism 2-3).

Additionally, as large corporations take over the food industry, farmers and middlemen see the disappearance of agricultural institutions: livestock auction barns shut down, local grain elevators closed, local slaughter plants empty. Creameries leave, while small vegetable factories shut their doors. Much of the local market that farmers once depended on vanishes, leaving only a few customers for the farmers' products.

Economist John Ikerd says that "on balance, industrialized livestock operations destroy more jobs than they create. Different studies report estimates of from 1 1/2 to 3 jobs lost for every job created" (Ikerd 4). New industries wishing to come into the rural area--industries like large industrialized farms, food-processing plants, or slaughter houses--are, unfortunately, likely to offer jobs at low wages under poor working conditions. These businesses,

desiring numerous low-paid workers, may recruit immigrant workers, who now constitute 10 to 20 percent of the population in some counties. Over 20 languages, for example, are spoken in Pelican Rapids, a community of 1,800 (League of Women Voters of Minnesota 41).

The influx of these immigrant groups into low-paying jobs, combined with the increasing proportion of older citizens, increases the need for educational and social services at the same time as fewer businesses and residents are left to pay for them. In addition, the communities must continue to provide clean water, good roads, and proper garbage and sewage disposal.

The Internet may also have the ability to drain dollars away from local business. Almost anything can be purchased there, even farm products such as animal feed, fertilizers, chemicals, and seeds. On the other hand, technology could be an answer to the problems of rural communities. People could live in country areas and, through the Internet, do their business, take their college courses, and communicate with others. The rural villages could become as global as the largest urban center.

Agriculture and the environment

Agriculture can provide benefits to the environment such as enhanced soil and water quality, green corridors for rivers, habitat for wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. But while many farmers are good environmental stewards, others employ practices which cause, for example, contamination of water and erosion of the soil; in the past many filled in wetlands, a practice which we now understand can have harmful consequences for the entire environment.

The rapid increase in industrial agriculture in Minnesota has focused attention on the relation between farming and the environment, particularly agriculture's effect on water and air. In 1998, as a result, the Minnesota legislature created a task force to prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture (final report expected in 2001). A background report on water prepared for this task force provides this assessment:

In Minnesota, about 60% of the surveyed or monitored rivers and streams, and 17% of the surveyed or monitored lakes were classified as being impaired. Agriculture was identified as the cause of 90% of the impaired river miles, and 64% of the impaired lake areas. It is unknown to what degree various types of agricultural activities . . . caused the impairment. In the Minnesota River basin, it is estimated that from 50-100% of the assessed tributary river miles . . . do not adequately support aquatic life. . . . (University G/5)

The environmental effects of Minnesota agriculture go well beyond our state's borders. Nutrients from farm runoff--from the monoculture farming of corn and soybeans and from animal waste--are linked to the formation of an approximately 7,000 square mile "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, an area of low oxygen where aquatic organisms cannot survive. According to the U.S. Geological survey, 1.7 million tons of nitrogen are flushed down the Mississippi into the Gulf each year, 6-8% coming from Minnesota (Meersman 18).

The increase in factory farms has enormous implications for both water and air quality because it means large concentrations of manure. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota's estimated 45,000 feedlots produce animal wastes that exceed the amount of human waste produced by a population of over 40 million people (MPCA, *General*).

Manure is a valuable resource when applied to the land appropriately. But it can become an environmental poison when it is not carefully controlled. Because manure from large feedlot operations is typically held in lagoons (basins), which can stretch the length of one or more football fields, the surrounding environment is at risk. Lagoons may leach, rupture, overflow. A worker may fail to close a valve properly. Or the lagoon itself may be poorly constructed. There may be illegal dumping of manure. Finally, there are natural occurrences, such as floods or underground sinkholes. A recent study by Iowa State University found that more than one-third of the lagoons studied leaked beyond the amount allowed by state standards (Clean Water Network 12).

It is common management practice to remove liquid manure from a lagoon and spray it onto fields as fertilizer. However, according to a report prepared by the University of Minnesota, "if manure is over-applied, applied at the

wrong time in the growth cycle, applied unevenly, allowed to experience losses in storage, handling, and application, then it can degrade water and/or air quality" (University J/6). Putting manure on the land where it cannot be absorbed causes runoff, which creates an extensive and unregulated source of water pollution.

The percentage of contaminated wells in Minnesota affected by animal agriculture is unknown, although it is known that roughly 7% of drinking water wells in Minnesota exceed the Maximum Contaminant Level set by the EPA for nitrates in drinking water (University G/ 7). Minnesota Pollution Control reports that feedlot runoff contains roughly ten times as much phosphorus as untreated domestic waste, and that only one pound of phosphorus produces over 500 pounds of weeds and algae in a lake, which depletes the water of oxygen and suffocates fish and other aquatic life. Manure poses additional problems, as it also carries bacteria, viruses, heavy metals, and other harmful pollutants.

In Minnesota, animal waste remains one of the most prevalent causes of fish kills. In June 1997, 100,000 gallons of raw manure from a hog operation in Renville County spilled into a nearby creek, killing nearly 605,000 fish (Minnesota. Dept. of Natural Resources). (The farmer whose facilities and/or procedures failed was punished by jail and a fine. The company for which he was growing the hogs, one of the nation's largest pork producers, was deemed to have no legal responsibility for the accident (De Vore 9)). Manure or feedlot pollution was responsible for ten of the 12 agriculture-related fish kills from 1995 through 1998, and led to more fish kills than either industrial or municipal pollution (Minnesota. Dept. of Natural Resources).

Agriculture's effect on air quality depends to a great extent on the area and concentration of manure. The noxious odor from large concentrations of manure is well described in the following account of a corporate hog operation in Oklahoma:

It's the ever present stench--the overpowering smell from Seaboard's 40,000 hogs closely confined in 44 metal buildings, where exhaust fans continuously pump out tons of pungent ammonia, mixed with tons of grain dust and fecal matter, scented with the noxious odor of hydrogen sulfide... (Barlett, 58).

Air emissions from feedlots also can be dangerous to health--of the animals, workers, and rural neighbors. Recently the Minnesota Department of Health linked the results of air monitoring for hydrogen sulfide at a Minnesota farm to physiological symptoms, and concluded that the monitored levels were high enough to pose a potential threat to human health (Minnesota, Dept. of Health). Twenty to 30 percent of workers in large-scale swine facilities are known to have respiratory problems (Thu 12). Exposure to high ammonia concentrations can be fatal to humans. In 1997 a link was established between waste from poultry farms in Maryland and Virginia and outbreaks of *Pfiesteria piscicida*, a toxic microbe that kills fish and causes skin irritation, short-term memory loss, and other cognitive problems for humans exposed to it. In 1993 a pathogen, *cryptosporidium*, in Milwaukee's water made 400,000 people sick and led to the deaths of more than 100 people. The suspected source: dairy manure (Duskin 14). (See also *Danger on Tap*, and Satchell, "The Cell from Hell.")

Airborne contaminants from animal agriculture, including gases, odor, dust, microbes, and insects, may be produced or emitted inside and near animal production facilities and can also drift when waste products are applied on the land. The environmental and health effects of these airborne contaminants are only beginning to be investigated. Long-term impacts on ecological systems and people are not known (University H/1).

Agriculture and food

Pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones, and food-borne pathogens

We spend about 11% of our income for food at present, an amount significantly lower than in any other part of the industrialized world. Japan spends approximately 18%, Australia, 14.6%, and France about 15% (Minnesota Farm Bureau 1). But along with this productive efficiency come some potential risks to human health. These stem from pesticides getting into food and water, from the use of antibiotics in livestock, from administration of growth hormones to livestock, from the risk of food-borne pathogens, and perhaps from genetically modified organisms.

Ten years ago, the League of Women Voters of the United States published a Citizens Guide entitled *America's Growing Dilemma: Pesticides in Food and Water*. That study pointed out the fragmented authority of federal regulatory agencies, and questioned the effectiveness of their processes for setting tolerances, assessing risks, and enforcing regulations. To a great extent these concerns remain.

Approximately 40% of all antibiotics used in the U.S. are used in livestock. Most are used in sub-therapeutic doses to promote rapid growth. The remainder are used to prevent or treat diseases, which can spread rapidly among crowded and stressed animals.

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences began to question this practice in 1989. Evidence has mounted throughout the nineties that the routine use of antibiotics in livestock may diminish the drugs' power to cure infections in people, as resistant bacteria are passed on from the meat of animals to people who eat it. Health authorities, including the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Academy of Sciences have called for banning sub-therapeutic uses of certain antibiotics with animals, as European countries have already done. The U. S. Food and Drug Administration has now begun a major revision of its guidelines regarding the use in this country of antibiotics for animals.

A further safety concern in industrialized animal agriculture is the administering of growth hormones, because long-term exposure to high residues of natural and synthetic hormones in meat products may pose risk of breast and reproductive cancers in humans (Gabler 38). Finally, food-borne pathogens transmitted from animals to humans--salmonella in poultry, eggs and meat; *campylobacter* in chicken; *E.coli* in hamburger; and *listeria* in meat and dairy products--all can result from the cramped confinement and feed contamination associated with factory farming.

Genetically modified organisms

The use in agriculture of genetically engineered, or genetically modified (GM), organisms has stirred much debate. In genetic engineering, small fragments of genetic material are transferred from one (usually unrelated) organism to another for the purpose of adding a new trait to the recipient organism. The resulting organism is called "transgenic."

All crops are in fact genetically different from their wild predecessors, through long periods of natural selection, domestication, and controlled breeding (Transgenic). Genetic engineering differs, however, from conventional plant breeding (hybridization and crop selection) in several ways: 1) there is genetic exchange between organisms that would not occur in nature; 2) the genetic engineering process introduces other foreign material (bacteria and viruses necessary to ensure successful transfer); 3) genetically engineered plants can be developed more rapidly and with more precision than in traditional breeding programs.

GM crops were first grown commercially in the mid-1990s. By 1999, almost 100 million acres world wide had been planted, the largest acreages being in the U.S., Argentina and Canada. In the United States in 1998 65% of cotton, 57% of soybeans, and 38% of corn were GM crops, followed by canola and potatoes. The U.S. and/or Canada also grow GM flax, squash, papaya and tomatoes. GM crops currently in the field-testing stage include alfalfa, apples, cucumbers, melons, rice, strawberries, sunflowers, walnuts and wheat. In Minnesota, test crops include corn, soybeans, canola, potatoes, sugar beets, wheat (Barrett 2-3).

Most GM crops have been developed for agronomic (ease of growing) purposes: about two-thirds for tolerance to herbicides such as Roundup and one-third for insect and virus resistance (Barrett 2-3). A small number of crops have been modified for quality traits such as altered oil production in canola or delayed ripening in tomatoes. Crops containing vaccines and vitamin supplements are in the wings. For example, rice is being genetically modified to include beta carotene, a precursor of Vitamin A; such "golden rice" may help millions in developing countries whose diets are based on rice and are now deficient in Vitamin A (a major cause of blindness in children (Transgenic).

Those with doubts about genetically modified crops urge caution and more long-term study, particularly carefully controlled field study. They note that the evidence of benefits--increased yields, decreased use of chemicals, increased farmer profits--is inconclusive. USDA data from 1996-98 showed positive results in some cases and negative results in others (Barrett 2-3). Opponents also fear health problems--particularly allergic reactions--

resulting from unwittingly encountering an allergen in a GM food. A project to enhance the protein in soybeans with a protein gene from brazil nuts was stopped when testing showed that people allergic to brazil nuts also reacted to the altered soybeans (Transgenic). And, opponents say, GM foods may be addressing the wrong problem. The real problem today, according to Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the U. N. World Food Program, is not a crisis of food supply, it is a crisis of poverty, inequality and lack of access (International).

Of greater concern are potential environmental effects. Once new genes are released into the environment, there is no way to take them back. Gene transfer through pollen from GM crops to related weeds has occurred from, for example, GM canola to wild mustard, and from GM wheat to jointed goatgrass (Transgenic). Environmental scientists and farmers have identified additional concerns including eventual insect resistance; possible harm to non-target insects such as ladybugs and monarch butterfly larvae; harm to beneficial soil organisms; and the development of new plant pathogens.

Organic farmers, among others, worry about genetic engineering's use of *bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Bt is a self-limiting, organically approved, non-chemical alternative for insect control. Used only as necessary, Bt spray has been a very important resource of last resort for organic farmers. Through GM technology, Bt genes are now being inserted in crops such as corn, cotton and potatoes, transferring the insecticidal trait into every cell of the plant and at much higher levels than the spray. Future plans include many other crops. Such heavy use of Bt is likely to accelerate resistance in insects, thereby causing a loss of major proportion to organic farmers. Organic farmers stand to lose as well through accidental cross-pollination. Farmers who grow and market non-GM corn and soybeans lose their market when contamination from neighboring GM crops occurs.

Finally, GM technology gives rise to food security concerns among some people, in that almost all GM crops are owned by private sector corporations. Patents on GM technologies by seed and chemical companies have placed the control of crop production into very few hands. Recent corporation mergers have combined seed, chemical, processing, and pharmaceutical companies into powerful entities.

The proponents of genetic modification make a number of arguments. Foremost is that transgenic crops have the potential to feed the world without requiring additional land (such as rain forests) to be opened up to agriculture. Currently developed GM crops, they point out, are good for the environment, in that they use a lower level of pesticides and herbicides; transgenic crops under development will increase the productivity of degraded soils. Farmers can use a variety of planting strategies to mitigate potential negative effects like cross-pollination and reduction of milkweed on which monarch larvae feed. The public has been eating transgenic soy and corn products for some time and as yet no adverse health effects have been reported (Transgenic). Finally, proponents point out that the U.S. competitive position in the world as a major exporter of food products and as a leader in the biotech industry will be enhanced.

