Agricultural Policy and 21st Century Food Systems

Agriculture Policy Education

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Presentation Outline

• Policy Education in … (Note: my frame of reference may be shorter than yours)
  – “The Good Old Days”
  – a Different World
• Policy Preference Survey
• Planning for 2007 FB Education
• Conclusions
Policy Education in...

“The Good Old Days”

• Whether reality or just my perception… it seemed that the commodity groups were better organized
  – Better understood they needed each other

• A lot fewer groups “at the table”
  • Commodity, food, and environmental groups

• Secretary of Agriculture was perceived to be – the farmer’s man in Washington
  – No distinction between commodity program participants and nonparticipants

• Farm Bills actually had some goals both explicit and implicit inside the front cover
Policy Education in... 

“The Good Old Days” - Continued

• WTO was still the GATT
  – Had been burned by trade

• The WWW was “in process”
  – News didn’t travel nearly as fast

• Once A Bill Was Passed
  – CSREES had a role
  – Extension educators were THE source of information
  – Policy education was qualitative
  – Decision aids were very unsophisticated in today’s terms
    • Super Calc templates
Policy Education in a Different World

- Commodity groups
  - Don’t see the strong leadership from elected producers or professional staff
  - Are all about “taking care of their own”

- What group doesn’t want a say in the farm bill?
  - Commodity, food, and environmental groups
  - Others that have decided they have a role
    - EWG and AFT are two examples

- Secretary of Agriculture is trying to be every farmers’ man in Washington
  - Program participants do not like the inclusiveness

- 2002 Farm Bill had no explicit or implicit goals
Policy Education in...

a Different World - Continued

• WTO is perceived as critical – especially by those in the U.S. who want to end current programs
  – I have a lot of whys that I need answered

• The internet put us in the world of instant information – regardless of whether any good or not
  – A lot of electronic newsletters available
  – Incredible pressure on Extension Policy Educators to stay up with

• Once A Bill Is Passed
  – CSREES has no role
  – Extension educators are only 1 source of information
  – Policy education is qualitative but also increasingly quantitative
  – Decision aids are very sophisticated
    • Base and Yield Analyzer
Policy Preference Survey

• Great accomplishment to get 27 states involved – Brad and committee and FF
• Dates back to at least 1985
• Have we always messed it up? Not reflective of commodity groups – not just leadership
  – Survey stratas great idea
    • News release gave average
  – Texas example (even after oversampling)
    • 4000 surveys sent out -- 953 usable
      – Small 554 (58%) 33% had <$10,000 GR
      – Medium 217 (23%)
      – Large 182 (19%)
    • Cattle made up 51.5% of cash receipts, cotton 10%
    • Only 40% of respondents participate in commodity programs
Goals for the Farm Bill

Average Score

- Farm Income
- Risk Reduc.
- Competi.
- Sml/Beg Farm
- Natural Resources
- Rural Economy
- Food Supply
- Renewable Energy

Legend:
- Small
- Medium
- Large
- Average
Planning for 2007 FB Education

• Pre-farm bill education has been hard
  – Clientele groups want to know too many whys
  – Perceived drivers – budget and WTO
    • Difficult to get stakeholders to move beyond thinking of money and what box program spending fits in
    • What are their “policy” goals?
  – Have been doing a lot of options and consequences work with commodity groups
    • Really hard to say anything about Revenue Assurance plans
    • Have to know details…
Planning for 2007 FB Education

• Post-farm bill education will be uncomfortable
  – So many players at the table – many will lose

• Have to balance between:
  – Committee activities
    • Train the trainer event(s)
      – Best use of our time in the short run to fill in the gap left by others who don’t do this anymore
  – Individual activities
    • We all have to do this
    • Large waste of time but... P&T requires
Conclusions

- Times have changed and more difficult to be relevant to stakeholders
- Options and Consequences only way I can see to do this
- Next year will be very interesting