94th Congress, 1st Session — House Document No. 94–125

VETO OF THE EMERGENCY AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 1975

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

VETOING

H.R. 4296, AN ACT TO ADJUST TARGET PRICES, LOAN AND PURCHASE LEVELS ON THE 1975 CROPS OF UPLAND COTTON, CORN, WHEAT, AND SOYBEANS, TO PROVIDE PRICE SUPPORT FOR MILK AT 80 PER CENTUM OF PARITY WITH QUARTERLY ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING MARCH 31, 1976, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

MAY 5, 1975.—Message and accompanying act ordered to be printed as a House document

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To the House of Representatives:

I am returning without my approval H.R. 4296, referred to as the Emergency Agricultural Act of 1975. Although the aim of this bill is laudable, its results would be costly not only to consumers and taxpayers but to American farmers in the long run. It would damage our international market position which is so essential to American agriculture's long-term interests.

Approval of this bill, therefore, would *not* be in the public interest.

In the conduct of the Government's fiscal affairs, a line must be drawn against excesses. I drew that line in my address to the Nation on March 29. I promised all Americans that, except where national security interests, energy requirements, or urgent humanitarian needs were involved, I would act to hold our fiscal year 1976 deficit to no more than $60 billion.

New spending programs which the Congress is considering could easily raise the Federal deficit to an intolerable level of $100 billion. This *must* not happen.

H.R. 4296 is an example of increased non-essential spending. In fiscal year 1976, it could add an estimated $1.8 billion to the Federal deficit. If used as a point of departure for longer-term legislation—as was strongly indicated during its consideration—it could lead to an escalation of farm program subsidies in succeeding years.

Approval of this bill would undermine the successful market-oriented farm policy adopted by this Administration and the Congress. It is a step backward toward previously discredited policies.

Prospects for farmers, it is true, are not as bright this year as in the recent past. Farm production costs have been pushed upward by the same inflationary pressures that affect other industries. Demand for certain farm products has simultaneously slackened because of the recession. Prices paid by farmers are currently 11 percent above year-ago levels. In contrast, the index of prices received by farmers is now 7 percent below levels of a year ago. Fortunately, the latest index, released Wednesday, shows that the 5-month decline in prices received by farmers has been reversed and was 4 percent above a month earlier.

The Administration recognizes that some farmers have experienced financial difficulties due to this cost-price squeeze. It has taken a number of positive steps to assist farmers. The 1976 wheat acreage allotment was recently increased by 8 million acres to 61.6 million acres. This action provides wheat producers with additional target price and disaster protection.

We have also increased the 1975 crop cotton price support loan rate by 9 cents a pound. And we recently announced an increase in the price support level for milk, which, combined with easing feed prices, should be helpful to dairy producers.

Within the past several days, we have completed negotiations with the European Community to remove the export subsidies on industrial cheese coming here—a step that ensures that surplus dairy products will not be sold in the U.S. market at cut-rate prices. At the same time, we have worked out arrangements which enable the Europeans to continue selling us high-quality table cheese. This solution has enabled us to keep on mutually agreeable trading terms with our best customers for American farm exports.

The Administration has also taken action to protect our cattle producers against a potential flood of beef imports from abroad. The Department of State is completing agreements with 12 countries limiting their 1975 exports of beef to this country. These voluntary export restraint agreements are intended to keep imports subject to the Meat Import Law to less than 1,182 million pounds.

If unforeseen price deterioration requires action on my part, I will direct the Secretary of Agriculture to make adjustments in price support loan rates for wheat, corn, soybeans, and other feed grains. But it is our expectation that market prices for grains will remain well above loan rates and target prices in the coming year.

Most farmers have already made their plans and bought their seed. Many are well into their planting season. These plans have obviously been completed without any dependence on the provisions of H.R. 4296.

In the long haul this bill would lead to constraints on production and result in loss of jobs in food-related industries. It would induce farmers to grow more cotton—already in surplus—and less soybeans needed for food. The bill would jeopardize the competitive position of our cotton in world markets.

American farmers have responded magnificently during the past several years to produce food and fiber for this Nation and the world. This has made agriculture our leading source of foreign exchange. This year, despite very trying circumstances, most farmers are again seeking full production. They have my support for a vigorous export policy for their products. I recognize that agricultural exports have been restrained twice in the past two years. We have now eliminated all restrictions on exports and we are determined to do everything possible to avoid imposing them again. Our farm products must have unfettered access to world markets.

This Administration is determined to act in support of the American farmer and his best interests. It will not act to distort his market. We must hold the budget line if we are all to enjoy the benefits of a prosperious, stable, non-inflationary economy.

For all these reasons, I cannot approve this act.

GERALD R. FORD.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *May 1, 1975.*