Agribusiness

In the U.S. the food business, like virtually every other industry from finance and media to computers and auto making, is increasingly dominated by a limited number of large companies. William D. Heffernan and his colleagues at the University of Missouri keep track of these concentrations. As of January 1999, four major businesses controlled 79% of the U.S. beef slaughter: IBP, ConAgra, Cargill, National Beef (16). Seventy-five percent of pork slaughter is controlled by six businesses: Smithfield, IBP, ConAgra, Cargill, Farmland, and Hormel (16). In flour milling, there are four big producers: ADM Milling Company, ConAgra, Cargill Food Flour Milling, and Cereal Food Processors, Inc. (17). (In each case the companies have been named from largest to smallest.)

Big companies also own elevators, which buy farmers' crops. Cargill is first, followed by ADM, Continental Grain, and then Bunge. According to Heffernan, four firms control processing of at least 40% of all the major commodities produced in the Midwest (2). There is concern, therefore, that not only do these companies have vast segments of individual markets under their control--produce the most chickens, slaughter the most beef cows, mill the most flour--but they also are powerful in many areas, not just one or two. They own seed corn, produce fertilizer, have interests in pharmaceutical companies, prepare food products.

These companies also aid their farm customers through marketing and risk management programs, research into techniques for greatest profitability, and development of specialty grain markets. And they earn large profits for

their shareholders and private owners. According to Heffernan, the food sector is second only to the pharmaceutical sector in producing returns on investments (U.S., USDA 72). Richard Levins, an agricultural economist, comments that it is common for these large companies to earn 17-20% on their equity (their net worth) each year. In comparison, farmers during the 1990s earned 2.39% on their investment of land, machinery, livestock, etc. (Food 9).

Nevertheless, one might ask whether this field of giants is good for U. S. consumers. Heffernan says that if four or fewer firms control 40% or more of a sector of a market, healthy competition is no longer present (1). This concentration has certainly happened in agriculture, as it has in many other economic sectors, even though over the years the U.S. has enacted various laws that are designed to allow healthy competition in the marketplace; two of these most often called upon in agricultural matters are the Packers and Stockyards Act and the Sherman Anti-trust Act. Critics of the increasing concentration in our food system charge that these laws are being ignored at both federal and state levels.

Getting big is one thing that helps a company survive in the midst of other giants; mergers and acquisitions have become a familiar feature of contemporary life. The small, independent corner grocery store is almost gone, as is the independent hardware store. Kraft Foods is now a unit of Philip Morris. Such large companies require modern transportation, communication, record keeping, and accumulation of capital. They also need a global market to make a large company possible and profitable.

Mid-size farmers need global markets as well. Since this state is blessed with fertile soil and favorable climate along with skilled farmers, Minnesota produces much more than its citizens consume, and in fact today exports one-third of the wheat, one-third of the corn, and half of the soybeans grown in the state. The growing economies and populations of, particularly, Asia seem attractive markets for these products. (Currently, in order of size, our five largest markets are Japan, Canada, Mexico, Taiwan, and Korea.) Minnesota food and agricultural exports total \$12 billion (28% of our total agricultural production) and support more than 44,000 jobs (Minnesota, Dept. of Agriculture. *Agricultural Profile*; Schommer).

The global marketplace, however, can be challenging. While there are new markets to reach with a product, the competition may be intense, not only from other U.S. corporations, but also from corporations in Brazil, Argentina, France, Mexico. Risks are equally dramatic. Markets that once were good can quickly and unexpectedly dry up. A whole group of economies can go into a slump, as happened in Asia in the 90s; other countries can not only improve their ability to meet their own needs, but increase their exports, as Brazil is doing with soybeans (Zielenziger 5). The U.S. government can embargo a product for political reasons, as it did with wheat sales to Russia. Sales are also influenced by the trade barriers that still exist in the world market. Size can provide the necessary flexibility and capital to weather such sudden changes; where size does not avail, government may need to step in.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Because a country's people must have food, and because farming is so risky a business, modern nations have paid particular attention to their agriculture and have taken steps to insure that it would survive. In the U.S. there have been direct payments to farmers, public research in agriculture at the land-grant universities, extension service help for individual farmers and their families, construction of roads and waterways to move food, special insurance programs for farmers, and other programs.

Besides ensuring that the United States has had enough food and Minnesota has retained its healthy agricultural economy, there have been additional goals. One has been to preserve medium-sized family farms, as indicated by the preamble to the Corporate Farm Law, enacted in 1851 by the Territory of Minnesota and revised frequently over the years: "to encourage and protect the family farm as a basic economic unit, to insure it as the most socially desirable mode of agricultural production, and to enhance and promote the stability and well-being of rural society in Minnesota and the nuclear family." This preamble is retained in the current version of the law.

In addition, the U.S. and, to a lesser degree, Minnesota have been willing to subsidize agriculture because of the importance of producing great volumes to sell abroad. A sufficient number of farmers producing bumper crops has led to low prices, allowing the U.S. to be competitive in the global marketplace. Foreign sales have been good for

the U.S. as well as for farmers, who have earned 30-40% of their income in recent years from exports (Strauss 2B). Of course Minnesota, being a major agricultural state, has wanted its share of this trading prosperity.

Federal government assistance: a brief history

While weather, new technology, and market conditions are always important to farming, the federal government has also significantly influenced agriculture's fate since the depression of the 1930's. The 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act, enacted during President Franklin Roosevelt's administration, was intended to assist farmers only during the difficult Depression period. But federal assistance has continued to this day, assistance that has always been controversial and almost always expensive.

The goals of this legislation were to increase farm income, ensure a stable and cheap national food supply, and conserve farmland. Non-recourse government loans--loans that allowed farmers to turn these crops over to the federal government if the market price was lower than the loan rate--were introduced on a limited number of crops (among them corn, wheat, rice, and cotton), providing in effect a national floor below which prices would not fall. The federal government thus acquired, stored, and eventually distributed (often to food shelves and school lunch programs) large supplies of some commodities. Control requirements--limits on what individual farmers could grow under the program--were also enacted.

This federal help was welcome relief to farmers, enabling many to remain in farming. Ironically, though, since government help was based on acreages and production, much of the aid went to the largest and most successful farmers, who were then able to buy new machinery, purchase neighbors' land, and become even more productive and more wealthy. Another effect (which continues today) was that farmers were in this way encouraged to continue growing what was subsidized, not necessarily what the market needed.

Republicans, as a group, were from the beginning extremely unhappy with Roosevelt's farm program, believing that market forces ought to be allowed to work in agriculture just as in other businesses and that the nation ought not to be supporting farmers at the expense of the taxpayers. After World War II, when Republicans gained control of the presidency under President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-61), his secretary of agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson, retired some programs and initiated policies to encourage farmers to increase production for a world market. The government loan rate for farmers (which created the floor for domestic farm prices) was dramatically lowered, and getting bigger was encouraged. Much of the farm support program, however, was left intact.

National policy continued to encourage increased production all through the 1970s and '80s, promoting international sales, which were particularly good for the U.S. balance of payments. U.S. agriculture products enjoyed strong demand abroad during these years, partly caused by a weak dollar. Earl Butz, secretary of agriculture during the Nixon administration, advised farmers to "get big or get out." Farm income, land prices, and farm debt all escalated. Inflation ran rampant.

At the same time (1970's), Congress created a two-tier farm program, which still had a non-recourse loan program (but rates were low). In addition, Congress set a target price for specific crops and paid farmers deficiency payments (direct income supplements) when the market was below target price. Finally, in 1985 President Ronald Reagan signed a bill that basically kept the old system, although it sharply lowered the federal loan rate, and at the same time increased deficiency payments to farmers. This kept agricultural products inexpensive for the export market and the consumer. The cost to taxpayers soared, reaching \$26 billion in 1986 (LWVUSEF 5).

The following year, 1986, the Tax Reform Bill became law. Previously, non-farmers had acquired agricultural land with large incomes as a tax shelter. Tax reform repealed or reduced the tax advantages, thereby freeing up agricultural land for purchase by farmers.

The most recent major farm legislation constituted a dramatic change. Called the Freedom to Farm Act, it went into effect in 1996, eliminating federal commodity subsidies and production quotas. It called for continued payments to farmers for seven years, which would allow them to adjust to free markets. But in 1997 an economic crisis shook Asia, and it could no longer import agricultural products, such as U.S. pork, as it had in previous years. In August

1998 Russia devalued its *ruble*, and could no longer afford U. S. grain. In addition to all of this, much of the U.S. had abundant crops in 1998, the surplus leading to depressed prices. Some farmers chose to store their grain, hoping for better markets later. Hog prices hit record lows.

In response to all of this pain, Congress approved, and President Bill Clinton signed, a special \$6 billion farm relief bill, plus \$1 billion in agricultural tax cuts. In total, the federal government paid farmers and owners of farmland about \$12.1 billion in 1998. Unfortunately, 1999 proved to be another hard year. This time Brazil devalued its *real*, making grain purchases by that country unlikely; the Asian and Russian markets were still down; the harvests were again abundant; and prices again low. Hogs, once a reliable source of income, remained rock bottom, due in good measure to overproduction resulting from factory farming operations

The harvest of 1999 was generally a good one in the Midwest, so there was no shortage of food for sale. In addition, numerous farmers were still holding grain from the year before, and a continuing large volume of hogs was ready for market. Consequently prices were very low. Again the federal government came to farmers' aid with nearly \$9 billion in additional payments, for a total of \$22.7 billion in farm aid, 40% of farmers' net cash income for the year (Hershey). (In the spring of 1999, the Minnesota legislature also approved \$70 million in farm relief.)

State policy and programs

Minnesota agricultural policy is largely determined by five groups. First, there is the legislature, primarily through the House and Senate Agriculture and Rural Development committees. In the executive branch are two agencies, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Department of Agriculture. Both have regulatory powers; the Department of Agriculture, however, is charged with both regulating and promoting agriculture. The University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, as well as the Minnesota Extension Service, influence the direction of policy through research and education. Finally, farm organizations like the Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union, as well as agribusiness groups such as Minnesota Pork Producers and the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council develop policy proposals and lobby the legislature.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the University of Minnesota are strong proponents of biotechnology in agriculture and affirm its existing and potential benefits to the state's economy. According to Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson, "A lot of what we're doing as a state government is trying to assure and reassure an often skeptical, uneducated and not-necessarily-wanting-to-be-informed public that biotechnology is safe" (*Star Tribune*). And according to Dean Charles Muscoplat of the University of Minnesota College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science, Minnesota should increase its public investment in food-related biotechnology to prepare for the intensity of global competition and for its role in feeding the world.

Minnesota also has a variety of programs to provide instruction and assistance for farmers. The Department's Organic Certification Cost-Share Program assists with costs of certifying crops as "organic." The Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, under the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, publishes a *Greenbook* each year to assist farmers in using sustainable agricultural techniques. It sponsors forums, information exchanges, and other educational programs, and offers grants for trials of innovative methods. Some farmers and interested others believe that this program, the only section of the Department of Agriculture specifically designed for smaller, environmentally conscious farmers, is significantly underfunded.

The state also helps with certain marketing efforts. One program that Agriculture Commissioner Hugoson promotes is designed to help specialty farmers with marketing. The state will certify that farm products are what the farmers say they are--in terms of fertilizer restrictions, medicines in feed, insecticides, and so forth. A noteworthy, but small, program is "Minnesota Grown." It was begun in the mid-1980's in order to promote buying Minnesota products and to help farmers sell their products directly to the consumer. A "*Minnesota Grown*" *Directory for Fresh Produce* lists approximately 150 growers. Currently there are 600 licensed users of the "Minnesota Grown" logo.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has recently reinstated state inspection of small slaughter and processing facilities, which allows meat producers to sell their own meat directly to customers if they use one of the facilities

inspected by the state. This program now includes 28 plants, processing in total nearly 300,000 pounds of meat a month. Previously meat for any kind of sale had to go through a USDA-inspected large operation, and large operations do not do small orders.

Regulation of agriculture

Minnesota farm laws

For 150 years lawmakers in Minnesota have been making laws about farmland and farming. Seven years before Minnesota became a state, a statute was adopted that said, "Any alien may acquire and hold lands...and he may convey, mortgage, and devise the same...as if such alien were a native citizen of this territory or of the United States" (Minnesota. Corporate. Appendix D). Between then and 1991 the legislature dealt with land ownership over 100 times (Rankin 1).

The reason Minnesota has such a large percentage of family farms is precisely because the Minnesota legislature has passed laws to control ownership. To keep foreign money from coming in to buy up Minnesota farmland the Alien Ownership Law was enacted in 1973; in 1977 and 1981 restrictions were tightened. The Corporate Farm Law was amended in 1973 to limit corporate leasing of land; it was amended again in 1975 to require that a majority of shareholders in an authorized farm corporation live on the farm or be actively engaged in farming. Ten years later, an amendment to the law was passed that set maximum acreage limits--generally 1500 acres of farmland (Rankin 3-4).

The law has been loosened in various ways as well. In 1978, poultry raising was defined to be a non-farm activity, which meant that the law did not apply to corporations in the poultry business (Rankin 5). Another amendment passed in 1994 broadened the law to allow non-family corporations, composed mainly of farmers, to raise hogs in Minnesota.

