

The Report updated Nearly final <sup>MISC-PT02a 50</sup> Version  
Al + Beata to Dave's copy. The final draft.  
Take 10 or so

**WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

~~REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON~~

**REPORT ON THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE**

~~October 2, 2000~~

Prepared by:

Office of Representative Al Ott  
October 2, 2000

with assistance from  
Legislative Council Staff

Chairperson Assembly  
Ag Comm  
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Next page

*Wisconsin State Assembly  
Committee on Agriculture  
Representative Al Ott, Chairperson*

*Report on the Crisis in Wisconsin Agriculture*

October 2, 2000

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming economy are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades-long trend. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the economy of the support community. An economically weakened support community further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our rural community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

### **Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture**

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, was determined to respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled a statewide series of listening sessions/public hearings to hear the concerns of the farming community. He wanted to hear directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to seek their views on state and federal agricultural policy. In addition, he used the hearings as an opportunity for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.

- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the directive of the State Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of the hearings was not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, they were intended as a means to channel the views of the Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.

Four public hearings were held in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. For the convenience of farmers, three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm. At each location, participants had unique issues of concern. Together the four locations were representative of the entire state.

Members of the public were invited to contribute testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were asked to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were assembled to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. Several area legislators also attended the hearings.

The subcommittees heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by current low commodity prices; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many shared ideas for local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

## Committee Report

The final results of these listening sessions are presented in this report. Documented in outline form, Appendix 1 presents a summary of the statements and suggestions that were made in oral and written testimony before the four subcommittees. The suggestions are presented in the outline as stated in the hearings, without further elaboration or refinement.

The design of Appendix 1 recognizes that the various aspects of the farmers' predicament must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions collected at the hearings were separated into four categories based on area of jurisdiction. Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in current federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, certain environmental regulations, and food production and distribution. Comments relating to these issues will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and in developing future policies. On matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality, animal health issues and certain other environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators for consideration in evaluating current programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and developing future policy. Issues such as zoning laws, development rights and problems related to local agricultural marketing cooperatives would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer; the report identifies these as suggestions for action by local governments and individual farmers.

Appendix 2 shows the dates and locations of the hearings. It lists the names of the participating committee members, committee staff, members of the public who testified or who observed, resource people and media representatives who were present. The table in Appendix 2 shows the numbers of individuals who participated in each hearing.

The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This report will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to state and local policy makers.

**APPENDIX 1:**

**SUGGESTIONS MADE TO SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS BY  
THE WISCONSIN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY**

## **I. Federal**

### **A. Prices and competition**

1. General federal policies
  - a) Reconsider the current low price/high production national food policy
  - b) Declare a federal state of emergency regarding agricultural commodity prices
  - c) Set higher support prices
  - d) Redirect federal spending to support agriculture
  - e) Provide an adequate safety net for farmers
  - f) Manage the supply of agricultural products, including controls on production
  - g) Declare food to be a critical national resource
  - h) Open all foreign markets to US produce, including China and Cuba
  - i) Address the issue of subsidies for foreign competitors
2. Milk and cheese pricing
  - a) Improve the reporting of milk prices paid by processors, for example, monthly reporting
  - b) Consider a northwest dairy coalition instead of the Midwest dairy compact
  - c) Bring California into the milk pricing system
  - d) Investigate the prices charged for cheese
  - e) Improve inventory reporting for butter and cheese
  - f) Investigate inequities in volume pricing
  - g) Consider environmental compliance costs in determining prices
  - h) Ask the Attorney General to investigate agricultural commodity pricing
  - i) Use anti-trust laws to address noncompetitive practices of buyers and suppliers
3. Reporting of production
  - a) Require full reporting of all cheese produced
  - b) Require reporting of whey produced, especially in connection with nonfat dry milk
4. The farm-consumer price gap
  - a) Investigate how food prices are affected by "middlemen"
  - b) Audit factors that determine the price of cheese
  - c) Impose quotas on milk solid proteins
5. Impose quotas on agricultural commodities
  - a) Cease the importation of milk protein concentrate (MPC) until prices are higher
  - b) Determine when to impose quotas based on farmers receiving cost of production and cost of living

### **B. Food production and distribution issues**

1. Use of MPC in cheese
  - a) Investigate inappropriate use of MPC
  - b) Test MPC in cheese and enforce restrictions
2. Labeling
  - a) Require country of origin labels for agricultural products
  - b) Require labeling of products to highlight differences between US and foreign products
  - c) Use labels to identify practices used to produce food
  - d) Establish a "family farm" label for agricultural products
3. Inspection of meat
  - a) Allow state inspection of meat shipped in interstate commerce
  - b) Prevent use of the US inspection label to imply that meat is produced in the US
4. Surplus food
  - a) Use US food surpluses in overseas disaster relief and local nutrition programs
  - b) Use oversupply of milk to make powdered milk and do research
  - c) Place surpluses in state-controlled "welfare warehouses"

**C. Environmental regulations**

1. Adopt reasonable regulations in the coastal zone management and similar programs
2. Have the EPA develop manure storage regulations that are specific to individual states

**D. Programs to assist farmers**

1. Create a separate program to support dairy grazing
2. Allow subordinations in agricultural loan guarantees to reduce costs of refinancing
3. Create a program of direct payments to farmers based on a farmer's prior year gross income (i.e., farmer's "unemployment compensation")
4. Provide access to affordable health insurance
5. Increase the amount of land entered in conservation reserve

**E. Miscellaneous**

1. Eliminate block voting by cooperatives
2. Review whether the benefits to farmers under Social Security will be adequate in light of low farm income during a farmer's earning years
3. Keep the Mississippi River open as a transportation route

**II. State**

**A. Financial programs to assist farmers**

1. Develop programs to assist direct marketing by small and medium sized farms; connect farmer and consumer directly

2. Involve the Department of Commerce in the agricultural industry
3. Provide loans for farmers to develop niche markets
4. Change the WHEDA CROP program to provide assistance for more than a one-year period
5. Ask the Governor to request emergency funding from the President
6. Create a buyout program for Johne's disease to remove cattle and reduce milk supply
7. Provide access to affordable health insurance
  - a) Fund BadgerCare
  - b) Address preexisting medical conditions
8. Marketing
  - a) Allow the milk marketing board to set the base price for milk and to lobby congress on behalf of WI milk producers
  - b) Market WI cheese nationwide

***B. Technical assistance programs to assist farmers***

1. Give PSC authority to order electric coops to address stray voltage

***C. Taxes***

1. Use value assessment
  - a) Expand use value assessment to include forested land on a farm
  - b) Differentiate between agricultural and recreational woodlands in use value assessment
  - c) Make use value assessment available only to land that is permanently in agricultural use
  - d) Evaluate the program to determine benefits to farmers; report on the effects on farms
  - e) Consider applicability of use value assessment to farm improvements
2. Eliminate sales taxes paid by farmers

***D. Food quality***

1. Implement quality checks on imported agricultural commodities

***E. Animal health***

1. Address tuberculosis concerns, especially in relation to white-tailed deer
2. Johne's tests
  - a) Speed up results
  - b) Lower costs
3. Change implied warranty law to exclude Johne's and pseudorabies
4. Reimburse for TB testing

***F. Environmental regulations***

1. Ensure adequate staffing at DNR
2. Reduce the costs of manure storage regulations
3. Nonpoint source pollution
  - a) Adopt standards that recognize differences in terrain throughout the state
  - b) Provide funding to install facilities
  - c) Review navigable waters regulations as applied to farms
  - d) Provide that all farms are eligible for payments, not just ones that are expanding
4. Do not require improvement of drainage ditches unless farmers choose to
5. Speed up decisions by DNR on permits
6. Provide similar enforcement of discharge regulations in rural areas as in urban areas

**G. Crop and livestock damage**

1. Sandhill cranes and wild turkeys
  - a) Pay crop damage
2. Coyotes
  - a) Impose a bounty
  - b) Pay for damages to livestock
  - c) Ease hunting restrictions
3. Generally, reduce wildlife populations
  - a) Set up programs to match hunters and farmers who need deer herd thinned

**H. Miscellaneous**

1. Provide full funding for the morning milk program
2. Replace soda machines with milk machines in schools
3. Investigate progress in addressing stray voltage
4. Incentives for meat packers to buy from small producers

