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Inside Information

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AG COMMUNICATORS' CONGRESS HUGE SUCCESS

Attendance at the first U.S. Agricultural Communicators' Congress far exceeded original projections.

Registration at the historic event exceeded 700 people, and included representatives from the five sponsoring agricultural communications organizations and three other agricultural journalism groups. Nearly all United States and territories, as well as Canada and several other foreign countries were represented at the congress.

Those attending the conference seemed overwhelmed by the line-up of speakers put together by the congress organizers and program planners. Many agreed that this may have been the best slate of speakers ever put together for an agriculture-related event.

President Ronald Reagan spoke to the congress on the south lawn of the White House, about two blocks from the conference hotel (the new J.W. Marriott Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue--the flagship hotel for the Marriott chain).

Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, Secretary of the Treasury Donald T. Regan and Ambassador William E. Brock, U.S. Special Trade Representative, were other principal speakers from the executive branch of the federal government.

Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) and Rep. Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) were the principal speakers from the U.S. Congress. Other legislators appearing on the program were Sen. Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.) and Rep. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.).

Many other notables from both the commercial and government sectors appeared on various panels to discuss such key agricultural topics as agricultural trade, commodity policy and direction, conservation of resources, farm credit situation, world trade competition and strategy, trade development challenges and credit at home and abroad.

Leaders of the five major national farm organizations appeared as a panel to summarize their thoughts on charting farm policy for the 1980s.

Information technology challenges were discussed by Dr. Joseph Pelton, director of policy for INTELSTAT. Others appearing in that segment of the congress program labeled "Bits, Bytes and Bounces in Communicating Agriculture," were Gary Truitt of the Brownfield Broadcasting Network in Missouri, Ray Wilkinson of the Tobacco Radio Network in North Carolina, Scott Watson of Doane Publishing Company in St. Louis and Gary Myers of Morgan & Myers agricultural public relations firm in Wisconsin.

Presidents of the five sponsoring agricultural communicators' organizations spoke briefly during the opening session of the congress, each saying where he or she thought agricultural communications is headed.

JoAnn Pierce, national president of Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) and associate editor of the editorial department of the Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida, said ag communicators "support each other, and should."

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Other presidents speaking were Willard McCracken, Agricultural Relations Council (ARC), with Deere and Company; Len Richardson, American Agricultural Editors Association (AAEA), editor of California Farmer magazine; Ann Warring, Cooperative Editorial Association (CEA), with Sunkist Growers, Inc.; and Art Sechrest, National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB), WJBC in Illinois.

Actively taking part in the congress were two other groups -- Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) and Communications Officers of State Departments of Agriculture (COSDA) -- who held meetings in conjunction with the congress. ACT president Jeff Stevenson from Michigan State University and COSDA president Mark Randal from the Illinois Department of Agriculture, were both seated at the head table and introduced at different sessions.

Some representatives from the Newspaper Farm Editors Association (NFEA) also attended the conference. The nation's first Miss Agriculture, Julie Unverfehrt, an agricultural journalism student at the University of Illinois, also was introduced during the congress.

Two announcements were made at the congress about upcoming national ag communicators' meetings. ACE will hold its annual meeting at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, next summer (last week of June). COSDA will hold its regular annual meeting later this year (first week of December) in Denver, Colo.

USDA VISITOR CENTER BECOMES SALES STORE

The USDA Visitor Information Center, managed by the Special Programs Division of USDA's Office of Information, will soon begin selling USDA publications as a "sales agent" for the U.S. Government Printing Office.

Long in the planning stages, final negotiations between USDA and GPO have been completed and sales are expected to begin sometime this month.

Milton Sloane, public affairs specialist supervising the operation, says that about 100 additional publication titles have been selected for the program, in addition to the 100 plus titles already being offered through the Center under the USDA publications user fee program.

The accounting system has been set up, inventory cards are being prepared and new forms, racks, shelving and other trappings have been placed on order. Next up is the reprogramming of the electronic cash register to track each publication by number as it is dispensed.

Supervisory receptionist in the Visitor Information Center is Carole Plummer. Other staff include receptionists Adelaide Conaway and Thelma Jackson.

NEW AUDIOVISUAL PROJECT PLANNED

A new audiovisual on the subject of "killer bees" is being planned by the Video & Film Division of USDA's Office of Information for USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

The USDA film made some years ago about the killer bees is out-of-date and needs to be revised. Three writers will be paid to present concepts for the new revision after which a selection will be made by a panel of ARS and Video & Film Division representatives.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either Stan Prochaska or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or to AGRO02 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.