The present Corporate Farm Law allows two major categories of agricultural corporations--family and authorized--but places strict restrictions on them. Family farm corporations must be established for the purpose of farming, the majority of shareholders must be persons or the spouses of persons related to each other within the third degree of kindred (third cousins, for example), and at least one shareholder must live on the farm or at least be actively operating the farm.

The authorized farm corporation has broader requirements, but here too local investment and farmer dominance is required. Within this category are two different options. One option allows no more than five shareholders (all of whom must be "natural persons"), requires that 51% of the shareholders must reside on farmland or be actively engaged in agriculture, and prohibits the corporation from owning more than 1,500 acres of land. The other option, enacted in 1994 in response to farmers who wished to pool assets and raise large numbers of hogs, applies only to those raising livestock other than dairy cattle. There can be any number of shareholders, but at least 51% of shares must be held by those living on the farm or actively engaged in farming, 75% of the financial control must be held by Minnesota farmers, and the corporation can own no more than 1,500 acres of agricultural land.

A third category under the Corporate Farm Law is the breeding stock exemption, where farmers raise animals for breeding, not for meat. Finally, a limited number of corporate ownerships of land either were grandfathered in by the 1973 legislation or have been granted for very special uses since. Poultry raising does not fall under this law, so corporate ownership is allowed there.

Limited liability companies are now allowed in Minnesota agriculture under legislation passed during the 2000 session. Limited liability means what it says: Investors are not liable for company damages in an amount greater than that which the investor has invested. Two types of companies, a family farm limited liability company and an authorized farm limited liability company, were written into the law. In both cases 49% of the investors can be either non-family (family limited liability company) or non-farmer (in the authorized farm limited liability company) (Sobociaski 10). This law makes it easier to raise investor money for large-scale animal operations, where the potential for a costly environmental accident is always present.

The 2000 session of the legislature passed a bill regulating contracts between agricultural producers and buyers. Modeled after the procedure used with the insurance industry in Minnesota, it set minimum standards: The contracts must tell the farmers what risks they run, and be clearly written. Farmers must have up to three days to review contracts, see attorneys, and change their mind. It is now illegal to require a farmer to keep secret the price received under a contract. A court could later change the terms of the contract if it was not clear and readable and the producer was harmed. A Minnesota Department of Agriculture publication, *A Producer's Guide to Production Contracts*, has recently become available.

Environmental regulation

Congress has largely turned to the states to regulate industrial agriculture, although pollution does not respect state lines, and only a national solution can prevent "pollution shopping"--the attempt by businesses to locate in states with more lenient regulations. What federal legislation exists, like the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, is often inadequate with respect to agriculture. The Clean Water Act, for example, does not adequately address non-point source pollution (polluted runoff whose sources are diffuse and do not come from a pipe or other conduit), of which agriculture is the biggest contributor. Federal (and state) environmental regulations fail to prevent factory farms from locating in environmentally sensitive areas, such as floodplains and karst areas. The U.S. Clean Air Act has not been effectively used to regulate factory farm air pollution. There is currently no national tracking system for manure spills, fish kills (those often go unreported, so the causes remain unknown), or *pfisteria* events associated with confined-animal feeding operations ("Spilling Swill" 3).

It often seems that taxpayer dollars are used to first subsidize industrialized farms and then to clean up after them. (See, for example, Adcock.) Many citizens advocate making corporations responsible for the pollution they are causing, and are calling for a reclassification of big farms from agricultural to industrial.

Legislation was proposed in Minnesota in 1998 that would have prevented the construction or expansion of large animal operations for a two-year period so that the issues involved could be studied. It was, however, defeated. The legislature chose instead to charge the Environmental Quality Board with preparing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement on animal agriculture to be completed in 2001. A task force has been working on the project since 1998.

Some states have taken action. For example, there is now a moratorium on building new corporate hog farms in North Carolina. Other states have limited or banned new factory farms. In Minnesota there has been intense controversy over large animal feedlot operations, as well as heavy criticism of the regulatory body, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. (See, for example, Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor report.) Some Minnesota counties are taking things into their own hands, adopting moratoria on new factory farm construction and developing and enforcing regulations.

Regulation of genetically modified foods

Three federal agencies review different components of genetically modified organisms (GMO). The Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulates potential plant pests and the safety of plants; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates GM microorganisms and pesticides; and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates the safety of GMOs intended for human and animal food.

The USDA requires breeders to conduct field tests for several years to assure the accuracy of the result and the nutritional level and safety of the plant. In 1992 the FDA established the policy that GM foods did not require regulation and labeling unless they contained substances with a "significantly different" structure, function or quantity than substances in non-GM foods. This position is supported by The National Academy of Sciences, and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Schmickle). The FDA has determined to date that most transgenic crops are not "significantly different" and therefore do not require pre-market testing or approval. Until very recently developers of GM foods were encouraged to consult with the agency on safety and regulatory questions on a voluntary basis. That policy has now been changed to require companies to give advance notice and submit safety data before bringing new foods to market.

The Science and Environmental Health Network and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, on the other hand, believe that the principles used by U.S. regulatory agencies are inadequate to evaluate potential hazards. They say this for a number of reasons. First, they believe the United States' fragmented regulatory system is itself inadequate to deal with the complexity of genetically modified organisms. This fragmentation also makes public awareness and participation difficult. Moreover, in the U.S. the developer of the product, who will benefit financially from its sale, does pre-market testing. The full results of these tests are treated as confidential business information, and thus are not available to the public. No independent testing is done to verify the results (Barrett).

The State of Minnesota, through its Department of Agriculture, has its own review process for proposed GM crop test sites. That process mirrors the federal permitting and review process. The USDA sends all pertinent information regarding a proposed test crop to the state, where it is reviewed from the perspective of the state's interest. Then public notice is given, providing citizens an opportunity to comment. Modifications may be requested if the proposal does not meet the criteria established. The state must also approve any commercial use of GM products, such as the sale of seeds.

The one risk in GM foods that most seem to agree on is that such foods could contain unsuspected allergens. The National Academy of Sciences report, for example, advocates better methods for identifying things that could trigger allergic reactions in some people (Schmickle). One method of accomplishing this might be simply to label all GM foods as "genetically modified."

A coalition of 60 consumer and environmental groups, along with at least 49 members of Congress, has called for such labeling (*Organic* 1). Advocates of labeling believe it is in keeping with U.S. case law and precedent on the people's "right to know" about what they eat (Midwest). Labeling would bring the U.S. in step with Europe, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, where such labeling is mandatory.

The food industry, however, says that labeling would be burdensome and might arouse irrational fears in consumers. Moreover, because of the virtual omnipresence of GM plants and by-products, almost everything would have to be labeled. An alternative might be to label foods that do not use GM technology, as we do now with organic foods.

ISSUES

Government cannot do anything about hail or drought; the global economy is not especially controllable; industrialized farming is here to stay. Consumers in the United States have, for the most part, inexpensive food, wide choices, and few shortages. Many farmers are hurting. Others have specialty markets, good contracts, little or no debt, vast fields, a skill at locking in prices on the grain exchanges for their traditional crops, good luck, and government payments when they need them.

But it is not hard to see that certain aspects of the current agriculture scene pose serious questions. The big one is this: To what extent should the state make special efforts to keep medium-sized commercial farms viable, those farms that are trying to make farming their main source of income, but that do not have the volume of sales to make a decent profit in times of low prices and low profit margins for the major crops and animals?

Do we say that Minnesota should not be trying to save the family farm, that we in the United States believe in the free market system, and part of that belief is that everyone should have an opportunity to make a living, but no one warrants special protection? Do we agree that large businesses dominate most areas of our economy and argue that there is no good reason why farming should be rescued from this global trend?

Or do we believe that the production of food is fundamentally different from other businesses and therefore should be treated differently? Do we agree that medium-sized, commercial farms are a valuable part of Minnesota's economy and society, that such farms are good for the environment, good for the countryside, good for small towns, people and animals--and should therefore be assisted to remain in business? Should the state find ways to encourage young people to become owner-operators of family farms?

If small and medium-sized farms are going to be assisted, what form should such assistance take? Here are some possibilities. Add to the educational workshops, grants, loans, technical advisors, and publications currently available through the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to assist farmers to improve their methods of farming. Find new crops to grow and markets for these crops, as was done in the 1960s with soybeans. Vigorously promote cooperative processing ventures to enable farmers and/or rural communities to add value to crops before sending them on. Mandate that state institutions--colleges, state government dining areas, hospitals and prisons--use state-grown vegetables and fruits whenever possible. Promote "Minnesota grown" to grocery stores and restaurants.

Should the state be assisting rural communities? Is farming the only or best means of support for rural communities? The Ventura administration is strongly advocating good computer access in the rural areas, believing this to be vital if businesses and professionals are going to be enticed to the country. Roads, affordable housing, good schools, state-of-the-art health care also help sell the rural community. Government has programs in these areas. Does more need to be done?

Clearly, another big issue is the environment. Should farms be required to treat their animal wastes in the same fashion as cities must treat human waste before it goes back to the environment? Should farmers going into large-scale animal raising (or the businesses that contract with them) have to purchase a bond, so if there is an accident and significant damage occurs, someone other than the state (the taxpayer) is responsible for fixing the problem? Should there be air and water standards that factory farms must meet in order to stay in business?

Should the government assist the small but growing number of farmers who maintain sustainable agricultural practices such as rotational grazing, cover crops, crop rotation? Should government provide economic incentives to use sustainable techniques?

We know that farms also improve the environment. For example, one study shows that small U.S. farmers allow 17% of their areas to be woodlands (compared to 5% on large farms) and maintain twice as much of their land in soil improvement uses, such as cover crops and green manures (Rosset 8). Should small farms therefore be favored in government policies? Should we provide incentives--such as Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), which protects natural and sensitive areas on both public and private land by permanent easements that prevent set-aside wild areas from reverting to agriculture--to set aside more land than at present?

Some consumers are concerned about food safety and apprehensive both about the chemicals used to grow fruits and vegetables and the genetically modified foods that have started to arrive on the market. Should Minnesota do more to promote organically grown foods? Should Minnesota mandate appropriate labeling of foods so that the consumers know what they are purchasing? Is this an action that could be effective on a state level?

An increasing number of agriculture research grants come from agribusiness, which naturally leans towards projects that are commercially viable for large corporations. Does agribusiness unduly influence agricultural research? Should the state fund more research that is helpful for small and medium-sized farms and that is focused on sustainable agriculture?

The global marketplace raises other issues. Could the state promote Minnesota exports even more than it does now? Is there anything the state can do to cushion the effects on farmers of swift changes in the global economy?

Finally, what, if anything, can and should Minnesota do about the large corporations that are dominating markets? Should we push for stronger enforcement of federal anti-trust and fair marketing legislation, which the Minnesota attorney general could do? Is the state level the right place for such action?

The answers to these questions will direct public agricultural policy in Minnesota. Citizens need to understand the issues and make their preferences known.

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Speakers

Agricultural Committee

- Willis Anthony, Farmer, St. Peter MN; former Professor in Applied Economics, University of Minnesota
- Brad Biers, staff member, Agriculture Policy Committee, Minnesota House of Representatives
- Cornelia Butler Flora, Senior Fellow in Agricultural Systems, University of Minnesota
- Gene Hugoson, Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture

Richard Levins, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota

William Nelson, Director of Cooperative Development, Cenex Harvest States

John Peck, Doctoral Candidate in Agricultural Economics, University of Wisconsin

Mark Ritchie, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

C. Ford Runge, Professor of Economics and Law, University of Minnesota

Dave Serfling, Farmer, Preston MN; member, Land Stewardship Project

Harold Swanson, Farmer and Professor of Agriculture, Iowa Western, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Linda Thrane, Departmental Vice President, Cargill

Members of League of Women Voters of Minnesota Agriculture Study Committee

Jane Bennett, LWV St. Cloud Area

Barbara Vaile*, LWV Northfield

Eunice Biel, Harmony, Minnesota

Charmaine Wright, Nerstrand

Adeline Blowers, LWV Austin Area

Anne Borgen*, LWV Golden Valley

Judy Duffy, President, LWVMN

Sally Sawyer, Executive Director, LWVMN

Georgianna Campbell, LWV Northfield

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, LWV Northfield

Nancy Gundersen*, LWV St. Cloud Area

Writers/Editors

Nancy Gundersen, LWV St. Cloud

Mary Steen, LWVMN Board, *VOTER* Editor

Stephanie Henricksen*, LWV Northfield

Janice Larson, LWV Fridley

*Readers, advisors, editing assistance

Deanna Lederer*, LWV St. Cloud Area

Carol McCarter, LWV Brooklyn Park/Osseo/Maple Grove

Connie Metcalf, LWV Fridley

Beverly Montgomery, LWV MEPH

Helen Palmer*, LWV Minneapolis

Linda Peck, LWV St. Cloud Area

Eldred Phillips, LWV Owatonna

Mary Phillips, LWV Owatonna

This list reflects the membership of the
Committee over an eighteen month period.

JoAnne Rohricht*, LWV St. Paul

We hope that we have acknowledged all of the people
who made contributions to this study.

Gertrude Ulrich, LWV Richfield, Chair

TO: LWVUS
1730 M. St., NW
Washington, DC 20036

FROM: LWV of _____
State: _____ File #: _____

POSTMARK DEADLINE: JUNE 8, 1988

CONSENSUS ON THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN AGRICULTURE

If your League participated in a joint consensus meeting with other Leagues, please fill out a separate form for each League.

How did your board determine member thinking on this consensus report?