**III. Local**

**A. Purchase of development rights (PDR) programs**

1. Ensure that PDR assists farmers rather than those who remove land from agricultural use
2. Administer PDR through an elected body
3. Review restrictions placed on farms with land affected by PDR

**B. Zoning**

1. Allow and facilitate the placement of large scale animal agriculture in areas zoned for exclusive agricultural use

**IV. Farmers**

**A. Production**

1. Adopt more efficient practices
2. Use caution in adopting biotechnology, which will increase production and reduce prices

**B. Marketing**

1. Increase use of futures markets
2. Focus on national and international markets
3. Educate the public regarding animal rights issues

**C. Coops**

1. Increase the use of cooperative marketing
2. Participate directly in marketing coops
3. Limit imports to coops and limit processing only to member's products
4. Attend annual meetings and participate

**D. Use the state insurance pool**

**E. Work to attract a new generation into farming**

APPENDIX 2:

PARTICIPANTS IN SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS

This appendix presents information regarding the hearings. The table below identifies the location and date of each hearing and summarizes participation in the hearings; the following pages list the participants. The appendix identifies only those people who registered at the hearings or otherwise made themselves known to the committee clerk. The total number of individuals who participated in the four hearings is slightly less than the sum of the totals for the individual hearings because of committee members, staff and resource people who attended more than one hearing. However, the total participation was greater than is shown here since some members of the public did not register. In particular, it is estimated that 20 to 30 members of the public were present but did not register at the August 28 hearing in Durand.

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*Participants in Committee Hearings*

<i>Hearing Location and Date</i>	<i>Committee Members and Staff</i>	<i>Members of the Public Testifying</i>	<i>Members of the Public Observing</i>	<i>Resource People and Media</i>	<i>Total</i>
Equity Livestock, Richland Center, August 24, 2000	7	15	15	13	50
Spindler Dairy, Durand, August 28, 2000	8	24	36	<del>13</del>	<del>81</del>
Equity Livestock, Johnson Creek, August 29, 2000	7	14	15	15	51
Equity Livestock, Reedsville, August 31, 2000	9	15	10	16	50

*ADD*

*\*A note to all who participated: We acknowledge the <sup>potential</sup> ~~possibilities~~ concerning errors and omissions and apologize ~~in~~ ~~advance~~ for any that may have occurred.*

**Subcommittee on the State of Agriculture**  
**Richland Center, WI**  
**Thursday, August 24, 2000**

**Committee Members**

Rep. Al Ott, Chair  
Rep. Joan Spillner  
Rep. John Ainsworth  
Rep. John Steinbrink

**Committee Staff**

Mark Patronsky, Attorney, Legislative Council  
Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Joe Malkasian, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant  
at Arms

**Members of the Public Testifying**

Martin Tollofsen, Fennimore, banker; member of the Wisconsin Bankers Association Board  
Chuck Stevenson, Viola, raises sheep in Richland County  
Dan Deneen, Black Earth, worked as a crop consultant for 20 years, has grown organic vegetables for 10 years  
Randy Jasper, Muscoda, operates a dairy farm; has a full-time off-farm job  
Jerry Lehman, Reedsburg, member of the Sauk County Soil and Water Conservation Committee  
Norman Fruit, Viola, owner of an 80-cow dairy  
Joe Schaitel, Richland Center, owner of a 400-acre farm, raises heifers, but is not involved in dairy production  
Sheryl Albers, Representative, 50<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Robert Franke, Bloom City  
Raymond Schmitz, Richland Center  
John Oncken, Oncken Communications  
Eric Drachenberg, Arena, Wisconsin Pork Producers, employee of a feed company; cash crop farmer  
Dick Hauser, Richland Center, formerly with the Cattlemen's Association, now a farm supply representative  
Ron Lund, Sun Prairie, representing Farmland Industries  
Michael Myers, Platteville, VP of Ag Lending, First National Bank of Platteville

**Members of the Public Observing**

Rick Burknumer, Richland Center  
Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft  
Albert Greenheck, Lone Rock

Ann Greenheck, Lone Rock  
Harold Huffman, Richland Center, farmer  
Lynn Jasper, Muscoda  
W.A. Johnson, Portage, representing Alliant Energy  
Russell Koch, Muscoda, farmer  
Paul Larsen, Viroqua, representing WI Ag Bankers Assc.  
Jim Myers, Madison  
Dan Redington, Wonewoc, dairy farmer  
Shawn Redington, Wonewoc  
Mary Stadele, Richland Center  
Leo Stoltz, Hillpoint  
Jennifer Vogt, Madison, Ag Technology Studies  
UW-Madison

**Resource People**

Ron Touchen, Deputy State Statistician, DATCP  
Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP  
Barbara Tock, District Director, Farm Service Agency  
USDA  
Grant Loy, Richland Center Ex. Dir., FSA USDA  
Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP  
James Langdon, WHEDA  
Bruce Jones, UW Center for Dairy Profitability  
Steve Kohlstedt, UW Extension Richland County  
Tim Leonard, manager, Equity Livestock Co-op  
Richland Center  
Mike Burke, Equity Livestock Co-op  
Greg Beck, Equity Livestock Co-op

**Media Representatives**

Lorry Erickson, Regional Editor, The Country Today  
Stacy Kleist, WRCO Radio, Richland Center

Subcommittee on Agricultural Issues

Durand, WI

Monday, August 28, 2000

Committee Members

Rep. Al Ott, Chair  
Rep. Tom Sykora  
Rep. Barbara Gronemus  
Rep. Joe Plouff

Committee Staff

David Lovell, Senior Analyst, Legislative Council  
Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Erin Napralla, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Steve Krieser, Executive Assistant, Office of Sargeant at Arms

Members of the Public Testifying

Mel Pittman, Plum City, dairy farmer  
Jan Morrow, Cornell, dairy farmer, candidate for State Assembly  
Arnie Weisenbeck, Durand, dairy farmer  
Arnold Spindler, Pepin County, dairy farmer  
Tom Rotering, Fountain City, dairy farmer  
Steve Haines, Arcadia, dairy farmer  
Nancy Iverson, Plum City, dairy farmer  
Jamie Voelker, Rice Lake, dairy farmer  
Jay Richardson, Spring Valley, dairy farmer  
Mary Anderson, Whitehall, beef farmer  
Willard Haigh, Eleva, retired dairy farmer  
Dennis Iverson, Plum City, farmer  
Ron Huppert, Arkansaw, dairy farmer  
Sam Danzinger, Durand, dairy farmer  
Steven Kling, Taylor  
Jeff Jackson, Clayton  
Jill Lucht, Chippewa Falls, dairy farmer; representative of the Wisconsin Farmers Union  
Corliss Handrickson, Beldenville, dairy farmer  
Joe Bragger, Independence, dairy farmer  
Andy Huppert, River Falls, dairy farmer  
Marty Hallock, Mondovi, farmer  
Pat Kling, Taylor  
Jonathan Wayne, Durand  
Bob Swenson, River Falls

Members of the Public Observing

Ted Baier, Eau Galle  
Bernard A. Bauer, Durand  
Lorraine Brunner, Durand, Pepin County Farmers Union

James W. Brunner, Arkansaw  
John Caturia, Arkansaw  
Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft  
Jim Connolly, Mondovi, Countryside Co-op  
Cory Cutsforth, Rice Lake, dairy farmer  
Donald Danzinger, Durand, farmer  
Jackie Danzinger, Durand, dairy farmer  
Gary Evans, Mondovi  
Ed Gunderson, Durand, Countryside Co-op  
George Hayden, Mondovi  
Sally Hayden, Mondovi  
John Heck, Mondovi  
Leroy Heck, Mondovi  
Keith Hullopeter, Pepin  
Robert Ickler, Jr., Roberts  
Robert Ickler, Sr., Roberts  
Lynn Johnson, Pepin  
Douglas E. Knoepke, Durand  
Bernard Luebker, Plum City  
Kurt D. Manore, Pepin  
John Meixner, Durand  
Terry Mesch, Arkansaw  
Ken C. Olson, Menomonie  
Dave Prissel, Durand, Lone Oak Dairy, Inc.  
Matt Radle, Mondovi  
Jeff Schlosser, Durand  
Charles Spindler, Durand, Spindler Dairy  
Rod Spindler, Durand  
Kerry Suchla, Arcadia  
Sandy Sheets, Durand  
Robert Sheets, Durand  
Paul Wayne, Durand  
Dell Whelan, Mondovi

