

SENATOR ROBERT MORGAN
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TAR HEEL AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION AND
CONSERVATION SERVICE

It is certainly a pleasure to meet with you today. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service has played and will continue to play a vital role in our state's agriculture. I want to take the opportunity to point out to you that although I am not on the Senate Agriculture Committee that I am vitally interested in rural problems. Let me review some of the contributions that I have made to our state's rural concerns.

I supported Senator Talmadge's Ominbus Farm Bill in 1977, legislation that extended the basic price support programs for corn, soybeans, peanuts, dairy products, tobacco, and other farm commodities. Along with Senator Talmadge, I have voted for appropriations each year to carry out these programs.

I sponsored the Agricultural Trade Export Expansion Act of 1978, a bill that has helped boost our overseas farm exports.

In 1975, our farm exports were \$21.6 billion. This year, our farmers and ranchers will earn \$40 billion from foreign markets. In 1979, Tar Heel farmers earned \$1.2 billion from foreign markets, better than one-third of each dollar of sales.

My bill, which was signed into law, accomplished three goals: first, it expanded our credit programs to make the U.S. competitive; second, it put Department of Agriculture officials in our overseas embassies on a better footing to deal with State Department officials who have often impeded our exports; and third, it opened some overseas trade offices to provide facilities for us to sell our farm products.

I have also worked with my fellow Senators to head off challenges to the tobacco support program. No amendment that challenges the tobacco program has reached the Senate floor for a vote since 1976 although several Senators have made such efforts.

Recently, I have been working with North Carolina Farm Bureau President, John Sledge, in the effort to prevent foreign tobacco from invading our country under the guise of a "scrap" customs category.

Just several weeks ago I joined with Senators Talmadge and Huddleston and other tobacco state Senators in the successful effort to prevent wrapper tobacco from entering the U.S. duty free.

This has been a tough year for farmers. The increased price of fuel and fertilizer and the weather have conspired to hurt farmers. When the problem of aflatoxin arose, I worked closely with Jim Graham in our State Department of Agriculture to provide relief. The current loan program announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture will ease this problem.

As a Senator I am concerned very much about foreign trade. When U.S. Trade Representative Ruebin Askew went to Japan last May, I persuaded him to seek concessions from the Japanese government that would help our tobacco exports, and we have made progress in this area, particularly on the matter of advertising.

I have also championed the cause of our poultry industry against foreign trade barriers and against unwarranted net weight regulations. Our poultry exports have more than tripled in just four years.

Finally, I have worked closely with farmers across the nation to assure the integrity of our farm program. I have made this commitment not only because I believe in the farm program, but also because tobacco growers need the support of other farmers--from those who grow almonds in California to the Maine potato farmer.

In addition to these national and State matters, I am mindful of the continuing problems that relate directly to ASCS.

Last year I cosponsored a bill that would address the problem of inequities in benefits of ASCS County Office Employees, because there were inequities between ASCS employees and other federal workers. This "Transfer Bill" passed last year addressing this problem.

My next priority is to remedy yet another inequity in the law that requires some County Office Employees to take a salary cut when they move from county ASCS offices into USDA Civil Service positions. I have been working with Senator Jim Sasser of Tennessee to remedy this problem, and we hope that in the near future we will have some good news to report.

I would like also to praise the excellent job that Louise Bradshaw of Caldwell County has done during the past two years as President of the N.C. Association of ASCS Employees. She was the first woman and first Program Assistant elected to that position. We are all proud of her and her achievements.

I am a strong supporter of the Elected Committee System of farm program administration. North Carolina has given this program strong leadership, and I want to point out several people in that connection.

John Cline of Cleveland County is President of the North Carolina Association of Farmer Elected Committeemen, and B. B. Haigler, Jr., of Union County is the Southeast Area Executive Committeeman of the National Association of Farmer Elected Committeemen.

I think that the strong leadership and program will continue to thrive. For example, Congress recently passed an improved Federal Crop Insurance Act, and I think that ASCS should play an important part in carrying out this program. After all, the County Committees and their employees have an excellent reputation for good work. Moreover, there

is an ASCS office in each county that has all the needed crop production records. I will urge the Secretary of Agriculture to utilize ASCS personnel to carry out this act.

There are other agricultural issues that we will be facing in the future that I want to mention!

It is my strongest conviction to support a strong, comprehensive farm program. This not only means all elements of the price support program, but also research, extension, the cooperative movement, soil conservation, transportation, and crop insurance.

We must have a strong farm program because the economic viability of North Carolina and the nation depends on it. A dollar earned by a farmer turns over seven times in the economy, helping steel workers in Pittsburgh and chemical workers in Chicago.

Next year, Congress will face a number of crucial farm decisions. The most urgent issue is the rewriting of the farm bill. I will continue to make the inputs on this bill that I believe are necessary to assure the best possible farm program.

Congress will and should improve our trade program. The importance of trade lies in the fact that our market here at home is not growing. We have to look abroad to all corners of this planet for markets. There are things we must do to enhance our market development and credit programs. But these are secondary to my strong belief that we should set a bold goal of exporting \$100 billion in farm commodities by the end of this decade.

Such a goal is desirable for several reasons. First, we need goals that will drive policies and keep unwarranted intrusions out of export policy decisions. Second, we need goals to rally public support for our need to become a Trading Nation.

I endeavor to continue to be a salesman for American agriculture. In 1976 I met with Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt, in his residence to talk about a variety of problems. At that time, Egypt purchased very little in the way of U.S. farm products. Today, Egypt is our 15th largest customer with over \$600 million in purchases. I have made the same pitch with the leaders of Japan, Portugal, and countless other countries.

There are other ways that I plan to continue my work for Tar Heel agriculture. I will continue to educate my colleagues in the Senate on the beneficial aspects of the tobacco program and other commodity programs. Just this past August we had the second annual Congressional Aide Farm Tour, a program that I started and a program that has educated key decision-makers on the importance of tobacco.

Just two weeks ago I dedicated an Ethanol plant in Creedmore, and this is a giant step in attaining our energy independence. I will continue to work to strengthen the gasohol program, for we need to cut out as much of our dependence on OPEC oil as possible.

I will continue to use my chairmanship on the Rural Housing Subcommittee to strengthen the Farmers Home Administration housing program. In the past three years, FmHA has had more new housing starts than in the previous 30 years. This progress must continue.

Being a good farm Senator today demands several characteristics. For one, it means knowing what farmers want, For another, it means knowing how to horse-trade. Finally, it means knowing that profitability is the bottom line. This is the kind of farm Senator I have been for North Carolina and will continue to be.