_____ unit meetings	_____ questionnaire
_____ general meetings	_____ telephone poll/survey
_____ bulletin tear-off	_____ other, please specify

Number of members participating in this member agreement process: _____

This is a report of your League's consensus, not the concerns and opinions of individual members. It is NOT appropriate to ask for or to report numbers or percentages of "votes." "Consensus" means member agreement. "No consensus" means your League could not agree or did not discuss.

Please mail this completed form by the postmark deadline of June 8, 1988 to the above address. Mark envelope "Ag Consensus." The national board is under no obligation to consider replies postmarked after June 8, 1988.

Form completed by: _____

Board position: _____

I. A statement commonly used as a preamble to agriculture legislation says:

"The goals of federal agriculture policy are to ensure adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers while allowing farmers a reasonable return on their labor and investment."

Check the response(s) below that reflect the views of your members about these components of federal agriculture goals.

The goals of federal agriculture policy should be:

1. to ensure adequate supplies of food and fiber
_____ agree _____ disagree _____ no consensus
2. to provide food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers
_____ agree _____ disagree _____ no consensus
3. to allow farmers a reasonable return on their investment and labor
_____ agree _____ disagree _____ no consensus

—over—

II-A. Evaluate whether the following selected agricultural policies are appropriate or inappropriate roles for the federal government.

	Appro- priate	Not Appro- priate	No Consensus
1. Developing export markets for agricultural commodities	_____	_____	_____
2. Increasing reliance on the free market to determine prices	_____	_____	_____
3. Encouraging sustainable agriculture	_____	_____	_____
4. Controlling surpluses	_____	_____	_____
5. Improving the viability of mid-sized farms	_____	_____	_____
6. Providing research, information and technical assistance to agricultural producers	_____	_____	_____
7. Ensuring farm credit at reasonable terms and conditions	_____	_____	_____
8. Protecting farm income	_____	_____	_____
9. Stabilizing prices for farm commodities	_____	_____	_____

II-B. From the above list, rank order up to three federal policies that your League believes are essential for the future of agriculture (list by number).

First _____ Second _____ Third _____

League of Women Voters of Minnesota, 550 Rice St., St. Paul, MN 55103

LOCAL LEAGUE AGRICULTURE STUDY CONSENSUS REPORT FORM

Local League: _____

Name of person preparing report: _____

Phone: _____

Total membership in LL: _____ Number participating in consensus

Deadline: Please return your consensus report to the state League office as soon as possible after your League's consensus meeting and Board review of your League's report. The report must be postmarked no later than March 1, 2001.

INSTRUCTIONS

For each question, write the number of people who vote "yes," the number of people who vote "no," the number of people who vote "don't know," and the number of people who think the League should not take a position on this question.

1. Should the State of Minnesota continue to restrict the ownership of farm land to 1,500 acres as currently legislated in the Minnesota Corporate Farm Law?

___yes ___no ___don't know ___take no position

2. Should the State of Minnesota continue to limit the ownership of farm land to residents of Minnesota as currently defined in the Corporate Farm Law?

___yes ___no ___don't know ___take no position

3. Should Minnesota law require that businesses that contract with farmers share liabilities for environmental accidents?

___yes ___no ___don't know ___take no position

4. Should the State of Minnesota provide monetary incentives to farmers for furthering the state's environmental goals?

___yes ___no ___don't know ___take no position

5. Should rural communities receive state aid for economic development?

___yes ___no ___don't know ___take no position

6. Should State of Minnesota set standards for and regulate the labeling of organic foods?

☐ yes

☐ no

☐ don't know

☐ take no position

Judy -
FYI
SS

Comments on Agriculture Study

From Sally Sawyer, 8/3/00

General Observations: You've done a remarkable job in putting this together—it is a huge, complex topic and almost impossible to select the most relevant aspects. I have made some comments on the text, which I enclose. The following are quibbles and one or two more serious issues.

1. Remember the focus of the study was to be sustainability (viability) of agriculture and of rural communities. While the plight of farmers and rural communities is very well laid out, there is little discussion about how rural economies might be strengthened by diversification. I know the committee talked about this early on. My fear is that our study will seem incomplete or uninformed about the major discussion on this topic taking place in the administration and throughout the state. As you recall Commissioner Hugeson referred to the administration teams focusing on this. Can we add something about this? I have a copy of the Governor's "Big Plan," a four-year strategic plan for the Ventura administration. There are several initiatives relating to agriculture and rural communities—I will enclose them with this note. I think they should at least be referenced. (I note that Part 7 of the study does make some reference to e-commerce/technology.)
2. I would suggest some discussion of the historic role of co-ops per Mr. Nelson of Cenex.
3. How about a glossary of terms used in the publication: "agribusiness," "Freedom to Farm Act," "GMO," etc. Put it in a "sidebar."
4. I had trouble with how Food Safety and Agricultural Practices chapters fit with the publication. They are excellent pieces and perhaps just need more explicit language to connect them with the overall theme. Actually Helen has some very good language—the first paragraph of page 2.
5. I thought that some of Helen's piece was perfect for the discussion guide—references to the League's previous study, positions and action, but did not belong in the publication.
6. In the face of overwhelming evidence of what changes in agricultural practices have done to despoil the environment, it's hard to imagine that there is "another side" to the story. But perhaps some comments about how the PCA views its role or Hugeson's comment about working with non-compliant farmers to correct the errors rather than punish are in order. I loved Helen's questions to him about the two sides of his role: regulatory and promotion of Minnesota agriculture. I recall he also commented that small farmers are sometimes guilty of serious violations.
7. Could we trace the food supply from farmer to consumer—either by graphic or narrative? I was intrigued by Hugeson's comment that agribusiness isn't the only

villain of the piece, but that large retailers (Walmart) play a much bigger role in squeezing out the small farmer . . . or is this a red herring? His suggestion that the state certify organic or non-gmo crops to enhance their marketability abroad and to other consumers seems like practical assistance from the state.

8. Getting back to number 1. I can't help feeling that we are addressing two related but separate issues in this study: the drastic changes in agriculture and their impacts on farming and on rural communities **and** strategies for the survival of rural communities with or without agriculture. I think the study does an excellent job of addressing the former and only slightly acknowledges the latter.
9. I liked Deanna's first paper on rural communities very much and thought too much of it was removed from the second draft. I've enclosed both the original version and the second draft with my comments.

Again, good work! I hope these comments help rather than hinder. Call me, Nancy, if you want to discuss this—1-800-663-9328. I'll see you at Rogers the morning of the 14th!

THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES



MEMORANDUM

TO : State, Local, ILO Presidents and DPM Subscribers
FROM : Judy Knight, Chair, Agriculture Study
SUBJECT : Report on Consensus on Federal Agriculture Policy
DATE : October 1988
COPIES :

At its October meeting the national board reviewed consensus results submitted by Leagues in the Agriculture Study. Based on those responses, the board agreed to a new LWVUS position on Federal Agriculture Policy.

The national board and the Agriculture Study Committee are very satisfied with the successful completion of this two-year study adopted by Convention '86. A majority of local Leagues across the country participated in the agriculture consensus, with little regional differentiation in participation rates.

Leagues should feel proud that members did indeed come to grips with the complex issues in the study and, with customary League competence, arrived at a solid consensus.

The board again thanks the Leagues that participated in the field testing of the consensus questions; their efforts helped us develop a manageable and effective study. The field test results gave us the necessary guidance to shape questions that were stated broadly enough to provide a position that would enable the LWVUS to judge and evaluate agriculture policy for years to come. We did not consider specific commodity programs. Also recall that the board decided (see September 1986 Post-Board Summary) that some issues would not be addressed at all by the study: farm workers/farm labor issues, health and nutrition issues, rural community economic development issues and domestic food assistance needs.

Issues
not
included
in stud

The statement of position, a sample press release announcing the position (for you to tailor to your needs) and a "Q & A" are attached.

THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES



NANCY M. NEUMAN
President

Agriculture Consensus: Questions and Answers

Q. What is meant by "sustainable agriculture"?

A. The term sustainable agriculture as used in the League study includes both environmental and social aspects. The goals of sustainable agriculture policy are to promote ecologically sound and socially responsible farm practices. Sustainable agriculture promotes a system of farming that is low-input and regenerative and conserves human resources crucial to agriculture.

Q. What is meant by the term "reasonable" in the position statement?

A. The term reasonable is used twice in the position statement. Once, in reference to promoting adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices and again when the League supports ensuring that farmers have access to farm credit with reasonable terms and conditions. Reasonable prices for food and fiber are those that allow even the poorest to afford adequate nutrition, loosely interpreted; reasonable prices are also those that are not subject to wide price swings. Reasonable terms for farm credit imply availability to farmers, through the federal government if necessary, of credit for farm operations at rates that are not usurious.

Q. What is meant by mid-sized farms?

A. Mid-sized farms, or "family farms" as they are often referred to, are those with gross annual sales between \$40,000 and \$250,000. Most mid-sized farm households depend on farming for a large part of their income although the farms vary in land size and type of crop produced.

Q. What are some of the specifics on the League's new position?

A. The position can be used to support sustainable agriculture and action to reduce the use of toxic chemicals on the farm.

The agriculture position can be used to support drought relief on the basis of the concern about sustainable agriculture and protection of agricultural resources.

It can be used to support decoupling (moving away from direct farm payments based on production), because decoupling is consistent with the strong consensus on greater reliance on the free market to determine agricultural prices.

The position can be used to support a gradual reduction in the loan rates as part of a move toward a free-market situation.

The position supports farm credit reform. We believe that, in any case, the federal government should be the lender of last resort. *How is it funded?*

The position can be used to support targeting research programs and technological assistance to mid-sized farms and sustainable agriculture.

The position can be used to support the conservation reserve program, and to oppose the removal of lands prematurely from the conservation reserve.

The position cannot be used to address supply controls or capping payments to individual farmers. //

Q. Can the League position be used to support relief for family farms?

A. Yes, if the program in question is for research and technical assistance, for farm credit at reasonable terms and conditions, or to enable farmers to use sustainable agriculture. Of course, the League supports these programs for all farms, regardless of size. //

Q. Does the position address the rights of women farmers and minority farmers?

A. Other League positions address these issues as a matter of equality of opportunity with respect to employment, education and housing.

Q. How far toward a free market does the League position advocate moving?

A. The position speaks of greater reliance, not total reliance, on the free market to determine prices. In assessing federal programs that move agriculture toward greater reliance

on the free market, the League will consider special problems peculiar to agriculture. The position does not envision reliance on the free market to the detriment of particular groups of farmers in times of economic hardships or difficulty due to severe climate or natural disasters. //

Q. Does the agriculture position support deficit reduction?

A. The position does not mention deficit reduction per se but it does support moving away from commodity programs to determine prices. This indicates a clear tie to the League's deficit position under fiscal policy. In addition, the League's work on deficit issues as part of the expanded Campaign for a Safer World will relate to this facet of the agriculture position.

Q. Does the League have a position on individual commodities like tobacco, sugar, mohair, rice, grain, corn, etc.?

A. The League does not have a position on any particular commodity.

Q. What would be the League's stance on a future grain embargo?

A. The League believes that U.S. efforts should be directed toward expanding export markets for U.S. agricultural products. Based on both the agriculture position and the international relations position, the League could oppose a grain embargo.

Q. Are there issues included in the League study on which there was no consensus?

A. There was no consensus on controlling surpluses, protecting farm income, or stabilizing prices for farm commodities. //

Q. How will the new position be integrated into the League's advocacy work?

A. The LWVUS board will assess advocacy possibilities affecting agriculture as it determines the 1989 advocacy agenda in January.

Q. What is the League doing next for its work on agriculture?

A. The League of Women Voters Education Fund will begin a three-year program of issue training and citizen education funded by a grant. This project is being conducted jointly with Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, a consumer organization. The project will address one broad issue area per year in agriculture policy. The formal notice to Leagues about

this project will be made soon, describing how the League network can be involved.

Q. What can my LWV do on agriculture at the state or local level?

A. Leagues can use the information in this mailing to develop a strategy at the state and local levels for educating citizens or advocating for sustainable agriculture and other goals consistent with the national position. For example, a League could find out what programs are being conducted for farmers by land-grant colleges, by the agriculture extension office, or by state departments of agriculture. Leagues could also determine what activities the local ASCS, SCS, farm credit bodies and Farmers Home Administration are pursuing. After consulting with other concerned groups, Leagues could craft a strategy keeping in mind state and local League positions. As always, state and local League boards can apply national positions for action at the state and local level. The relevant League board must be sure that its members are knowledgeable and support the action to be taken.

To: Agriculture Study Committee
From: Sally Sawyer
Re: a modest proposal for organizing study
Date: 9/3/99

CFord Rung
Lynne Hayes
legal action
cong farm law

I have a suggestion for organizing the work of the committee. Before the next committee meeting, committee chairs and a few others should prepare a working outline of the publication—using as models previous LWV studies. The outline could be something like the following—note that this is only an example, not the outline you should follow.

- Part I: Facts: a Primer on agriculture in the U.S. include a glossary of useful terms;
1. Brief history of agriculture in U.S. trends, including evolution to large scale, corporate farming, agribusiness.
 2. National picture: statistics, current laws, impact of international trade policies, impacts of freedom to farm act. Impacts of all on farms & rural communities. Who are the players. Include environmental impacts
 3. History of Ag in MN
 4. State of Minnesota: statistics: how many farms, what kind, crops, impacts of national and state laws, policies on farms, communities; current crisis. Include environmental impacts
 5. Rural Communities — facts
- Charts, tables, maps would be useful.