Resource People

Bob Battaglia, Statistician, DATCP  
Bob Cropp, UW Extension Agent, Pepin Cty  
James Langdon, WHEDA  
Ken McMahon, Elsworth, Co-op  
Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP  
Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP  
Joe Tregoning, Deputy Secretary, DATCP  
Julie Dokkestfull, Pepin Co. Exec. Dir., FSA

Media Representative

Gene Kirschner, Durand, WRDN Radio  
Mary Trettin, Durand, WRDN Radio  
Dan Lyksett, Leader-Telegram  
Rep. of Courier-Wedge (local paper)

ADD

Bob Basold - #

Eau Claire Radio

**Subcommittee on the Agricultural Industry**  
**Johnson Creek, WI**  
**Tuesday, August 29, 2000**

**Committee Members**

Rep. Al Ott, Chair  
Rep. Steve Kestell  
Rep. John Ainsworth  
Rep. John Steinbrink

**Committee Staff**

David Lovell, Senior Analyst, Legislative Council  
Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Pat McKee, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant  
at Arms

**Members of the Public Testifying**

Mark Christenson, Lake Mills, member of the  
Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board  
Mike Martin, Hayward, member of the Wisconsin  
Milk Marketing Board  
Sue Schaefer, Watertown, dairy farmer  
Norman Bartel, Watertown, retired farmer  
Charles Untz, dairy farmer  
Vern Newhouse, Kaukauna, farmer  
Dave Matthes, Viola, Wisconsin Livestock Dealers  
Association  
Harold Schoessow, Mequon, farmer  
George Roemer, Hartford  
Gail Goehring, buyer for Equity Livestock Sales  
Sue Marx, Helenville  
Peter Haakenson, Evansville  
Raymond Ireland, retired farmer  
Rodell L. Singert, Mukwonago, Waukesha County  
Board Supervisor

**Members of the Public Observing**

Dennis Bries, Johnson Creek  
Richard Brye, Middleton  
Richard W. Fink, Mayville, WMMB and self  
Floyd Froelich, Sullivan  
James P. Furlong, Sr., Watertown  
Ronald Griebenow, Watertown, dairy farmer  
Phil Humphrey, Helenville  
Russell Horst, Rubicon  
Aaron Kutz, Jefferson, Kutz Dairy  
Ron Kutz, Jefferson, Kutz Dairy  
Joe Reising, Watertown  
B. Weisensel, Watertown  
A.C. Weisensel, Iron Ridge, Horicon State Bank

John W. Winkelman, Watertown  
Mike Wollner, Neosho, Horicon State Bank

**Resource People**

Peter M. Overlien, USDA FSA  
Jerry Doll, UW-Extension Agronomy  
Ron Touchen, Deputy State Statistician, DATCP  
Gene Weittenhiller, Loan Officer, WHEDA  
Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP  
Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP  
Prof. Ken Bolton, Cooperative Extension Southern  
County and Area  
Tim Griswald, Dairy 2020  
Bruce Jones, UW Center for Dairy Profitability  
Sen. Scott Fitzgerald, 13th Senate District  
Rep. David Ward, 37th Assembly District  
Matt Hauser, Governor's Office Staff  
Neale Jones, Manager, Equity Livestock Co-op  
Johnson Creek  
Mike Burke, Equity Livestock Co-op

**Media Representative**

Gloria Hafemeister, Wisconsin State Farmer

**Subcommittee on the Agricultural Economy**  
**Reedsville, WI**  
**Thursday, August 31, 2000**

**Committee Members**

Rep. Al Ott, Chair  
Rep. Steve Kestell  
Rep. Joan Spillner  
Rep. John Steinbrink  
Rep. Sarah Waukau

**Committee Staff**

Mark Patronsny, Attorney, Legislative Council  
Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Erin Napralla, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
Sherab Phunky, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant at Arms

**Members of the Public Testifying**

Gerald Jaeger, Campbellsport, farmer  
Randy Geiger, dairy farmer, Reedsville; member of the Wisconsin Agri-Business Council  
Don Cooper, Glenbeulah, farmer  
Norb Van de Hei, DePere, Van de Hei, dairy farmer  
Dale Behnke, Reedsville, veal grower, Wisconsin Veal Grower Association Member  
Wayne Craig, New Holstein, farmer  
Wayne Mueller, St. Cloud: Investors Community Bank, Manitowoc  
Gerald Vande-Heiden, Seymour  
Allen Kracht, Newton, dairy farmer  
Willard Krueger, Brillion  
Rosalie Geiger, Reedsville, Ran-Rose Farms  
Norm Alsum, Brandon, Alsum Veal Farm  
Paul Huisenga, Brandon  
Ray Mueller, Chilton, Wisconsin State Farmer Press  
Bill Shogren, Seymour Times

**Member of the Public Observing**

Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft  
Dave DuBois, Greenleaf, Quality Veal  
Lee Engelbrecht, Two Rivers  
Martin Huizenga, Jr., Brandon  
Gary Leick, Jr., Greenleaf, Gary Leick Veal  
Bill Parkinson, Chilton  
Ron Redig, Chilton, Reedsville Equity  
Mike Salter, Black Creek  
Ervin Sinkula, Two Rivers, Irish Acres

Bernard Vander Heiden, Kaukauna

**Resource People**

Scott Gunderson, Manitowoc, UW-Extension  
Joe Jankowski, Manitowoc, County Executive Dir. USDA-FSA  
Jennifer Kreuning, Kewaunee, UW-Extension  
Keith Schultz, Manitowoc, Farm Loan Manager USDA-FSA  
Gerald Campbell, Prof. Agricultural and Applied Economics  
Jim Langdon, WHEDA  
Bob Battaglia, State Statistician, DATCP  
Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP  
Will Turba, State Ag. Board  
Matt Glewen, Calumet County Extension  
Greg Cummings, Manager, Equity Livestock Co-op Reedsville  
Mike Burke, Equity Livestock

**Media Representatives**

Ray Mueller, Chilton, Wisconsin State Farmer Press  
Judy Brown, The Country Today  
Pat Pankratz, Herald Times Reporter  
Bill Shogren, Seymour Times

*The Report Nearly final version.*

**WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON  
REPORT ON THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE**

Prepared by:

Office of Representative Al Ott  
October 2, 2000

*Leg. C?*

*Wisconsin State Assembly  
Committee on Agriculture  
Representative Al Ott, Chairperson  
Report on the Crisis in Wisconsin Agriculture*

*October 2, 2000*

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- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the directive of the State Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of the hearings was not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, they were intended as a means to channel the views of the Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.

Four public hearings were held in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. For the convenience of farmers, three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm. At each location, participants had unique issues of concern. Together the four locations were representative of the entire state.

Members of the public were invited to contribute testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were asked to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were assembled to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. Several area legislators also attended the hearings.

The subcommittees heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by current low commodity prices; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many shared ideas for local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

## **Committee Report**

The final results of these listening sessions are presented in this report. Documented in outline form, Appendix 1 presents a summary of the statements and suggestions that were made in oral and written testimony before the four subcommittees. The suggestions are presented in the outline as stated in the hearings, without further elaboration or refinement.

The design of Appendix 1 recognizes that the various aspects of the farmers' predicament must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions collected at the hearings were separated into four categories based on area of jurisdiction. Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in current federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, certain environmental regulations, and food production and distribution. Comments relating to these issues will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and in developing future policies. On matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality, animal health issues and certain other environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators for consideration in evaluating current programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and developing future policy. Issues such as zoning laws, development rights and problems related to local agricultural marketing cooperatives would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer; the report identifies these as suggestions for action by local governments and individual farmers.

Appendix 2 shows the dates and locations of the hearings. It lists the names of the participating committee members, ~~and committee staff, as well as~~ members of the public who testified or who observed, ~~and the resource people and media representatives~~ who were present. The table in Appendix 2 shows the numbers of individuals who participated in each hearing.

The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This report will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to state and local policy makers.

