

House farm leader says Congress faces agricultural decisions

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

House Agricultural Committee Chairman Kika de la Garza, D-Texas, said Congress at mid-term is facing the challenge of a number of important agricultural policy decisions.

"We have made some headway toward finding answers to a number of severe problems which continue to plague the farm economy," he said. "Our committee was able, for example, to adopt a major farm credit bill and to agree on a compromise bill to reduce surplus milk production.

"We have adopted some helpful forward steps, including bills providing for expanded and improved food distribution for needy Americans. We also have adopted improved research and development authority for aquaculture and for crops which can produce critical materials like rubber.

"In addition, Congress has passed legislation which will help many plan their operations more efficiently by providing earlier announcement of government programs.

"These past months have brought improved prices for some crops, partly because the PIK program program reduced acreage and partly because bad weather is cutting into potential yields. But American agriculture as a whole is not out of the economic woods yet. We will have to continue to seek whatever legislative improvements may be possible.

"Because the PIK program has such a major impact, the committee will probably make a review of many

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phases of 1983 program operations early in the fall. The committee is going to be considering several important new bills in the fall, including one designed to protect the long-term stability of the rural electrification credit program."

De la Garza said some of the major actions taken by the committee and its subcommittees since the 98th Congress began last January include:

- **Farm credit:** The committee adopted and the House approved a bill to provide needed improvements in credit programs for farmers served by the Farmers Home Administration. It would revive an Economic Emergency Credit Program, continue authority for other FmHA farm and rural development credit programs and would allow producers time to repay their loans if delayed because of economic factors beyond their control.

- **Dairy:** The committee adopted a bill providing a compromise two-year program to help dairy farmers bring milk supplies back into balance with demand.

- **Program dates:** Congress approved a bill requiring the USDA to give farmers earlier notice of many acreage reduction rules. These are stepped up from Nov. 15 to Sept. 30 for 1984 and 1985 feed programs and for 1985 wheat program.

- **Pesticide:** The House passed a bill to extend authorization for federal pesticide control programs for one year through Sept. 30, 1984.

- **Food distribution:** Congress adopted legislation to continue and

strengthen programs designed to get surplus government-owned foods into the hands of needy people. The House sent its intent to Congress that there should be no further cutbacks in federal food aid to needy Americans.

- **Elevator bankruptcy:** The subcommittee has urged the House Judiciary Committee to consider changes in the federal bankruptcy code and others steps by the administration and Congress to include consideration of possible development of federal and private insurance policies which farmers could buy to protect themselves against loss of elevator bankruptcies.

- **Research:** The House adopted the Critical Materials Act to promote the development of rubber and other critical materials from agricultural crops. It approved a bill which extends and streamlines a government program designed to help promote the growth of the aquaculture industry, creating a National Aquaculture Board.

The subcommittee on forests, family farms and energy under Rep. George Hansen may hold hearings in September on some aspects of a recent presidential decision to permit extension of some Forest Service timber contracts unless satisfactory replies are received from Agriculture Secretary John Block.