This first part should be an informative, educational piece about agriculture in the U.S. & MN today. Most of us are starting with a very rudimentary understanding of what our food production system has been and is and what factors are at work.

- Part II: Issues: state and federal policies: various viewpoints, suggestions
- Proposed changes in state and federal laws, trade policies
- Initiatives for change
- Models
- What should the goals of federal/state ag policy be? Various viewpoints
- Include brief excerpts from interviews with farmers? How about rural businesses? Members of affected communities? Urban dwellers? Reps of co-ops or agribusiness?
- Make sure that you have possible consensus questions in mind so that you provide information, discussion, pros and cons in this background material.

Your audiences for this study are local League members and members of the public, the media, policy makers, elected officials. Aim for a succinct, balanced yet thorough presentation. You might spend some time looking at the St. Paul Pioneer Press's series of articles, to be completed at the end of October and the way in which they tackled the

I 1 sub-committee

psych
climate

II

Who are the players?

1 Concentration of power (democracy issues)
2 Access to info
3 Future of ag
4 Future of rural communities
5 Future of agribusiness

1 Ag economics in a democracy
2 Access to markets
3 Local state - not just org of farmers

6 Proposals for ag policy chgs

subject. (The series uses a lot of human interest material but also good factual material and discussion of issues.)

Use the working draft of the outline as a basis for forming subcommittees.

Decide on a list of speakers (no more than ten is my suggestion) to be heard by the whole committee, leaving subcommittees to focus on readings and remaining sources.

Decide how the subcommittees will report—will each write a section and turn it in to one or two main writers? My suggestion is to set a timeline—the time goes very fast and it takes a very long time to do the final writing and editing, not to mention the detailed process of publication.

Can the committee find a principal writer? Will we need to hire one to do the final writing and editing?

To: Ag Steering Committee
From: Sally Sawyer
Date: 9/22/99

The mission of the League is to promote informed and active citizen participation in government through **education** and **advocacy**.

In thinking about the difficulty we've had in pulling this study together, I have some questions.

1. There is a tremendous amount of information about agriculture, the crisis in agriculture and the issues in ag. In the news media and through conferences and public forums (Humphrey Institute has hosted and Clean Water Action conference on Saturday, 9/18 for example) the issues are being hotly debated and have high visibility.

What can the League of Women Voters bring to public understanding and discussion of this issue?

Can we bring new information or synthesize existing information to clarify the issues? Or will the League be duplicating effort?

What aspects of the issues are not being adequately addressed? Is the League the group to do this?

2. Advocacy: The League has national and state positions that would enable us to strongly address environmental concerns and land use issues.

Are we really talking about undertaking an advocacy project rather than a "study?" and is this part of our problem in defining the scope of the study?

What do we want to be able to speak to at the state legislative level or the county level that we can't speak to now? Minnesota corporate farm law?

Do we want to address issues that can only be decided at the federal level? Such as the "Freedom to Farm Act?"

- SUGGESTIONS*
3. *Review again existing national and state positions.
*Go back to the adopted wording and scope to help us clearly define what we are and what we are not going to study.
*Decide what issues we want to speak to that we can't speak to now.

Deffy

**LWVMN Agriculture Committee
Meeting Notice and Agenda
Thursday, October 7, 1999
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

**Minnesota Women's Building
Large Meeting Room
550 Rice Street
St. Paul**

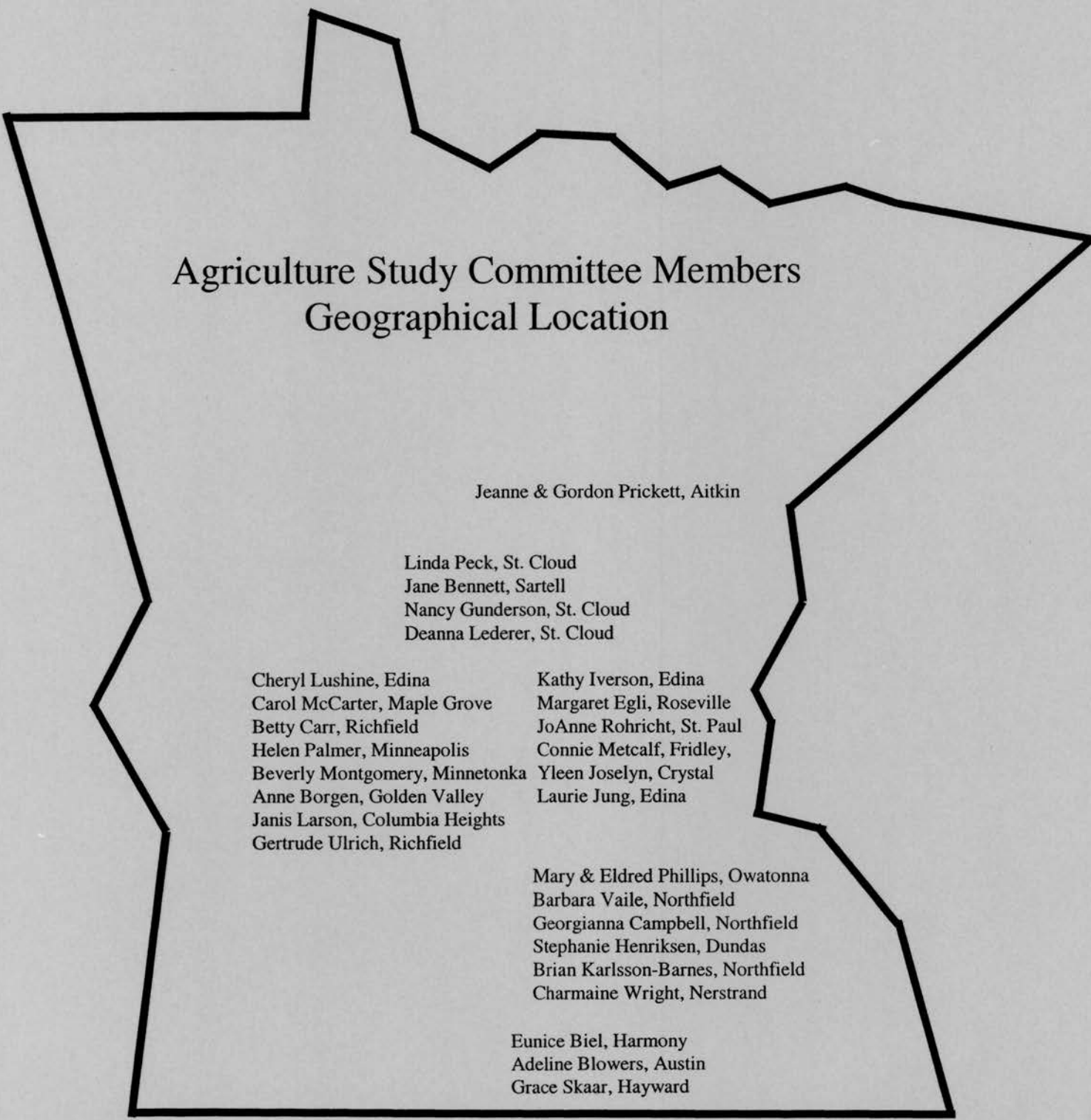
Please call the LWVMN office if you cannot attend: 1-800-663-9328 or 1-651-224-5445; e-mail: lwvmn@mtn.org

Agenda

1. 5 Introductions/Gertrude Ulrich
2. 2 Minutes of the September 2, 1999 Meeting/Beverly Montgomery
Appoint recording secretary for this meeting.
3. 10 Report from Red Wing Regional Meeting/Helen Palmer & other presenters
4. 60 Organizing the work of the Committee/Ulrich

See attached outline of proposed subcommittees. Please review and come prepared to sign up for the area/issue that interests you. Have we forgotten anything or does it fit under one of the headings?

5. 10 Identify speaker for general meeting of the committee/Ulrich
Subcommittee has suggested C. Ford Runge or Steve Taff from the University of Minnesota, both agricultural economists.
6. 30 Break into subcommittees to plan work and choose sub-committee chairs



Agriculture Study Committee Members Geographical Location

Jeanne & Gordon Prickett, Aitkin

Linda Peck, St. Cloud
Jane Bennett, Sartell
Nancy Gunderson, St. Cloud
Deanna Lederer, St. Cloud

Cheryl Lushine, Edina
Carol McCarter, Maple Grove
Betty Carr, Richfield
Helen Palmer, Minneapolis
Beverly Montgomery, Minnetonka
Anne Borgen, Golden Valley
Janis Larson, Columbia Heights
Gertrude Ulrich, Richfield

Kathy Iverson, Edina
Margaret Egli, Roseville
JoAnne Rohricht, St. Paul
Connie Metcalf, Fridley,
Yleen Joselyn, Crystal
Laurie Jung, Edina

Mary & Eldred Phillips, Owatonna
Barbara Vaile, Northfield
Georgianna Campbell, Northfield
Stephanie Henriksen, Dundas
Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Northfield
Charmaine Wright, Nerstrand

Eunice Biel, Harmony
Adeline Blowers, Austin
Grace Skaar, Hayward

Harold Swanson, Iowa

LWV Agriculture Study Committee
Minutes from meeting September 2, 1999

Jane Bennett, vice chair, conducted the meeting and later in the meeting agreed to chair the committee. She thanked Gertrude Ulrich for accepting the responsibility to initially chair the committee and to begin the agriculture study project.

Jane reviewed protocol procedures: raise hands to be recognized, order of wishing to speak will be noted, and, one person speaking at a time so that all can participate effectively.

Committee members spoke their ideas, hopes, and wishes for the outcome of this committee's work. These were recorded on an easel tablet by Judy Duffy.

Andrea Lex requested ideas for sources to fund the study, which will cost about \$30,000. Andrea says that large agribusiness companies are not a source.

Fall Regional Workshops will be held to introduce Leagues to the topics under consideration in the Ag Study. To prepare for the workshops the following sub-committees will function:

- Coordinate articles and info for the workshops from various sources:
(Sally Sawyer, Charmaine Wright, Helen Palmer, Adeline Blowers, Stephanie Henriksen, JoAnne Rohricht, Jane Bennett)
 - a few articles to give a notion about the scope of the study.
 - visuals of data from the Farm Rally in Waconia
 - 'words' from interviews of farm families - condensed
 - packet from Washington, D.C. gathering of farming community (30 from MN are attending) from Eunice Biel.
 - suggestions of activities local leagues could accomplish
 - video On This Farm (27 minutes) - low key and even-handed
- Refine the timeline, glossary and prepare a bibliography.
(Deanna Lederer and Adeline Blowers)

Other suggestions to introduce the topic to Leagues:

- Get materials to local Leagues ASAP so members will be alert to current publications regarding ag issues.
- Local Leagues can be urged to form ag committees.
- Blurbs can be written for local League newsletters. (Anne Borgen shared what she had written for her League's newsletter.)

Workshops will be held on the following dates:

Red Wing

October 2

Presenters:

Helen Palmer, Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Barbara Vaile

Brainerd

October 21

Presenters:

Jane Bennett, Nancy Gunderson, Deanna Lederer, Linda Peck

West Metro Alliance **October 28**

Presenters:

Anne Borgen, Carol McCarter

Roseville/etc.

October 30

Presenters:

Janis Larson, Gertrude Ulrich

(Other regions may convene meetings if they cannot make it to the set regional meetings.)

Farm to Fork Symposium - September 18 at Mall of America, Bloomington.

Attendance is urged. If needed, fee of \$25 can be reimbursed from the LWVMN Education Fund .

State Legislative Agriculture Committee: Adeline Blowers attended the Freeborn/Maurer County Meeting. She reported that only Republican legislators attended. They received info from various ag groups. Adeline felt most legislators did not understand the issues. The Hearing did not allow for speakers from the area.

National Farmer: Eldred Phillips shared materials from this publication.

Broken Heartland: Stephanie Henriksen gave a brief synopsis of book the group is reading.

NEXT MEETING ON OCTOBER 7, 1999, 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.

Agenda Item: Form sub-committees to meet outside of main Ag Committee to refine some info and data for the whole committee.

Recorder: Beverly Montgomery.

Date: September 29, 1999
To: Agriculture Study Committee
Re: Agriculture Subcommittee

A meeting was held to discuss and determine the Agricultural Study subcommittee structure. It was decided that the following subcommittees would be established in order to facilitate the progress of the project.

The most fundamental objective of this committee will be to educate our members and the public at large on the salient issues affecting rural communities. To gather resources and produce a document that gives an overview of the following areas will be the work of this committee as a whole. Committee members will be asked to think about these areas and consider which one is of most interest and be ready to commit to a subcommittee at the meeting on October 7.

The "Facts and Issues" that will be produced will focus on these areas:

Facts Subcommittee:

1. A background primer including a brief history of agriculture in the U.S. This will cite statistics, current laws, trends (including the evolution to large scale, corporate farming and agribusiness), crops and the current crisis; an analysis of the impact of the freedom to farm act and international trade policies.

Background information on the state of Minnesota, including statistics, how many farms, what kind, crops, impacts of national and state laws, policies on farms, communities, the current crisis and environmental impacts; facts on changing rural communities.

Who are the players?

Charts, tables, maps would be useful.

This first part should be an informative, educational piece about agriculture in the US and MN today. Most of us are starting with a very rudimentary understanding of what our food production system has been and what factors are at work.