*SUGGESTIONS*

APPENDIX 1:

~~RECOMMENDATIONS~~ MADE TO SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS BY  
THE WISCONSIN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

## **I. Federal**

### **A. Prices and competition**

1. General federal policies
  - a) Reconsider the current low price/high production national food policy
  - b) Declare a federal state of emergency regarding agricultural commodity prices
  - c) Set higher support prices
  - d) Redirect federal spending to support agriculture
  - e) Provide an adequate safety net for farmers
  - f) Manage the supply of agricultural products, including controls on production
  - g) Declare food to be a critical national resource
  - h) Open all foreign markets to US produce, including China and Cuba
  - i) Address the issue of subsidies for foreign competitors
2. Milk and cheese pricing
  - a) Improve the reporting of milk prices paid by processors, for example, monthly reporting
  - b) Consider a northwest dairy coalition instead of the Midwest dairy compact
  - c) Bring California into the milk pricing system
  - d) Investigate the prices charged for cheese
  - e) Improve inventory reporting for butter and cheese
  - f) Investigate inequities in volume pricing
  - g) Consider environmental compliance costs in determining prices
  - h) Ask the Attorney General to investigate agricultural commodity pricing
  - i) Use anti-trust laws to address noncompetitive practices of buyers and suppliers
3. Reporting of production
  - a) Require full reporting of all cheese produced
  - b) Require reporting of whey produced, especially in connection with nonfat dry milk
4. The farm-consumer price gap
  - a) Investigate how food prices are affected by "middlemen"
  - b) Audit factors that determine the price of cheese
  - c) Impose quotas on milk solid proteins
5. Impose quotas on agricultural commodities
  - a) Cease the importation of milk protein concentrate (MPC) until prices are higher

- b) Determine when to impose quotas based on farmers receiving cost of production and cost of living

**B. Food production and distribution issues**

- 1. Use of MPC in cheese
  - a) Investigate inappropriate use of MPC
  - b) Test MPC in cheese and enforce restrictions
- 2. Labeling
  - a) Require country of origin labels for agricultural products
  - b) Require labeling of products to highlight differences between US and foreign products
  - c) Use labels to identify practices used to produce food
  - d) Establish a "family farm" label for agricultural products
- 3. Inspection of meat
  - a) Allow state inspection of meat shipped in interstate commerce
  - b) Prevent use of the US inspection label to imply that meat is produced in the US
- 4. Surplus food
  - a) Use US food surpluses in overseas disaster relief and local nutrition programs
  - b) Use oversupply of milk to make powdered milk and do research
  - c) Place surpluses in state-controlled "welfare warehouses"

**C. Environmental regulations**

- 1. Adopt reasonable regulations in the coastal zone management and similar programs
- 2. Have the EPA develop manure storage regulations that are specific to individual states

**D. Programs to assist farmers**

- 1. Create a separate program to support dairy grazing
- 2. Allow subordinations in agricultural loan guarantees to reduce costs of refinancing
- 3. Create a program of direct payments to farmers based on a farmer's prior year gross income (i.e., farmer's "unemployment compensation")
- 4. Provide access to affordable health insurance
- 5. Increase the amount of land entered in conservation reserve

**E. Miscellaneous**

- 1. Eliminate block voting by cooperatives

2. Review whether the benefits to farmers under Social Security will be adequate in light of low farm income during a farmer's earning years
3. Keep the Mississippi River open as a transportation route

## **II. State**

### **A. Financial programs to assist farmers**

1. Develop programs to assist direct marketing by small and medium sized farms; connect farmer and consumer directly
2. Involve the Department of Commerce in the agricultural industry
3. Provide loans for farmers to develop niche markets
4. Change the WHEDA CROP program to provide assistance for more than a one-year period
5. Ask the Governor to request emergency funding from the President
6. Create a buyout program for Johne's disease to remove cattle and reduce milk supply
7. Provide access to affordable health insurance
  - a) **Fund BadgerCare**
  - b) **Address preexisting medical conditions**
8. Marketing
  - a) **Allow the milk marketing board to set the base price for milk and to lobby congress on behalf of WI milk producers**
  - b) **Market WI cheese nationwide**

### **B. Technical assistance programs to assist farmers**

1. Give PSC authority to order electric coops to address stray voltage

### **C. Taxes**

1. Use value assessment
  - a) **Expand use value assessment to include forested land on a farm**
  - b) **Differentiate between agricultural and recreational woodlands in use value assessment**
  - c) **Make use value assessment available only to land that is permanently in agricultural use**
  - d) **Evaluate the program to determine benefits to farmers; report on the effects on farms**
  - e) **Consider applicability of use value assessment to farm improvements**
2. Eliminate sales taxes paid by farmers

### **D. Food quality**

1. Implement quality checks on imported agricultural commodities

### **E. Animal health**

1. Address tuberculosis concerns, especially in relation to white-tailed deer
2. Johne's tests
  - a) **Speed up results**
  - b) **Lower costs**
3. Change implied warranty law to exclude Johne's and pseudorabies
4. Reimburse for TB testing

**F. Environmental regulations**

1. Ensure adequate staffing at DNR
2. Reduce the costs of manure storage regulations
3. Nonpoint source pollution
  - a) **Adopt standards that recognize differences in terrain throughout the state**
  - b) **Provide funding to install facilities**
  - c) **Review navigable waters regulations as applied to farms**
  - d) **Provide that all farms are eligible for payments, not just ones that are expanding**
4. Do not require improvement of drainage ditches unless farmers choose to
5. Speed up decisions by DNR on permits
6. Provide similar enforcement of discharge regulations in rural areas as in urban areas

**G. Crop and livestock damage**

1. Sandhill cranes and wild turkeys
  - a) **Pay crop damage**
2. Coyotes
  - a) **Impose a bounty**
  - b) **Pay for damages to livestock**
  - c) **Ease hunting restrictions**
3. Generally, reduce wildlife populations
  - a) **Set up programs to match hunters and farmers who need deer herd thinned**

**H. Miscellaneous**

1. Provide full funding for the morning milk program
2. Replace soda machines with milk machines in schools
3. Investigate progress in addressing stray voltage
4. Incentives for meat packers to buy from small producers

**III. Local**

**A. Purchase of development rights (PDR) programs**

1. Ensure that PDR assists farmers rather than those who remove land from agricultural use
2. Administer PDR through an elected body
3. Review restrictions placed on farms with land affected by PDR

**B. Zoning**

1. Allow and facilitate the placement of large scale animal agriculture in areas zoned for exclusive agricultural use

**IV. Farmers**

**A. Production**

1. Adopt more efficient practices
2. Use caution in adopting biotechnology, which will increase production and reduce prices

**B. Marketing**

1. Increase use of futures markets
2. Focus on national and international markets
3. Educate the public regarding animal rights issues

**C. Coops**

1. Increase the use of cooperative marketing
2. Participate directly in marketing coops
3. Limit imports to coops and limit processing only to member's products
4. Attend annual meetings and participate

**D. Use the state insurance pool**

**E. Work to attract a new generation into farming**

Being?

APPENDIX 2:

PARTICIPANTS IN SUBCOMMITTEE ~~MEETINGS~~

*Listening sessions, hearings*

The following table summarizes participation in the hearings. The total number of individuals who participated in the four hearings is slightly less than the sum of the totals for the individual hearings because of committee members, staff and resource people who attended more than one hearing.

*Participants in Committee Hearings*

<i>Hearing Location and Date</i>	<i>Committee Members and Staff</i>	<i>Members of the Public Testifying</i>	<i>Members of the Public Observing</i>	<i>Resource People and Media</i>	<i>Total</i>
Equity Livestock, Richland Center, August 24, 2000	7 ✓	15 ✓	15 ✓	13 ✓	50 ✓
Spindler Dairy, Durand, August 28, 2000	8 ✓	24 ✓	36* ✓	12 ✓	80* ✓
Equity Livestock, Johnson Creek, August 29, 2000	7 ✓	14 ✓	15 ✓	15 ✓	51 ✓
Equity Livestock, Reedsville, August 31, 2000	9 ✓	<del>14</del> 15	10 ✓	16 ✓	<del>49</del> 50

*Note:*  
*disclaimer*  
*@ people who were there*  
*Not sent in testimony papers registration*

\*At this, the most heavily attended hearing, it is estimated that an additional 20 to 30 members of the public were present but did not register.

