

Freedom to Fanaticize

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Fundamentals of Communication

General Purpose: To Inform

Specific Purpose: To inform my classroom audience about the changes and the reasons behind the changes which are occurring in the agricultural industry.

Thesis Statement: I want my listeners to know the reasons behind government agricultural programs, the criticisms of farm programs, and the reform in the government agricultural programs.

Organizational Structure: Topic Order

- I. Reasons for Government Agricultural Programs
- II. Criticisms of Government Agricultural Programs
- III. Reform in Government Agricultural Programs

I. INTRODUCTION

Since all of us live in Iowa, you may be surprised to find out that only 2% of America's labor force is employed in agriculture. You may also find it ironic that America produces less than half of most of the world's agricultural products. For example, currently U.S. farmers produce just 49% of the world's soybeans, 40% of all corn, and 25% of all beef. Today I am going to be discussing the government's role in subsidizing the agricultural industry and the reasons for the recent reform in agriculture, which has led to the ever popular newspaper headlines calling this period of time "The Farm Crisis."

(Startling Statement)

II. PROPOSITION

After this speech, my listeners will know the reasons for government agricultural programs, the criticisms of government agricultural programs, and the reform in the government agricultural programs.

III. BODY

A. Reasons for Government Agricultural Programs

1. Since the 1930's the U.S. government has subsidized the farm industry through price supports, soil and water conservation programs, agricultural research, and farm credit programs.
2. There are many reasons why the government has supported its farm laborers.
 - a. Farmers' products are greatly needed, even though they receive very little for them.
 - b. Farmers are at the "mercy of the markets" when selling their crops.
 - c. Farmers are subject to extraordinary hazards (floods, droughts, insects) and cannot fully insure themselves against such hazards.
 - d. Lastly, the "family farm" is a fundamental U.S. institution that should be protected.

B. Criticisms of Government Agricultural Programs

1. Government agricultural programs treat the symptoms of farm problems, not the cause.
 - a. The major cause of agricultural problems is an inefficient allocation of resources (land, laborers, capital) to the farm industry.
 - b. Most economists believe the problem is too many farmers in relation to product demand and possible income from farm markets.
2. Farmer price supports and subsidy programs benefit farmers who need them least.
 - a. In 1996, 6% of all farmers received 46% of all government subsidies.
 - b. In 1996, also the poorest 60% of all farmers (earned less than \$20,000) received just 4% of all direct government farm subsidy payments.
 - c. Farm programs increase farmland values, but most farmers only own 50% or less of their land.
3. There is declining political support, because only 2% of the population is in agriculture.

C. Reform in Government Agricultural Programs

1. In 1996, Congress radically revamped 60 years of farm policy by passing

the Freedom to Farm Act.

2. The act immediately ended price supports in the wheat, corn, barley, oats, sorghum, rye, cotton, and rice industries.
3. Farmers are now expected to respond to changes in crop demand prices by varying the types and amounts of crops that they plant.
4. It is hoped to create a world market-driven agricultural economy, rather than one managed by the Federal government.
5. To ease the transition away from farm subsidies, farmers will receive guaranteed, but declining annual transition payments through 2002.

IV. CONCLUSION

As you can see, there are valiant reasons for and against government agricultural programs. Only time will tell, however, if the intent of the government agricultural reform is successful. Already, Iowa's Senator, Tom Harkin, has called Freedom to Farm "the most noxious weed populating America." Is he correct? I guess we'll have to just wait and see.

(Quotation)

Alternate Introduction:

Can you name which one of America's largest industries is going through extreme reconstruction? Would you believe it's agriculture! Today I am going to be discussing the government's role in subsidizing the agricultural industry in the past and the reasons for the recent reform in this industry.

(Rhetorical Question)

Alternate Conclusion:

Now you can see that agriculture, indeed, is the nations largest industry which is going through extreme reconstruction. There are valiant reasons for and against government agricultural programs. Only time will tell, however, if the intent of the government agricultural reform is successful.

(Reference to Introduction)