Issues Subcommittee:

1. Proposed changes in state and federal laws, trade policies and initiatives for change.
2. Agricultural economics in a democracy; these issues include the concentration of power and access to information.
3. Access to markets for farmers from the local, state, national and international; and the organization of farmers.
4. The future of the independent farm including contract farming.
5. The future of rural communities.
6. The future of agribusiness.

The audience for this study is local League members and members of the public, the media, policy makers, elected officials. Aim for a succinct, balanced yet thorough presentation. You might spend some time looking at the St. Paul Pioneer Press' series of articles, to be completed at the end of October and the way in which they tackled the subject. (The series uses human interest material as well as good factual material and discussion of issues.)

A timeline will need to be established and adhered to if this is to work. Writing, editing and preparation for publication are extremely time consuming and will require all of us to do our work in a timely fashion.

Thanks for your help and expertise!



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
MINNESOTA EDUCATION FUND

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (651) 224-5445 FAX (651) 290-2145

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April 27, 2000

Dear Agriculture Committee Members,

If we are to have any hope at all of meeting our agreed upon time schedule, we must have at least the beginnings of a publication soon. With this in mind, we agreed to devote our May meeting to a review of the written work of our committees.

It would be helpful if members would come to the May 4th meeting with copies of their work for distribution to committee members to read as they eat lunch at 12:00 noon. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. but we do have the room reserved from 12:00 until 3:00 p.m. No pot luck this time, although last month's was a great success.

Committee members might find it helpful to use the National League's *U.S. Farm Policy: Who Benefits Who Pays* as a guide. This publication was distributed at an earlier meeting.

Thanks for all your work,

Gertrude

**Agriculture Study Committee
Meeting Notice
Thursday, May 4, 2000
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Minnesota Women's Building
Large Meeting Room**

AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Adoption of minutes
3. Appointment of Secretary
4. Call for vouchers
5. Review of time schedule
6. Discussion of papers submitted by committee members
7. Set next meeting

Minnesota League of Women Voters
Agriculture Study Committee

Minutes
April 6, 2000

Present: Ulrich, Lederer, Mary and Eldred Phillips, Borden, Gundersen, Rohricht, Peck; Karlsson-Barnes and Vaile after 1 p.m..

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Gertrude Ulrich who introduced the morning's speaker, Dr. Cornelia Flora, Director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University and currently serving as a Senior Fellow in Agricultural Systems at the U of M and working with the MN Institute of Sustainable Agriculture.

A transcript of Dr. Flora's presentation is attached.

Discussion of Dr. Flora's Presentation

Ulrich: The 7-county metro area is more rural than people realize. The greatest pollution here is from home septic systems and lake cabins...Regarding our rivers, the Mississippi River has improved, and the current emphasis is on the Minnesota River.....knows farmers who would like to see clean streams again. Re the rural community of Worthington with which she is familiar, sees very little connection between the farms and the town...town is prospering because of the medical center there.

Borden: Farmers shop elsewhere for bargains like everybody else...can't stop that.

Peck: Can't fix things (reconnect farms with their communities) everywhere, but you can start in particular places.....pointed to examples.

The potential of E-commerce for small businesses in general and entrepreneurial farmers in particular was mentioned by several. Web sites are easy to establish and communication is greatly facilitated. Roads will continue to be vital for the delivery of products.

Phillips: Regulations will continue to be necessary to get people to do what they should.

Borden: A very important issue for farmers is health insurance. The lack of it is part of the reason they have to work off the farm. Governmental policy should address this.

Peck: Contract monitoring by the state is very important (agreeing with Flora). Contracts can provide an option for farmers, but they have to be monitored for fairness.

Rohricht: Although the document we produce will need to describe the realities of present agricultural practices and policies, we should not be governed by resignation. We

should ask what it is we want our farm and food systems to be like. We need to envision the changes we think are necessary for healthy land and sustainable farms and communities.

Business Meeting

Chairperson Ulrich asked the committee to review and give titles to the committee structure as it has now evolved. Members proceeded to state what they had done to date and to describe the focus of their work. From that the following committees were named:

The Future of Rural Communities -- Lederer and Peck

The Future of the Independent Family Farm -- Lederer and Peck

Food Safety and Quality -- Rohricht and Borden

Agri-Business -- Gundersen

Background/Overview -- Palmer, Gundersen, Borden and Rohricht

The Phillipses and Rohricht are working with the Northfield committee which has several foci pertaining to ecological, sociological, ethical and spiritual issues for farm land, families and communities.

Further contributions:

Borden has been gathering and sharing a variety of data relevant to the study.

Peck is writing on "Contracts."

Rohricht is working on the social impact of ag policies and practices on rural communities, in consult with Lederer and Peck, and as a part of the Northfield committee (Karlsson-Barnes, Henriksen, Phillipses, and Vaile), the name of which is no longer clear to the recorder.

Efforts of committee members not present (as understood by recorder):

Palmer is working on Environmental issues in conjunction with the Background/Overview Committee.

Karlsson-Barnes is working on sustainability issues from an ecological perspective and on stewardship of the land (ethical and spiritual dimensions)

Vaile is interested in Globalization issues as they impact sustainable agriculture.

Further discussion on the document per se:

Borden suggested that our study document follow the format:

Facts/Background

Issues

Solutions/Choices (or a similar phrase)

This suggestion was well received by the committee, and it was recommended that those who are writing keep this format in mind.

Gundersen, reporting for the Background/Overview Committee, recommended that the committee appoint two or three "designated writers" to focus on the document to be written and to present an outline at the next meeting with main and subordinate issues delineated. Specific assignments could then be made or confirmed. Gundersen also suggested that the document have a brief statement of the Facts, including graphs and visual aides and a brief account of how we got to where we are, and then move to the Issues section and do further development within it.

Chairperson Ulrich reviewed the Committee's decision to interview certain persons as further resources for our study. She mentioned in particular Rep. Winter, Rep. Osthoff and Senator Dallas Sams and suggested the following issues to discuss with them:

- Incentive programs -- are they correctly tailored to the land as it is?
- How to encourage beginning farmers?
- Chemical clean-up in rural areas where chemicals have been carelessly used, stored or disposed of. Is this being done in rural areas as it is in the cities?
- Feedlot regulations and problems related to the Minnesota River
- Their views on ethanol

Ulrich invited those interested in being on the interview team to contact her.

Several pieces of info relevant to the study were distributed including a Q&A piece provided by Borden in which she had posed several questions to Cargill staff and received written answers in return. In addition, Ulrich alerted members to the March issue of Atlantic Monthly and its lead article, "The Kept University."

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 4th, at 1 p.m.

It was agreed that we would not schedule a speaker for this meeting but would concentrate on our study document. Members should do as much writing as they can and bring what they have written to the meeting. An outline will be submitted with Gundersen's coordination. In the meeting time remaining, we shall do planning for a forum.

Notes from Presentation by Willis Anthony, farmer from St. Peter
and former Professor in Applied Economics, U of M

Presentation Outline: Description of the Anthony Farm
 Major Challenges in Ag and Food Production
 Resulting Legislation and Policy

Description of the Anthony Farm

Farm location: In Nicollet County near St. Peter and near the Minnesota River. The river is important for transport and for drainage; it feeds the Mississippi thus providing transport to the Gulf.

Farm characteristics: May 1-Oct 1 production season, 30" rainfall, soil high in mineral content, especially suited to corn and soybeans.

The first Anthony farm was settled by Willis' mother's ancestors from Norway. His father was a blacksmith. In earlier times the area was made up of 80 - 160 acre farms, many land grant farms. Four rural communities supported and were supported by those farms; now there is one. After the railroads pulled out, the grain elevator sites disappeared.

Anthony feels a part of this changed landscape: His 2,400 acres incorporates some 11-12 smaller farms. He grows corn and soybeans, peas under contract, 15,000 hogs (620 sows) and some cattle. He runs the farm through two or three business units. His wife and son are shareholders and own the land (some land is rented). He employs his son, nephew and some part-time workers. Mechanized farming permits him to operate with this few employees. (He hires full-time workers for his hog operation.)

Anthony reviewed month by month the work accomplished on his farm including field work, tillage, weed control, planning, marketing, care of equipment, decisions on seed and chemicals, crop harvesting, storage and delivery.

Major Challenges in Agriculture and Food Production

1. Economic survival.

Anthony's farm is not under threat, but he gave the following comparative figures to illustrate the point: In 1954 a farmer could manage with 190 acres, 30 sows and 12 milk cows. In today's market a farmer with similar acreage, 510 hogs and 12 cows would incur:

Net income	\$14,345
Expenses	\$44,095 (no debt or tax)
Net Result	(\$29,749)

One family member would have to work full time for over \$14 per hour to make up the shortfall.

(Handout Provided)

2. Risk management.

Anthony lists weather uncertainties related to global warming, volatility in markets and uncertainty of government policies both domestic and foreign.

3. Knowledge category.

Food and ag advances result from public investment in land grant university research and dissemination of that knowledge. Federal investment in food and ag research, including food safety and nutrition, is at a 10-year low. (Handout provided) State and private funding has increased somewhat.

4. Technology.

Bio, electric and mechanical technology have increased significantly with great public concern about bio-tech developments in particular.

5. Rural community structure and space.

Brief reference to the "social" costs of space.

6. Sustainable agriculture.

Acknowledge the need for economic and environmental sustainability.

7. Tighter food chain linkage.

With the distancing between production and consumption, there is concern for consistency of product and also, in the case of food safety, for the capacity to trace back where something goes wrong. It is a challenge to maintain this degree of control and still have entrepreneurial producers.

8. Public policy.

U.S. food policy is piece-meal and our farm policy spastic and uncertain. Safety issues, consumer education, nutrition info -- all of poor quality. Trade policy is run by the State and Defense Departments rather than the Commerce Department. Thus our trade policies are inconsistent and short-term.

9. Bureaucracy.

It is hard for the average farmer to navigate the system.

Mr. Anthony concluded his remarks with several general comments: He is concerned about the continuing drive toward bigness and about environmental sustainability. We need more science in this regard, i.e., how best to protect against run-off and upgrade our waterways. The federal government should do more targeting on areas that shouldn't be farmed, but coalitions of political interests prevent this. And the state is not funding CRP enhancement programs.

Anthony also referenced the work of the MN Pork Producers Research Council of which he is a member. They have three three-year programs: Environment (odor and run-off), Safety (E-coli, etc.), and Animal Welfare. Anthony believes it is possible to produce pork in an environmentally friendly way and with humane animal treatment.

Questions and Answers exchanged with Mr. Anthony

Q. What about the ownership of farmland?

A. Does not envision ownership by large corporations...not enough return...they prefer to lease. Getting new people on the land is difficult.....Because of technology we are seeing more and more farms operated by two generations of family.

Q. Should we encourage new people to farm or is it too hard?

A. There is opportunity for small innovations, for "niches,"CSAs are a great idea.

Q. What government payments do you receive?

A. Loan deficiency payments, crop disaster payments, ag market transition payments and CRP wetland payments.

Q. Where would you prefer to see government payments go?

A. Put it all in research and education and trade programs with no dollars in farm payments. Payments do not benefit farmers very much in his view. But he doubts that private insurance could cover weather disasters.

Q. Why the need to get larger?

R. In order to generate income for 2 or 3 families. It is also the case that bankers more readily loan to the bigger farms and people with land to rent more readily rent to them.

Q. Isn't farmland often re-configured or expanded among brothers and relatives?

A. Yes, amalgamations occur in this way, and some of the relatives hold off-farm jobs.

Q. In reference to animal welfare measures, what might they be for an operation of 15,000 hogs?

A. Monitoring to see that they have room to move, continuous feed and water, and air circulating through the building and hiring workers who like to work with animals.

Q. What about the issue of antibiotics and growth hormones?

A. It is a concern both from its impact on humans and on resulting inefficacy with the animals. Some hog farmers tried dropping the level of medications when pork prices dropped, but the disease level increased.

Q. What about help with vaccines, etc. for less trained farmers?

A. We need more help from University research in this area..... Vet practice now is primarily consulting on feed, antibiotic programs, etc., not coming to look at one sick hog.

Q. Where do farmers get sustainable values now that they don't seem to be coming from the University? And what is the possibility of a more equitable distribution of the land?

A. There does not seem to be the political will for re-distribution of the land. As for the source of sustainable values, must come from all of us.

Q. What about the growth and concentration of power in agri-business?

A. It is alarming. We don't have the enforcement of our anti-trust laws that we should have....don't know how to answer the corporations claim that these trends are necessary to remain competitive...Also concerned about heavy contract use and abuses of power.

Q. What about the problem of market access for small farms?

A. If access to market is denied, it would clearly be a problem. Anthony's farm is not in the small farm category, and market access has not been an issue for him.

Q. Has there been manure management problems on your farm?

A. Yes. Although they have followed Nicollet County's requirements for injection of wastes in the ground and for one-year storage facilities and although they have placed their farrowing and finishing sites eight miles apart, they have still had odor problems on the site which is at a distance from their home. They investigated each incident and identified the problems (relationship between food and odor, problems with pipes, etc.) and took measures to correct. Their neighbors are still their friends.Believes those hog farms that have become public issues had other problems before that of the hogs.

Q. What are your thoughts about the Minnesota River's pollution?

A. There is an agreement between MN and the federal government to improve the Minnesota River. The MPCA wanted a major effort undertaken, but their proposal did not garner sufficient support. Instead soil scientists have identified that 2/3 of the pollution comes from three watersheds in the Mankato area and have proposed three areas of focus: (1) for the Blue Earth Watershed, corrected tiling and adequate birming; (2) correction of erosion patterns in area ravines and (3) attention to the problem of erosion caused by disturbing the soil in suburban development.