Subcommittee on the State of Agriculture ✓

Richland Center, WI ✓

Thursday, August 24, 2000 ✓

Committee Members

- ✓ Rep. Al Ott, Chair
  - ✓ Rep. Joan Spillner
  - ✓ Rep. John Ainsworth
  - ✓ Rep. John Steinbrink
- (4)

- ✓ Ann Greenheck, Lone Rock
- ✓ Harold Huffman, Richland Center, farmer
- ✓ Lynn Jasper, Muscoda
- ✓ W.A. Johnson, Portage, representing Alliant Energy
- ✓ Russell Koch, Muscoda, farmer
- ✓ Paul Larsen, Viroqua, representing WI Ag Bankers Assc.
- ✓ Jim Myers, Madison
- ✓ Dan Redington, Wonewoc, dairy farmer
- ✓ Shawn Redington, Wonewoc
- ✓ Mary Stadele, Richland Center
- ✓ Leo Stoltz, Hillpoint
- ✓ Jennifer Vogt, Madison, Ag Technology Studies UW-Madison

Committee Staff

- (3)
- ✓ Mark Patronsky, Attorney, Legislative Council
  - ✓ Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott
  - ✓ Joe Malkasian, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant at Arms

- (15)
- ✓ Jennifer Vogt, Madison, Ag Technology Studies UW-Madison

Members of the Public Testifying

- ✓ Martin Tollofsen, Fennimore, banker; member of the Wisconsin Bankers Association Board
- ✓ Chuck Stevenson, Viola, raises sheep in Richland County
- ✓ Dan Deneen, Black Earth, worked as a crop consultant for 20 years, has grown organic vegetables for 10 years
- ✓ Randy Jasper, Muscoda, operates a dairy farm; has a full-time off-farm job
- ✓ Jerry Lehman, Reedsburg, member of the Sauk County Soil and Water Conservation Committee
- ✓ Norman Fruit, Viola, owner of an 80-cow dairy
- ✓ Joe Schaitel, Richland Center, owner of a 400-acre farm, raises heifers, but is not involved in dairy production
- ✓ Sheryl Albers, Representative, 50<sup>th</sup> Assembly District
- ✓ Robert Franke, Bloom City
- ✓ Raymond Schmitz, Richland Center
- ✓ John Oncken, Oncken Communications
- (13) ✓ Eric Drachenberg, Arena, Wisconsin Pork Producers, employee of a feed company; cash crop farmer
- ✓ Dick Hauser, Richland Center, formerly with the Cattlemen's Association, now a farm supply representative
- (12) ✓ Ron Lund, Sun Prairie, representing Farmland Industries
- ✓ Michael Myers, Platteville, VP of Ag Lending, First National Bank of Platteville

Resource People

- ✓ Ron Touchen, Deputy State Statistician, DATCP
- ✓ Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP
- ✓ Barbara Tock, District Director, Farm Service Agency USDA
- ✓ Grant Loy, Richland Center Ex. Dir., FSA USDA
- ✓ Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP
- ✓ James Langdon, WHEDA
- ✓ Bruce Jones, UW Center for Dairy Profitability
- ✓ Steve Kohlstedt, UW Extension Richland County
- ✓ Tim Leonard, manager, Equity Livestock Co-op Richland Center
- ✓ Mike Burke, Equity Livestock Co-op
- ✓ Greg Beck, Equity Livestock Co-op

Media Representatives

- ✓ Lorry Erickson, Regional Editor, The Country Today
- ✓ Stacy Kleist, WRCO Radio, Richland Center

Members of the Public Observing

- ✓ Rick Burknumer, Richland Center
- ✓ Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft
- ✓ Albert Greenheck, Lone Rock

Total 50

Subcommittee on Agricultural Issues

Durand, WI

Monday, August 28, 2000

Committee Members

- ✓ Rep. Al Ott, Chair
- ✓ Rep. Tom Sykora
- ✓ Rep. Barbara Gronemus
- ✓ Rep. Joe Plouff

Committee Staff

- ✓ David Lovell, Senior Analyst, Legislative Council
- ✓ Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott
- ✓ Erin Napralla, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. Al Ott
- ✓ Steve Krieser, Executive Assistant, Office of Sargeant at Arms

Members of the Public Testifying

- ✓ Mel Pittman, Plum City, dairy farmer
- ✓ Jan Morrow, Cornell, dairy farmer, candidate for State Assembly
- ✓ Arnie Weisenbeck, Durand, dairy farmer
- ✓ Arnold Spindler, Pepin County, dairy farmer
- ✓ Tom Rotering, Fountain City, dairy farmer
- ✓ Steve Haines, Arcadia, dairy farmer
- ✓ Nancy Iverson, Plum City, dairy farmer
- ✓ Jamie Voelker, Rice Lake, dairy farmer
- ✓ Jay Richardson, Spring Valley, dairy farmer
- ✓ Mary Anderson, Whitehall, beef farmer
- ✓ Willard Haigh, Eleya, retired dairy farmer
- ✓ Dennis Iverson, Plum City, farmer
- ✓ Ron Huppert, Arkansaw, dairy farmer
- ✓ Sam Danzinger, Durand, dairy farmer
- ✓ Steven Kling, Taylor
- ✓ Jeff Jackson, Clayton
- ✓ Jill Lucht, Chippewa Falls, dairy farmer; representative of the Wisconsin Farmers Union
- ✓ Corliss Handrickson, Beldenville, dairy farmer
- ✓ Joe Bragger, Independence, dairy farmer
- ✓ Andy Huppert, River Falls, dairy farmer
- ✓ Marty Hallock, Mondovi, farmer
- ✓ Pat Kling, Taylor
- ✓ Jonathan Wayne, Durand
- ✓ Bob Swenson, River Falls

Members of the Public Observing

- ✓ Ted Baier, Eau Galle
- ✓ Bernard A. Bauer, Durand
- ✓ Eorraine Brunner, Durand, Pepin County Farmers Union

- ✓ James W. Brunner, Arkansaw
- ✓ John Caturia, Arkansaw
- ✓ Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft
- ✓ Jim Connolly, Mondovi, Countryside Co-op
- ✓ Cory Cutsforth, Rice Lake, dairy farmer
- ✓ Donald Danzinger, Durand, farmer
- ✓ Jackie Danzinger, Durand, dairy farmer
- ✓ Gary Evans, Mondovi
- ✓ Ed Gunderson, Durand, Countryside Co-op
- ✓ George Hayden, Mondovi
- ✓ Sally Hayden, Mondovi
- ✓ John Heck, Mondovi
- ✓ Leroy Heck, Mondovi
- ✓ Keith Hullopeter, Pepin
- ✓ Robert Ickler, Jr., Roberts
- ✓ Robert Ickler, Sr., Roberts
- ✓ Lynn Johnson, Pepin
- ✓ Douglas E. Knoepke, Durand
- ✓ Bernard Luebker, Plum City
- ✓ Kurt D. Manore, Pepin
- ✓ John Meixner, Durand
- ✓ Terry Mesch, Arkansaw
- ✓ Ken C. Olson, Menomonie
- ✓ Dave Prissel, Durand, Lone Oak Dairy, Inc.
- ✓ Matt Radle, Mondovi
- ✓ Jeff Schlosser, Durand
- ✓ Charles Spindler, Durand, Spindler Dairy
- ✓ Rod Spindler, Durand
- ✓ Kerry Suchla, Arcadia
- ✓ Sandy Sheets, Durand
- ✓ Robert Sheets, Durand
- ✓ Paul Wayne, Durand
- ✓ Dell Whelan, Mondovi

Resource People

- ✓ Bob Battaglia, Statistician, DATCP
- ✓ Bob Cropp, UW Extension Agent, Pepin Cty
- ✓ James Langdon, WHEDA
- ✓ Ken McMahon, Elsworth, Co-op
- ✓ Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP
- ✓ Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP
- ✓ Joe Tregoning, Deputy Secretary, DATCP
- ✓ Julie Dokkestfull, Pepin Co. Exec. Dir., FSA

Media Representative

- ✓ Gene Kirschner, Durand, WRDN Radio
- ✓ Mary Trettin, Durand, WRDN Radio
- ✓ Dan Lyksett, Leader-Telegram
- ✓ Rep. of Courier-Wedge (local paper)

total = 80

✓

Subcommittee on the Agricultural Industry  
Johnson Creek, WI ✓  
Tuesday, August 29, 2000 ✓

Committee Members

Rep. Al Ott, Chair ✓  
Rep. Steve Kestell ✓  
Rep. John Ainsworth ✓  
Rep. John Steinbrink ✓

✓  
✓  
✓  
✓ (3)

