

etc. Strong consideration should be given to legislation that will provide for import quotas or market-sharing arrangements that will protect the American producer and consumer. The end result should not be designed to gouge the consumer, but should be designed to assure the American housewife of an adequate supply of fruits and vegetables at a reasonable price and give the American producer the right to supply these commodities during our seasons of production.

H.R. 16416 "FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES MARKET-SHARING ACT OF 1968"

The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association sincerely feels that H.R. 16416 introduced by Representatives Herlong and Rogers of Florida is legislation that will not only aid the agri-business of our Nation, but will also protect the consumers' welfare. This legislation marks a shift away from rigid protection of domestic industry by recognizing the claim of foreign countries to a fair share of our market. The bill is designed to establish a ceiling over imports while permitting them to participate proportionately in the domestic consumption of any product made subject to a ceiling.

The authority of the President under the Agricultural Act of 1956 to seek to obtain agreements with other countries—limiting the export from such countries and the importation into the United States of agricultural commodities—has not been exercised with respect to fresh fruits and vegetables. During the intervening years, imports of certain fresh fruits and vegetables into the United States have increased to such extent as to disrupt the market for such commodities produced in the United States. This increase in imports has been caused in large part by lower costs of production in other countries, especially in the wages paid to agricultural employees, which it is the policy of the United States to maintain at relatively much higher levels than in other countries. Because of this unfair disparity in costs of production which exists in other countries by reason of the payment of substandard wages, it is practically certain that imports of fresh fruits and vegetables will continue to increase and further destroy the market for such commodities produced in the United States.

Access to the United States market for foreign produced fresh fruits and vegetables should be established on an equitable and orderly market-sharing basis consistent with the maintenance of a strong and expanding United States production of fresh fruits and vegetables and designed to avoid the disruption of United States markets and the unemployment of United States agricultural workers.

The Association is aware of the fact that in order to export we must import; however, it does not follow that we must submit our industries to highly destructive imports. The United States is a better market for imports when it is in a prosperous state. A good marketing situation is not created by driving some of our major industries to stagnation by unrestricted imports that undersell our own producers.

The standard of living enjoyed by citizens of the United States did not come about by accident. Our economy is geared to high wages, etc., but the chain is broken when you force the American producer to pay high wages and then bring in goods produced in low-wage countries to compete with his commodity on the open market. We have aided the foreign countries by supplying them with technology and education. The Provost for Agriculture of the Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida stated recently that at the last count there are students from 45 nations studying agriculture at the University of Florida, and most of them are sponsored or subsidized by our own Government.

Many professors from the University of Florida have been sent to foreign lands, again at the expense of our Government, to teach proper methods of production and marketing of their commodities. This is fine if the intent is to train them so they can provide some of their own needs in terms of meeting their particular food requirements. But this is not the case. As soon as production methods are learned, they turn around and flood our markets with the commodities we taught them how to produce.

We are hopeful that this Committee will be able to come forth with recommendations that will provide the necessary protection to our producers and to the employees whose livelihood is dependent upon industries which are vulnerable to foreign competition from low-wage countries. We feel H.R. 16416 will accomplish this objective.