Q. Where do you think research dollars should be spent?

A. Funds for food, agriculture and environmental research should be put in a program like the National Science Foundation or the National Institute of Health where there is peer review and where research is motivated by curiosity, science and the public good.

Mr. Anthony was warmly thanked for his presentation. Meeting adjourned. (See page 3 re next meeting.)

Jo Anne Rohricht, Recorder

Minnesota Government Policies: What Can Be Done for Rural Communities Related to Agriculture

A presentation to the Minnesota League of Women Voters
April 6, 2000

Cornelia Butler Flora

The basic reality that agriculture is changing. It is changing because of globalization and post-Fordist industrialization. Globalization is a result of the lowering of international barriers, first in the 1970s and 80s, to the flow of capital and in the 1990s to the flow of goods and services.

As a result, we have international agreements such as the World Trade Organization and NAFTA. The WTO took the place of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Farmers are upset about these two international agreements, and there is a real schizophrenia about this issue. On the one hand, we don't like having to import other people's stuff, while on the other hand, we like people importing our stuff. Unfortunately, we can't just say, "You import our stuff, but we won't import your stuff." So, this is the dilemma. Very seldom can you get something (a sale) without offering something in return (a purchase). So we export a huge amount of our agricultural product, just as we import a huge amount of what we eat.

Most people think in terms of the food value chain -- the various steps between producers of the raw materials that make up our food supply and end users who consume it. In the United States, the food processors drive the food chain -- not the producers, not the input suppliers, and not the cargo carriers -- while researchers report that grocery chains drive the value chain for food in Europe. So, if you are going to look at policies to improve agriculture or ways to do it, you need to look at the processor in the United States. One could argue that meat packers might still be the drivers in the meat value chain.

As we understand that value chain, we understand that farmers making more money will not necessarily keep Main Street in the local community vibrant. All the inputs farmers receive will not necessarily be from the community in which they live. For example, a friend is the member of one cooperative raises hogs for a different cooperative. The feed for those hogs comes from a third coop located several counties away. These contractual arrangements send the product further away and bring the inputs in from a greater distance. They also give farmers more a more secure income as long as they keep contract. So, contract farming is neither good nor bad. But contracts can be good or bad, and a single farmer may not have the resources to be sure the contract is enforced.

One of the policies that is important for keeping farmers on the land is having the state of Minnesota help oversee the contracts. An example of this need is seen in poultry production. While the first contract looks really good to the poultry farmer, the terms of the contract deteriorates over time as it is renewed. The farmer is too weak to contest it by himself or herself.

Another example comes from a number of people in Iowa I have spoken with who contracted with Murphy Family Farms, which is now Smithfield. Basically, these people did not read the contract carefully or didn't understand what it really meant. Their thinking was that because they were dealing with a very big company, they would not go broke, even with low hog prices, because big companies are so integrated. What a typical contract makes it clear that you never own the hogs (which saves you short term capital investment), you just own the processing portion (the more expensive long term capital investment). This is like owning a parking lot where I get paid for every car that parks in my lot. The difference is that only one person owns the cars that park there, and can thus tell you how to run it, how to improve it, and hold you liable for what happens to his car while under your care.

The contract says that the farmer must provide buildings to specifications. These are very expensive buildings and the technologies constantly change. So, you have a fixed investment about one-half million dollars. As one of my friends says, this is a good way to borrow about 1/2 million dollars and to get yourself a minimum wage job. That is an option and it keeps the farmer on the land. If you have more off-farm work, all the better. But, the contract also says that you have to deliver the hogs under certain conditions with certain weight, etc. As the facilities get older and the conditions deteriorate as a result, more hogs will die due to disease. When this happens, the company will say that the farmer is not meeting the terms of the contract and they will terminate the contract. The contracts are sometimes written with the company's guarantee of financing the project, but the producer is still stuck with the debt.

This happened with both the poultry and hog industries. The large companies generally want farmers who have other sources for off-farm income so they pay back the debt. This is why these contracts need to be monitored and O.K.'d by the state.

Participant: I thought the state did look at contracts. Am I wrong? I thought I read about this in some publication. Do they do any review of contracts?

I don't know what the state of Minnesota does. I know this is definitely not the case in the South. I do know about the case of poultry. Again, I don't know what happens with the contract growing in Minnesota but it would definitely be something to research. Generally, contract growing for crops goes like this. Let's say that I am a vegetable canner and I will contract with 100 growers to deliver a specific vegetable from specific seed on a specific day with a specific quality. I look very carefully at the product. Then I decide to take out the bottom 50% and just contract with the top 50 producers, who may in fact take over the land of some of the 50 that I dropped. The next time around, I will again pick only the top fifty percent to contract with. The fewer the growers, the better for the canner. It is easier to contract with a few rather than a lot of people. As a result, I have a competitive system and will just keep contracting with the champions. The producers compete to sell their products, but with increasing concentration in food processing, the processors don't compete with each other to buy what the growers produce. That is the type of competition that law firms use. You hire a lot of people, work them to 60 to 80 billable hours a week, try them out, and then you let a lot of them go. The practice of growing contests it difficult for rural communities, as these decisions are outside of the rural communities' control and are not made in regard to the well-being of the place -- only the well-

being of the firm. That is what the market is expected to do, but it is hard on people and the environment..

What does this mean to rural communities? Obviously, it means we are not going to have agriculturally-based retail and wholesale businesses based in town because the contractor will supply the input and will take away the products for processing elsewhere. So, we will have a few communities around the state with value-added agricultural industries (although these are likely to be in urban areas and are not the cure to community economic ills that many claim they are. There will be the majority of Minnesota communities where this will not happen.

There has to be a lot concern about rural development so there can be off-farm jobs, which helps keep people on the land -- and connected with community..

A student I am working with just finished an interesting study of Marshall County, Minnesota. Her sample of owner operators found that 75% of those households had off-farm income, either from the husband or wife working off the farm. So, concern about rural communities as a whole is very, very important.

Prior to the 1996 Farm Act, there were a series of farm bills that built on the federal response to the Great Depression of the 1930s. In the 1930s, most farmers grew some wheat and some corn. Most farmers milked cows. In the South, most farmers raised cotton. In particular, many small farmers grew or could grow some tobacco. Thus commodity price supports, given in exchange for executing conservation practices and limit supply by taking acres out of production of those commodities, were put into place. Those price supports provided a base price below which domestic prices could not fall. And, to help farmers' cash flow, the federal government also provided a loan on the bushels harvested. That *loan rate* in essence became the ceiling price for the market. Those loans, made on grains or cotton prior to sale were non-recourse loans, which means if the price never gets to the loan rate, the farmer can just walk away from the unsold crop, keep the loan price and let the government deal with the crop. If the crop was sold below the loan rate, the farmer received a *deficiency payment* to make up the difference between the loan rate and the market price. It was not a bad notion but it was not holistic enough. So, people planted what they knew they would get a government price for, which they could predict. The only thing unpredictable would be the amount of set aside acres they had to have in place in order to qualify for the loans. They didn't pay as much attention to the market price as they did to what would be the loan price. The loan price was always determined very late and the conditions were always determined very late, creating a great deal of anxiety for farmers.

It only made sense to put the least productive land in the conservation program, as your payment depended on bushels (production). And you had to keep planting the program commodity crop, or you would lose your base acres from which you would take the set-aside and qualify for the deficiency payments. So, you had these perverse incentives to keep planting the same thing and growing as much as possible of it, no matter what world markets did or what happened to ecosystem health -- or your neighbor's farm. World markets looked terrible in the 70s, looked pretty good in the 80s, and looked great up until about 1997.

The idea of the 1996 Farm Act was to help farmers change and diversify from growing a lot of the same old crops and diversify their production systems to meet more diverse market demands. At that time we realized that we were supporting low valued, high volume commodities that required huge subsidies in terms of dams, locks, straightened rivers, railroad support, etc. to move. The federal government subsidized grain traders to send products overseas. We were also subsidizing the shippers to ship overseas. And we lent money on very "soft" terms (below market interest rates and forgivable loans) if they would buy our grain rather than someone else's grain. This was a very expensive proposition when we were only growing bottom-of-the-line products. Although Americans grow the finest corn, it is still #2 dent corn and it is transformed into many other things.

The thought was, "We know farmers are innovative and smart. Let's let them experiment and let's guarantee them an income that is not related to what they produce." The income was very good in the first two years of Freedom of Farm. Farmers who had previously participated in the commodity programs received a payment decoupled from what they produced and what they did to their land and water. Many farmers paid off their debt at that time and improved their debt to asset ratio, which was a very smart thing to do. But they did not innovate into new crops grown in new ways. The reason they did not innovate is an important piece in regard to what the state can do to help farmers. Farmers didn't innovate because nothing else changed. There were no institutions to help them market alternative crops. There was no information available to help them look at alternative ways of growing and marketing alternative crops. We made no institutional changes and expected farmers to change on their own.

What we had in place were the elevators that took corn, soybeans or wheat, while the very innovative ones might take sunflowers. There was no market for new products and no commodity associations which profited from more of a new crop being grown through check offs. They were no researchers receiving money from the non-existent commodity associations, and thus no one to lobby for extending the loan deficiency payments for new crops -- but there were there for the old crops, plus one, soybeans, introduced after the 1930s.

Participant: I need to argue with you a bit. We grew corn and soybeans because corn and soybeans had more value than any other crop. Some years ago, sunflowers became the "rage" but sunflowers could not compete with soybeans as far as what you could grow on an acre of ground. You could grow violets rather than corn, but you don't get as much out of an acre, so that is why they are growing corn and soybeans because you get more per acre than you do with the alternative crops.

Exactly and this is because it is the way it has always been. You are rewarded by the deficiency payments by how many bushels you grow. The market didn't make corn and soybeans profitable, the U.S. government did.

Participant: Yes, it's all set. These products are worth more than anything else one would grow.

But is it worth more only because the government is paying you for growing this particular crop? Sometimes it is truly worth more and sometime it is not. We need more research to determine what are other things we can grow and market. The tricky thing here is not looking for the

"miracle" crop. Sunflowers are more risky. Farmers in Minnesota adopted soybeans in the 1960s relatively quickly, as the crop was supported by extension and research and marketing mechanisms.

Participant: I come from that area and in the long hall you are right, but at the time this was a big innovation. This was a big step to take.

We need to do more studies to learn what was put into place to allow farmers to include soybeans in rotation. Extension really pushed it. You had processors ready to be there to buy. You had a whole industry of input and a whole institutional structure there to help with this change. My point is that farmers are doing what is smart. But what is smart financially has to do with the institutional structure that surrounds us.

The price of soybeans now is really low but this year farmers have loan deficiency payments for each bushel of soybeans. What are they going to plant next year? Soybeans. This is the only smart thing to do because this is the way the programs are set up. It would be too risky to try something else because the whole institutional structure in the state and the private sector make it more profitable to grow corn and soybeans. But, that institutional structure is not based on worldwide prices.

The point I'm trying to make is that the government programs makes farmers grow corn and soybeans. But we might need to look at world prices to see if it's worth our while as tax payers to do so. My question is, "Why are we planting more soybeans acres than ever in this country when soybeans are at world market lows?" There are a lot of people growing a lot of soybeans. We also see that increasing as a result of new technologies, such as Round-up ready soybeans and Round-up ready corn, where you can grow and manage more per acre. In terms of rural communities, supporting people to grow soybeans may mean encouraging one person to grow many, many acres of soybeans. But that person may be someone who has nothing to do with that community.

Paying for Producing What Society Needs

What is it that farmers produce? Farmers do a lot more than produce food and fiber. Farmers are indeed stewards of the land. We understand more and more that the quality of our water depends on what happens to the land, yet we reward farmers for fence row-to-fence row cropping because the biggest reward is the crop deficiency payment, which is based on per bushel of beans or corn.

So, we need to get the state of Minnesota to pay farmers for producing for the public good.

Participant: Who determines that?

Clean water?

Participant: No, the public good. O.K., clean water. They understand corn.

Yes, they understand corn, but why do we give farmers all of this funding? Is it because we want all of this corn and soybeans? Is it because we know what to do with it? No. Why do we subsidize corn and soybeans when we don't get good prices? Who defines that public good means that corn and soybeans farmers are worth more than wheat farmers? It's the powerful politicians. Why do they do it? Because the Corn and Soybean Associations are much stronger than the Wheat Growers.

The state acts upon what is defined as the public good, which is determined by pressure groups. The market does what is profitable. The market will always do what is profitable and they say that they are acting the way they do because it is profitable. It is the role of the state in a capitalist society to make it profitable to do what is right. Who defines what is right? This is what civil society, organized pressure groups, do. Increasingly, the public is defining water quality as what is right. We are also understanding that farmers are the guardians of our soil and water, but under the current situation, it is not profitable for farmers to do what contributes to the public good. Hopefully we are also understanding that there is no reason to think that farmers should be any more altruistic than anybody else.

What is it that farmers really do for society? Drinkable water is going to be the issue of the future. We have seen that happen in New York State already where the state is paying farmers to do whole farm planning. This is not easy for farmers to do because all of the institutions are set up to make it profitable to do what they have always done.

What state options would encourage farmers to look at alternatives? Some options could be:

- Support the multiple functions of agriculture
- Pay farmers for the ecosystem services they provide
- Make a change in institutional structures so farmers are paid more for doing a better job providing those services, rather than rewarding bad actors for shaping up.
- Enforce laws and standards against farmers who don't comply.