✓ John W. Winkelman, Watertown  
✓ Mike Wollner, Neosho, Horicon State Bank

Resource People

✓ Peter M. Overlien, USDA FSA  
✓ Jerry Doll, UW-Extension Agronomy  
✓ Ron Touchen, Deputy State Statistician, DATCP  
✓ Gene Weittenhiller, Loan Officer, WHEDA  
✓ Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP  
✓ Jeanne Meier, Farm Center, DATCP  
✓ Prof. Ken Bolton, Cooperative Extension Southern  
County and Area  
✓ Tim Griswald, Dairy 2020  
✓ Bruce Jones, UW Center for Dairy Profitability  
✓ Sen. Scott Fitzgerald, 13th Senate District  
✓ Rep. David Ward, 37th Assembly District  
✓ Matt Hauser, Governor's Office Staff  
✓ Neale Jones, Manager, Equity Livestock Co-op  
Johnson Creek  
✓ Mike Burke, Equity Livestock Co-op

Committee Staff

✓ David Lovell, Senior Analyst, Legislative Council  
✓ Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott  
✓ Pat McKee, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant  
at Arms (3)

Members of the Public Testifying

✓ Mark Christenson, Lake Mills, member of the  
Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board  
✓ Mike Martin, Hayward, member of the Wisconsin  
Milk Marketing Board  
✓ Sue Schaefer, Watertown, dairy farmer  
✓ Norman Bartel, Watertown, retired farmer  
✓ Charles Untz, dairy farmer  
✓ Vern Newhouse, Kaukauna, farmer  
✓ Dave Matthes, Viola, Wisconsin Livestock Dealers  
Association (14)  
✓ Harold Schoessow, Mequon, farmer  
✓ George Roemer, Hartford  
✓ Gail Goehring, buyer for Equity Livestock Sales  
✓ Sue Marx, Helenville  
✓ Peter Haakenson, Evansville  
✓ Raymond Ireland, retired farmer  
✓ Rodell L. Singert, Mukwonago, Waukesha County  
Board Supervisor

(15)

Media Representative

✓ Gloria Hafemeister, Wisconsin State Farmer

Members of the Public Observing

✓ Dennis Bries, Johnson Creek  
✓ Richard Brye, Middleton  
✓ Richard W. Fink, Mayville, WMMB and self  
✓ Floyd Froelich, Sullivan  
✓ James P. Furlong, Sr., Watertown  
✓ Ronald Griebenow, Watertown, dairy farmer  
✓ Phil Humphrey, Helenville  
✓ Russell Horst, Rubicon  
✓ Aaron Kutz, Jefferson, Kutz Dairy  
✓ Ron Kutz, Jefferson, Kutz Dairy  
✓ Joe Reising, Watertown  
✓ B. Weisensel, Watertown  
✓ A.C. Weisensel, Iron Ridge, Horicon State Bank

(15)

total 51 instead of 54 St

Subcommittee on the Agricultural Economy

Reedsville, WI

Thursday, August 31, 2000

Committee Members

- Rep. Al Ott, Chair ✓
- Rep. Steve Kestell ✓
- Rep. Joan Spillner ✓
- Rep. John Steinbrink ✓
- Rep. Sarah Waukau ✓

(5)

Committee Staff

- ✓ Mark Patronsky, Attorney, Legislative Council
- Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk, Office of Rep. Al Ott
- ✓ Erin Napralla, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. Al Ott
- ✓ Ott
- ✓ Sherab Phunky, Page, Office of Assembly Sergeant at Arms

(4)

Resource People

- ✓ Scott Gunderson, Manitowoc, UW-Extension
- ✓ Joe Jankowski, Manitowoc, County Executive Dir. USDA-FSA
- ✓ Jennifer Kreuning, Kewaunee, UW-Extension
- ✓ Keith Schultz, Manitowoc, Farm Loan Manager USDA-FSA
- ✓ Gerald Campbell, Prof. Agricultural and Applied Economics
- ✓ Jim Langdon, WHEDA
- ✓ Bob Battaglia, State Statistician, DATCP
- ✓ Dr. Clarence Siroky, State Veterinarian, DATCP
- ✓ Will Turba, State Ag. Board
- ✓ Matt Glewen, Calumet County Extension
- ✓ Greg Cummings, Manager, Equity Livestock Co-op Reedsville
- ✓ Mike Burke, Equity Livestock

Members of the Public Testifying

- ✓ Gerald Jaeger, Campbellsport, farmer
- ✓ Randy Geiger, dairy farmer, Reedsville; member of the Wisconsin Agri-Business Council
- ~~Dr. Clarence Siroky, Wisconsin State Veterinarian~~ →
- ✓ Don Cooper, Glenbeulah, farmer
- ✓ Norb Van de Hei, DePere, Van de Hei, dairy farmer
- ✓ Dale Behnke, Reedsville, veal grower, Wisconsin Veal Grower Association Member
- ✓ Wayne Craig, New Holstein, farmer
- ✓ Wayne Mueller, St. Cloud: Investors Community Bank, Manitowoc
- ✓ Gerald Vande-Heiden, Seymour
- ✓ Allen Kracht, Newton, dairy farmer
- ✓ Willard Krueger, Brillion
- ✓ Rosalie Geiger, Reedsville, Ran-Rose Farms
- ✓ Norm Alsum, Brandon, Alsum Veal Farm
- ✓ Paul Huisenga, Brandon

(15)

+2

Media Representatives

- ✓ Ray Mueller, Chilton, Wisconsin State Farmer Press
- ✓ Judy Brown, The Country Today
- ✓ Pat Pankratz, Herald Times Reporter
- ✓ Bill Shogren, Seymour Times

(16)

Member of the Public Observing

- ✓ Pete Christianson, Madison, Kraft
- ✓ Dave DuBois, Greenleaf, Quality Veal
- ✓ Lee Engelbrecht, Two Rivers
- ✓ Martin Huizenga, Jr., Brandon
- ✓ Gary Leick, Jr., Greenleaf, Gary Leick Veal
- ✓ Bill Parkinson, Chilton
- ✓ Ron Redig, Chilton, Reedsville Equity
- ✓ Mike Salter, Black Creek
- ✓ Ervin Sinkula, Two Rivers, Irish Acres
- ✓ Bernard Vander Heiden, Kaukauna

(10)

total 29  
25  
16  
50

*Compromise Version of Intro between Dave & Beata*

Chairman:  
Agriculture Committee

Member:  
Consumer Affairs  
Government Operations  
Natural Resources

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

*Take 8, 9*

**Al Ott**  
**REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON**  
State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

**REPORT ON THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE**

**October \_\_, 2000**

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming economy are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

*Overview*

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the economy of the support community. An economically weakened support community further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our rural community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

**Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture**

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, was determined to respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled a series of statewide listening sessions/public hearings to hear the concerns of the farming community. He wanted to hear directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to seek their views on state and federal agricultural policy. In addition, he used the hearings as an opportunity for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

*state / public hearings*

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the directive of the State Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of the hearings was not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, they were intended as a means to channel the views of the Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.

~~Chairperson Ott scheduled a series of four public hearings, or~~ <sup>The</sup> ~~listening sessions,~~ <sup>was held</sup> in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. For the convenience of farmers, three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm. At each location, participants had unique issues of concern. Together the four locations were representative of the entire state.

Members of the public were invited to contribute testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were asked to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were assembled to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. Several area legislators also attended the hearings.

The subcommittees heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by current low commodity prices; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many shared ideas for local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

## Committee Report

The final results of these listening sessions are presented in this report. Documented in outline form, Appendix 1 presents a summary of the statements and suggestions that were made in oral and written testimony before the four subcommittees. The suggestions are presented in the outline as stated in the hearings, without further elaboration or refinement.

Appendix 2 shows the dates and locations of the hearings. It lists the names of the participating committee members, as well as individuals who testified or who observed <sup>as well as</sup> ~~and~~ the resource people and media representatives who were present. The table in Appendix 2 shows the numbers of individuals who participated in each hearing.

summary  
appendix 1

The design of the report recognizes that the various aspects of the farmers' predicament must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions collected at the hearings were separated into four categories based on area of jurisdiction. Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in current federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, certain environmental regulations, and food production and distribution. Comments relating to these issues will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and in developing future policies. On matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality, animal health issues and certain other environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators for consideration in evaluating current programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and developing future policy. Issues such as zoning laws, development rights and problems related to local co-ops would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer; the report identifies these as suggestions for action by local governments and individual farmers.

The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This report will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation and United States Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to state and local policy makers.