We hesitate to do that now, but enforcement is a critical issue. In Iowa we let the public good go, and we have very bad water quality as a result. Thus Iowans have had to spend a lot of money cleaning up our water. If we only enforce the negative sanctions without positively encouraging people to make changes, it won't work. Farmers really do not like regulations. Part of this is because we have all of these stupid best-management practices that someone in Washington, D.C. thinks up. Because the Natural Resource Conservation Services department has done no research on what the real impacts of specific best management practices (BMPs) are in specific environmental contexts, farmers say, "Putting in this mandated practice makes no sense". But we have NRCS so poorly staffed that farmers are not given the latitude to determine what makes sense on their own land, so they will go for an outcome standard rather than a design standard.

What is really happening to the water? There are ways we can monitor the water but this means making institutional changes. This is where a whole community can work together. You can get inputs from a distance, but services are purchased locally. When you pay for services, you get new and exciting custom service groups to come in.

Participant: Can you expand on that? Are you saying that the community might be able to provide services, but farmers would still need to get inputs from somewhere else?

Yes, but the services provided by the community would include things like installing, caring for, and repairing buffer, rather than the traditional inputs of seed, feed and agrochemicals. One reason why farmers don't put in riparian buffers is because you have to plant them at the same time you are planting corn. So, you create new custom service enterprises that are based on skill. We then have a whole new area of services such farm management and integrated pest management (IPM) that require skilled people in rural areas running their own businesses.

Farmers can afford these new custom services (as they are increasingly paying for custom spraying, custom harvesting and custom planting) if they are paid for the ecosystem services these custom services produce. That is what we as tax payers should be paying for, rather than corn and soybeans. Farmers don't want to take welfare, and the current institutions -- both market and governmental -- demand that you must grow corn and soybeans. We need to let the farmer work on these other issues. In the support of multi-faceted rural development, it is very important that we look at these things within the context of community. Farmers need to get together with people in the community.

We have developed a research tool that the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, which covers the 12 North Central region states, used with some folks in Illinois. We looked at the question that if something changes on the farm to make resource flows, what has to change off the farm to make this work? If it was more labor, how was that labor supplied? If it would take a different kind of processing, where would that come from? This gives community people the opportunity to change in tandem with what farmers are doing. Instead of hiring farm laborers, they are hiring custom service people who have their own businesses. It's much easier to get good help from an independent business owner than it is just hiring folks. Anyone who has tried to hire folks in the last year or so knows what I'm talking about. You buy the service, not the person's time, when you go to an independent business owner.

The state of Minnesota should support more local food systems and give alternatives for people to produce and buy food locally. One example is HACCP, which is the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, which is the new way we are now doing meat inspections for meat safety. This will be implement into a number of other food crops value chains in regard to the food safety regime. The state of Minnesota can help get the record systems up and running for small processors to help make them competitive.

While some small processors view HACCP as being regulatory and extremely costly, it can also be a way to be extremely flexible and to have a cutting edge in the market. Again, this is an area where it is important to have state support to help small processors, who will then provide alternatives for people who feel they can only contract with large packers in order to have a way to slaughter their animals. These small processors need serious help in getting funds.

IBP can hire one person or a team of people who can make all of their plants presumably HACCP ready, although we are now seeing that they keep lousy records and HACCP requires

good trace-back records. But, there are ways we can make things happen to keep small meat processors in place.

We need to provide experiments for alternatives, but let's not just experiment on the farm. This research must also be linked to pass-the-farm-gate stuff.

Let's look at the farmer who decides to grow flax. Many people are saying that flax is going to be a good product to grow.

Participant: But people aren't paying enough for it.

You're right, they aren't paying enough for it, so this person cannot just grow flax. This is an innovative farmer but the community must be innovative with him, so you will need somebody who is a specialty processor of flax oil or a specialty processor of linen. You must have these kinds of industries going on at the same time so this farmer can see a reason to start growing flax in terms of making a profit. Farmers can grow lots of things. They cannot sell them because the value chains are not there. It is appropriate for the state of Minnesota to help create the value chains, which is not always value added enterprises but linking the producer with existing end-users.

Participant: We would love to have alternative crops if we didn't have to harvest it in the fall. It would have been for weed control and that would have been good, but they didn't pay enough for it.

We have to figure out how we can put market institutions in place so that this can be profitable. Although farmers are very good at growing things, they are not very good at selling things. It is the institutions that are in place that can help make this different. My argument for rural communities is that that must be in the context of rural community. Obviously, it must be linked, so you will need coalitions that take you to and from a variety of markets. This is a place where public dollars could help us identify these kinds of alternatives. In these cases, public dollars can take risks so that entrepreneurs can then enter an arena to complete the value chain.

What are public dollars currently doing? They are heavily supporting market development that tends to be very unimaginative, like industrial parks. The disadvantage rural communities have is that they are distant and dispersed. They really don't know what is "hot" and who is buying what is "hot". This is a service that could come from the public sector to help us at least begin looking into alternatives.

Institution building should be aimed at the market, because the market is so efficient at distributing goods and services. But, innovative institutions will only happen in urban areas unless we give rural areas a "jump start" because of their dispersion and distance. We just don't have those kinds of contacts. One contact is not enough. People are tired of someone coming in with a "miracle" crop idea and then losing their shirts, but rural folks have tended to believe that person because there are not a lot of alternative sources. So, the question is: How do we get those alternative sources of information to the farmer? I believe this would be an appropriate role for extensionists tied to the land grant universities.

Often, the public sector "jump starts" something that later becomes private sector. If extension now decided to do artificial insemination, there would be local protests from the artificial inseminators. But, extension started to do this for free to clarify that there was going to be a market.

Another example is when extensionists handed out highbred seed to radically change how farmers grew corn. Extension also handed out soybean seed to help introduce the crop. The current source of both those seeds is now firmly in the private sector. In other words, the public sector took the risk that allowed market enterprises to emerge.

We giving farmers loan deficiency payments to make farming less risky. Why do farmers put their crops into commodity crops?. Now we have more specialization and crops that were ultimately meant to be income supports for the bulk of rural residents embedded in rural communities. The situation has changed. Little of the billions of dollars Congress has appropriated in the last few years to make up for low commodity prices has remained in rural communities.

The state of Minnesota needs to promote farm community entrepreneurial partnerships. Let's not just make the farmer the only innovators. If you can't make money from your innovations, it won't work. My notion is that the problem is not just that this is the way the markets are. It is the way institutions are that in turn make markets function the way they do. What we must do for rural America is understand that we've had policies in place for 60 years that encouraged people to do these program crops. From experience, they learned this was not profitable. So, we must invest real money in allowing alternatives to be put in place. That means paying farmers to produce the things we really value and that is determined through a political process. The nice thing is that water quality is something most people acknowledge as being very important. When we see towns that are dealing with these issues, we see that they are making a difference. We must not blame farmers but acknowledge that we are all allies in this.

Looking at communities is an excellent way to bring about these needed changes. The community gives us a better handle as to what is going to happen in rural areas.

All institutional structures taught farmers not to be involved in their communities, as their real future rested in Washington, D.C. If pork producers wanted to increase pork prices, their commodity associations encouraged the federal government to buy more pork for the school lunch program in order to bring up pork prices. It worked. We need programs on the state level that show that involvement at the local level can also work in creating alternative institutions that strengthen local communities, rather than make them irrelevant to what happens on the land. And that such involvement helps farmers, not just agriculture as a sector.

Agriculture Study Committee Members

Gertrude Ulrich
LWV Richfield
7601 Aldrich
Richfield, 55423
612/866-8171

Jane Bennett
LWV St. Cloud
4146 Pine Point Rd.
Sartell, 56377
320/252-8779
egarver@csbsju.edu

Eunice Biel
RR 1 Box 113
Harmony, 55939
507/937-3333
biel.eunice@mayo.edu

Adeline Blowers
LWV Austin
1905 SW 5th Ave.
Austin, 55912-1511
507/437-3547

Anne Borgen
LWV Golden Valley
1811 Pennsylvania Ave N
Golden Valley, 55427
612/545-7076
woodhill60@aol.com

Georgianna Campbell
LWV Northfield
10834 Farrel Ave.
Northfield, 55057-4463
507/645-7488

Nancy Gundersen
LWV St. Cloud Area
806 S 6th St.
St. Cloud, 56301
320/252-9651

Stephanie Henriksen
LWV Northfield
1866 130th St. E
Dundas, 55019
507/645-7086
dkamis@informns.k12.mn.us

Brian Karlsson-Barnes
216 Woodley St. W
Northfield, 55057
507/645-2527
hgardens@rconnect.com

Janis Larson
LWV Fridley
3812 Lincoln St. NE
Columbia Heights, 55421
612/788-0728

Deanna Lederer
LWV St. Cloud Area
5811 Michael Ct.
St. Cloud, 56303
320/253-5704
dlederer@cloudnet.com

Carol McCarter
LWV BP/O/MG
6211 Eagle Lake Dr
Maple Grove, 55369
612/564-9383 (FAX)

Connie Metcalf
LWV Fridley
860 W. Moore Lake Dr.
Fridley, 55432
612/571-3596
cjmet@netO.net

Beverly Montgomery
LWV MEPH
18321 Ridgewood Rd
Minnetonka, 55345
612/470-1098
wmontgomery@ieee.org

Helen Palmer
LWV Minneapolis
2405 Sheridan Ave S
Minneapolis, 55405
612/377-5972
thepalmers@uswest.net

League of Women Voters of Minnesota, 550 Rice St., St. Paul, MN 55103 651/224-5445 • 651/290-2145 (F) • lwvmn@mtn.org

Linda Peck
LWV St. Cloud Area
12299 Sauk River Rd
St. Cloud, 56301
320/685-3365

Mary & Eldred Phillips
LWV Owatonna
610 Carl Anna Pl.
Owatonna, 55060
507/455-2622

JoAnne Rohricht
2191 Commonwealth Ave.
St. Paul, 55108
651/645-6043
tojoro@worldnet.att.net

Harold Swanson
210 E Florence
Glenwood, IA 51534
712/527-9895

Barbara Vaile
LWV Northfield
4151 320 St. W
Northfield, 55057
507/645-7315
bvaile@nco.northfield.mn.us

Charmaine L. Wright
11513 Karow Tr.
Nerstrand, 55053
507/645-8853
aevenson@rconnect.com

Ex officio:

Judy Duffy, President
Andrea Lex, Development & Communications

League of Women Voters of Minnesota
550 Rice Street
St. Paul, 55103
651/224-5445
651/290-2145 (F)
lwvmn@mtn.org

LWV Agriculture Study Committee
Minutes from meeting September 2, 1999

Jane Bennett, vice chair, conducted the meeting and later in the meeting agreed to chair the committee. She thanked Gertrude Ulrich for accepting the responsibility to initially chair the committee and to begin the agriculture study project.

Jane reviewed protocol procedures: raise hands to be recognized, order of wishing to speak will be noted, and, one person speaking at a time so that all can participate effectively.

Committee members spoke their ideas, hopes, and wishes for the outcome of this committee's work. These were recorded on an easel tablet by Judy Duffy.

Andrea Lex requested ideas for sources to fund the study, which will cost about \$30,000. Andrea says that large agribusiness companies are not a source.

Fall Regional Workshops will be held to introduce Leagues to the topics under consideration in the Ag Study. To prepare for the workshops the following sub-committees will function:

- Coordinate articles and info for the workshops from various sources:
(Sally Sawyer, Charmaine Wright, Helen Palmer, Adeline Blowers, Stephanie Henriksen, JoAnne Rohricht, Jane Bennett)
 - a few articles to give a notion about the scope of the study.
 - visuals of data from the Farm Rally in Waconia
 - 'words' from interviews of farm families - condensed
 - packet from Washington, D.C. gathering of farming community (30 from MN are attending) from Eunice Biel.
 - suggestions of activities local leagues could accomplish
 - video On This Farm (27 minutes) - low key and even-handed
- Refine the timeline, glossary and prepare a bibliography.
(Deanna Lederer and Adeline Blowers)

Other suggestions to introduce the topic to Leagues:

- Get materials to local Leagues ASAP so members will be alert to current publications regarding ag issues.
- Local Leagues can be urged to form ag committees.
- Blurbs can be written for local League newsletters. (Anne Borgen shared what she had written for her League's newsletter.)

Workshops will be held on the following dates:

Red Wing

October 2

Presenters:

Helen Palmer, Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Barbara Vaile

Brainerd

October 21

Presenters:

Jane Bennett, Nancy Gunderson, Deanna Lederer, Linda Peck

West Metro Alliance **October 28**

Presenters:

Anne Borgen, Carol McCarter

Roseville/etc.

October 30

Presenters:

Janis Larson, Gertrude Ulrich

(Other regions may convene meetings if they cannot make it to the set regional meetings.)

Farm to Fork Symposium - September 18 at Mall of America, Bloomington.
Attendance is urged. If needed, fee of \$25 can be reimbursed from the LWVMN Education Fund .

State Legislative Agriculture Committee: Adeline Blowers attended the Freeborn/Maurer County Meeting. She reported that only Republican legislators attended. They received info from various ag groups. Adeline felt most legislators did not understand the issues. The Hearing did not allow for speakers from the area.

National Farmer: Eldred Phillips shared materials from this publication.

Broken Heartland: Stephanie Henriksen gave a brief synopsis of book the group is reading.

NEXT MEETING ON OCTOBER 7, 1999, 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.

Agenda Item: Form sub-committees to meet outside of main Ag Committee to refine some info and data for the whole committee.

Recorder: Beverly Montgomery.