Appendix 1 + 2

9/29/00

**WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON**

**REPORT ~~OF~~ THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE  
ON**

**September \_\_, 2000**

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming economy are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the economy of the support community. The economically weakened support community further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our ~~business~~ community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

~~business~~  
*rural*

**Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture**

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, was determined to respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled a series of statewide listening sessions/public hearings to hear the concerns of the farming community. He wanted to hear directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to gather suggestions and seek their views on ~~the direction in which policy makers in Madison and Washington should pursue agricultural proposals.~~ *state and federal agencies* In addition, he used the hearings as an opportunity for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the directive of the Assembly Agriculture Committee. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of ~~this report is not~~ <sup>the hearings was</sup> to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, <sup>they were</sup> it is a means to channel the views of ~~the~~ Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.

The design of the report recognizes that the various aspects of the farmers' predicament must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions collected at the hearings were separated into four categories based on area of jurisdiction. Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in <sup>current</sup> federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, <sup>certain</sup> environmental regulations, food production and distribution. This information will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and for future proposals. Similarly, on matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality, ~~and~~ animal health issues, ~~as well as~~ <sup>and other</sup> environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators for consideration <sup>in Wisconsin current</sup> ~~in current~~ programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and in developing future policy. Issues such as zoning laws, development rights and problems with local cooperatives, would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer; thus the report ~~lists these ideas under local action~~.

*Identifies these as suggestions for activity by local gov. + the farmer*

### Subcommittee Hearings

Chairperson Ott scheduled a series of four public hearings, or listening sessions, in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. ~~To facilitate~~ <sup>For the</sup> convenience ~~for~~ farmers, three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm. The specific locations, dates and names of the participating committee members are shown in Appendix 2. Each location has unique issues of concern ~~and~~ together they are considered to be representative of the entire state. <sup>Participants</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>The four locations</sup>

Members of the public were invited to contribute testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were asked to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were assembled to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. <sup>Several</sup> ~~Many~~ area legislators also attended the hearings. The names of individuals who testified as well as the names of the resource people present are shown in Appendix 2. Table 1 in Appendix 2 shows the number of people who took part in each hearing.

# Committee Report

See  
index

Committee

The subcommittees heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by the current low prices; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many shared ideas for local and farm-based actions ~~which~~ <sup>that</sup> should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

The final results of these listening sessions are presented in this report. Documented in outline form as Appendix 1, is the summary of the statements that were made in oral and written testimony before the four subcommittees. This summary is presented <sup>and suggestion</sup> without further elaboration or refinement. The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This document will be forwarded to the Wisconsin ~~Federal~~ <sup>Cooperative</sup> Delegation, United States Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to State and Local policy makers. ~~The crisis in Wisconsin agriculture is affecting us all as it involves the food industry nationwide.~~

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Al Ott  
REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON  
State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

REVIEW OF THE CRISIS IN THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

September \_\_, 2000

The agricultural economy in Wisconsin is in crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming economy are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. Farm failures continue at an alarming rate. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairying for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because of a dearth of young people willing to take on the burdens of operating a family farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the farm support economy. A weakened support economy further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our farming community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

?  
Review by Assembly Committee on Agriculture

[Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture of the Wisconsin State Assembly, was determined to <sup>respond to</sup> review the farm economy crisis.] He scheduled a series of <sup>Statewide</sup> hearings to hear from the farming community regarding the problems that they are facing and to solicit their views on the direction in which government policy should be directed to address these problems. His intention was to hear directly from affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of problems they are facing and the solutions to these problems that they would like policy makers in Madison and Washington to pursue. In addition, he used the hearings as a forum for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance. The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking this study, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger than the Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of the review was not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, it was intended as a forum by which to channel the views of the agricultural community to policy makers.

The design of the review recognized that the various aspects of the agricultural crisis must be addressed at the appropriate level. On matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in federal programs, the review was designed to collect information regarding these programs from the people whom the programs are intended to help and to pass on this information to federal policy makers for use in improving the programs. Similarly, on matters of state jurisdiction, the review was designed provide input to state policy makers regarding state agricultural programs. On other matters, those that are best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer, the hearings strove to highlight the importance of local and individual action and to help guide that action.

pricing →

### Subcommittee Hearings

livestock sales barns + a dairy farm

Chairperson Ott scheduled a series of four public hearings, or listening sessions, in late August, 2000 at locations around the state. The dates and locations of the hearings are shown in the following table. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members and to maximize attendance. Members of the public were invited to provide testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were invited to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were invited to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. The numbers of individuals who participated in each hearing are shown in the following table; Appendix 2 lists the individual participants.

Area legislators attendees

Not sure if necessary ↓

#### Participants in Subcommittee Hearings

Include in Appendix 2(?)

Members in Appendix

Hearing Location and Date	Members of the Public		Subcommittee Members and Staff	Resource Personnel and Media	Total
	Registered to Testify	Registered as Present			

Equity Livestock, Richland Center, August 24, 2000	13	17	7	13	50
Spindler Dairy, Durand, August 28, 2000	24	36	8	12	80
Equity Livestock, Johnson Creek, August 29, 2000	14	15	7	18	54
Equity Livestock, Reedsville, August 31, 2000	15	10	9	16	50

1. At this, the most heavily attended hearing, it is estimated that an additional 20 to 30 members of the public were present but did not register.

The subcommittees heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by the current crisis; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many addressed the local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

Appendix 1 presents, in outline form, each of the individual comments or recommendations made in testimony to the subcommittees. These recommendations are presented without further elaboration or refinement. In this form, they represent the sentiments of the individuals who took the time to present testimony to the subcommittees, as stated by those individuals. They consist of recommendations addressed to the federal government, the state government, local governments and individual farmers, and are organized according to these categories.

→ your final notes here.

Cover letter from Al?

Chairman:  
Agriculture Committee

Member:  
Consumer Affairs  
Government Operations  
Natural Resources

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Al Ott  
REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON  
State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

## REPORT OF THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

September \_\_, 2000

*Another version of intro with changes from Beaton, Erin + Al to Dave's version*

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming market are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

*during this economic boom* economy

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the economy of the support community. The economically weakened support community further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our business community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

### Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, was determined to respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled a series of statewide listening sessions/public hearings to be informed about the concerns of the farming community. He wanted to hear directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to gather suggestions and seek their views on the direction in which policy makers in Madison and Washington should pursue agricultural proposals.

In addition, he used the hearings as an opportunity for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the directive if the <sup>Assembly</sup> Agriculture Committee. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of this report is not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, a means to channel the views of Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.

The design of the report recognizes that the various aspects of the farmers' predicament must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions collected at the hearings were separated into four categories based on area of jurisdiction.

CH? Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, food production and distribution plus environmental regulations.

This information will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and for future proposals.

CH? Similarly, on matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality and animal health issues as well as environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators for consideration in current programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and developing future plans.

CH? Issues, such as zoning laws, development rights and local co-ops, would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer, thus the report lists those ideas under local action.

## Subcommittee Hearings

Chairperson Ott scheduled a series of four public hearings, or listening sessions, in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. To facilitate convenience for the farmers, three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm.

The hearing date, location and names of the participating committee members are shown in Appendix 2. Each location has unique issues of concern and together they are representative of the entire state.

Members of the public were invited to contribute testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were asked to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were assembled to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. Also, many area legislators <sup>also</sup> attended joined the hearings as well. The names of individuals who testified as well as the names of the resource people present are shown in Appendix 2. It also graphs the number of people, who took part in each hearing.

↳ Considered to be  
Table 1 gives representation to

Shows the distribution of people

were presented with

The subcommittees witnessed testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the local farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by the current low prices; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many shared the local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

ideas for

are made known

which

document

The final result of these listening sessions is presented in this report. Appendix 1 presents, in outline form, a summary of the statements and the suggestions that were made in oral and written testimony before the four subcommittees. This summary is presented without further elaboration or refinement. The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This report will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Federal Delegation, United States Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to State and Local policy makers. The crisis in Wisconsin agriculture is affecting us all as it involves the food industry nationwide.

(This report)

Account record

FYI: The report will consist of the following parts

The Introduction

Appendix 1 = Outline of statements

Appendix 2 & 3 = dates, locations, names of ag subcommittee members

numbers of participants, names of those testifying and resource people

Handwritten signatures and scribbles, including the number 516.

**WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON**

**REPORT OF THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE**

September \_\_, 2000

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming ~~economy~~ are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations is placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. Discouraged dairy farmers abandon dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the farm support economy. ~~A weakened support economy~~ further stresses the producers, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our farming business community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

**Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture**

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, was determined to respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled a series of statewide listening sessions/public hearings to ~~hear~~ <sup>be informed regarding</sup> the concerns of the farming community. He wanted to hear directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to gather suggestions and solicit their views on the direction in which agricultural proposals should be pursued by policy makers in Madison and Washington. In addition, he used the hearings as a forum for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

Draft sent over to Dave 9/27/00 am complete with input from Santa + Erin  
to Dave's original version. My change 9/28/00 to pick up what  
9/28/00 Al has added the following...

The economically weakened support community

policy makers in Madison and Washington pursue agricultural proposals

opportunity

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

*Further discussion*  
In undertaking these hearings, Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the <sup>State</sup> State Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of this report is not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, ~~it is intended as a forum by which to channel the views of Wisconsin agricultural community to policy makers.~~ <sup>a means to</sup> ~~it is a forum~~.

The design of the report recognizes that the various aspects of the agricultural crisis must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions <sup>collected</sup> gathered at the hearings were separated into four categories ~~areas~~ based on area of jurisdiction.

Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in federal programs, include the issues of pricing, competition, food production and distribution <sup>as well as</sup> as well as environmental regulations. This information will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and for future proposals.

Similarly, on matters of state jurisdiction, the report addresses financial and technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality and animal health issues <sup>as well as</sup> in addition to environmental regulations. These suggestions will be made available to state legislators <sup>development</sup> for consideration <sup>current</sup> in programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and <sup>plans</sup> potential future policy.

Issues, such as zoning laws, development rights and local co-ops, would be best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer, thus the report lists those ideas under local action.

## Subcommittee Hearings

Chairperson Ott scheduled a series of four public hearings, or listening sessions, in August of 2000 at locations around the state. They were structured as hearings of four separate subcommittees to accommodate the schedules of committee members. Three of the four sessions were held in livestock sales barns, while the fourth location was a dairy farm (to facilitate convenience for the farming community). Each location had unique issues of concern and together they ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> representative of the entire state.

<sup>specific</sup> The dates, locations and names of the <sup>participating</sup> Agriculture Committee Members are shown in Appendix 2.

Members of the public were invited to <sup>asked</sup> provide testimony to the subcommittees and those who did not testify were <sup>invited</sup> invited to register their presence. Agency resource personnel and members of the media were invited to interact with the subcommittees and with the public. <sup>also many</sup> On many occasions, area legislators attended the hearings. <sup>The</sup> The numbers of individuals who participated in each hearing, names of individuals <sup>who</sup> that testified as well as the names of the resource people present are shown in <sup>Appendix 2</sup>.

<sup>graphs</sup> It also <sup>took part</sup> ~~has~~ <sup>participated</sup> shows the number of individuals who <sup>participated</sup> ~~participated~~ in each hearing, 2

~~Appendix 3.~~

The subcommittees <sup>witnessed</sup> heard testimony on a wide range of topics of concern to the <sup>local</sup> farming community. Many speakers described the hardships caused by the current <sup>local prices</sup> crisis; many also made very specific statements regarding the directions that should be taken in state and federal agricultural policy; and many <sup>shared</sup> addressed the local and farm-based actions that should be pursued to address the agricultural crisis.

The final result of these listening sessions <sup>is</sup> presented in this report. Appendix 1 presents, in outline form, a summary of the statements, the ideas and suggestions that were made in oral and written testimony before the four sub-committees.

This summary is presented without further elaboration or refinement. The ideas generated during the hearings in Wisconsin and compiled into this report, serve as a voice for Wisconsin agriculture. This report will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Federal Delegation, United States Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in addition to State and Local policy makers. The crisis in Wisconsin agriculture is affecting us all as it affects the food industry nationwide.

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FYI: The report will consist of the following parts

The Introduction

Appendix 1 = Outline of statements

Appendix 2 & 3 = dates, locations, names of ag subcommittee members

numbers of participants, names of those testifying and resource people

*Also graph at beginning of Appendix.*

Chairman:  
Agriculture Committee

Member:  
Consumer Affairs  
Government Operations  
Natural Resources

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Al Ott  
REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT, CHAIRPERSON  
State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

## REPORT OF THE CRISIS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

September \_\_, 2000

The agricultural industry in Wisconsin is in a crisis. At a time when most of the nation is benefiting from a growing economy, the farming community is not sharing in this growth. While many Americans are seeing current prosperity and future security, the people who work the land and provide food to this booming economy are seeing shrinking incomes and uncertain futures.

The problems faced by the agricultural community are numerous and multifaceted. Commodity prices are depressed at the same time that production costs are increasing. Multiple agricultural sectors are being affected simultaneously, including dairy, beef and hog production. Producers are facing mounting competition, from overseas where production is subsidized by national governments and from other states that benefit from federal pricing systems that discriminate against Midwest producers. Increasing consolidation of agricultural operations and increase of bigger farms are placing greater competitive pressure on small producers, as well. Environmental regulation of farming is becoming prescriptive and more expensive, adding costs that farmers cannot afford.

The number of family farms in operation is steadily declining, continuing a decades long trend. **farm values continue at an alarming rate.** Discouraged dairy farmers abandon **their** dairy for other farming options or leave farming altogether. As older farmers retire, farms go out of production or are bought for consolidation because **of a dearth of** young people are not willing to take on the burdens of operating a **small** farm in the current economy. The declining number of farm operations in turn threatens the farm support economy. A weakened support economy further stresses the producers and other industry participants, contributing to a vicious spiral of declining viability in our farming community. These trends threaten the tradition of the family farm in Wisconsin.

## Review Action by Assembly Committee on Agriculture

Wisconsin State Representative Al Ott, Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture [REDACTED] the Wisconsin State Assembly, was determined to [REDACTED] respond to the farm economy crisis. He scheduled statewide listening sessions/public [REDACTED] hearings

to hear the concerns of [REDACTED] the farming community, [REDACTED] regarding the problems that they are facing directly from the affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing. He also wanted to gather suggestions and [REDACTED] to solicit their views on the direction in which agricultural government policy should be [REDACTED] to address these problems pursued by policy makers in Madison and Washington.

*The intention was to receive*

[REDACTED] His intention was to hear directly from affected individuals, in their own words, the nature and extent of the problems they are facing and the solutions to these problems that they would like policy makers in Madison and Washington to pursue.

In addition, he used the hearings as a forum for resource personnel of state and federal agencies to answer farmers' questions and to direct participants to sources of assistance.

The specific goals of the hearings were the following:

- Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and to the US Secretary of Agriculture.
- Offer the opportunity for members of the agricultural community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.
- Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- Provide information on the various resources available to the agricultural industry.
- Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardship faced by Wisconsin agriculture.
- Bring the media and the agricultural industry together.

*During the listening session*

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Chairperson Ott acknowledged the important reality that the current agricultural crisis is larger in scope than the State Assembly Committee on Agriculture. In and of themselves, the hearings could not be expected to produce solutions, either immediately or even in the long term, to the underlying problems. Accordingly, the purpose of the report [REDACTED] was not to solve the problems or even to recommend specific solutions. Rather, it was intended as a forum by which to channel the views of the agricultural community to policy makers.

The design of the report [redacted] recognized that the various aspects of the agricultural crisis must be addressed at the appropriate level. The suggestions gathered at the hearings were separated into four category areas based on jurisdiction.

*Area of*  
On Matters of federal jurisdiction, especially those that are addressed in federal programs, [redacted] The review was designed to collect information regarding these programs from the people whom the programs are intended to help and to include the issues of pricing, competition, food production and distribution as well as environmental regulations. In particular the milk price problem falls under the federal category.

[redacted] This information will be forwarded to federal policy makers for use in improving the existing programs and for future proposals .

Similarly, on matters of state jurisdiction, the [redacted] report addresses financial, technical assistance programs, taxes, food quality and animal health in addition to environmental regulations. These suggestions will be provided *wherever* [redacted] *issues* [redacted] to state legislators *policy makers regarding program* for improvements in programs affecting Wisconsin agriculture and potential future policy.

*regulations*  
On local Matters, such as zoning laws, development rights and local co-ops, [redacted] those would be [redacted] best addressed at the local level or even at the level of the individual farmer, thus the report lists those ideas under local action. *hearings serve to highlight the importance of local and individual action and to help guide that action*