ADDRESS BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) BEFORE S. C. FARM
BUREAU AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, CLEMSON HOUSE, CLEMSON, S. C.,
NOVEMBER 22, 1955, AT 10:00 A.M.

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests and my Friends:

It is a great privilege for me to be here today, and I appreciate the opportunity of discussing with you one of the most perplexing economic problems confronting our nation. This problem is to provide our farmers with a fair income for their labors.

During the Congressional recess, I have had the privilege of addressing a number of farm organizations and discussing farm problems with hundreds of farmers and farm leaders from border to border in South Carolina.

Every meeting and discussion has led me to the inescapable conclusion that our farmers are dangling from the horns of a twin dilemma—rising production costs and falling agriculture prices. The farmer’s livelihood is constantly endangered by this dilemma from which no escape has yet been found.

Our nation’s agricultural leaders and experts are—I believe—earnestly trying to come to grips with these problems. But thus far, no one has been able to come forward with an adequate solution to them.

I cannot today provide a cure-all answer to the problems which beset our farmers. I do believe, however, that I have some ideas which, if adopted, would greatly benefit the farmers of our state.

The plight of the farmer today is a serious one and cannot be taken lightly. Our farm problems must not be kicked around like a football for political gain by either party or any person. My sincere hope is that both political parties will work together in the best interests of the farmer. Political gain cannot be considered when the welfare of the nation’s farmers is at stake. Any man of any
political party/who is willing to capitalize on the suffering of our farmers for political gain/is not worthy/to be a public servant.

The problems our farmers face are intricate ones, and they deserve the most careful consideration of our state and national leaders--both farm and political leaders.

There are many things to be done on behalf of the farmer, but time will not permit me to go into all of them. It is my feeling, however, that affirmative steps must be taken forthwith/to alleviate the condition/in which the farmer finds himself. I am of the opinion/that there are certain steps that can and should be taken/without delay. I presented certain points which I felt would be helpful to our farmers/to the Subcommittee of the Senate Agriculture Committee in Columbia last Monday, November 14th. Some of those will be discussed by me today, along with other matters.

1. Support Of Basic Farm Crops At Not Less Than 90% Of Parity. Even if this is done, our farmers will still receive, on the average, less than one-half as much income as persons engaged in other lines of endeavor. If producers are willing to make an honest effort to adjust production to consumption, there appears no sound reason/to refuse the farmers this consideration. Let it be said to the credit of the farmers of South Carolina, that they have voted overwhelmingly for the acreage reduction program--over 97% for it. It is my hope that Congress will adopt, at the next session, a program to provide 90 per cent of parity on the basic
crops. I shall continue favoring 90% of parity until someone comes up with a better idea of insuring our farmers against price drops for their money crops, such as cotton, tobacco, corn, wheat, peanuts and rice. At the present time, tobacco is the only crop on a permanent 90 per cent of parity basis. There is a House-approved bill now before the Senate Agriculture Committee that would restore rigid price supports for a period of three years. I have introduced a bill that would restore these supports on a permanent basis. If the Senate Committee cannot agree to bring out my bill, permanently restoring rigid supports, I hope it will approve, immediately after Congress meets, the three-year bill already passed by the House and now pending in the Senate Committee. I feel sure it would receive swift approval on the floor of the Senate.

2. Increase Of Sales Of Farm Produce On Foreign Markets.

As a result of our price support system and our continual loss of world markets, the Federal Government has accumulated huge stockpiles of farm surpluses in Commodity Credit Corporation warehouses. In approaching a solution to our farm problems, one of the first steps to be taken must be the establishment of an orderly program for disposing of government surpluses.

One of the most feasible plans for disposing of these surpluses is to be found through increased sales on the world markets, which in recent years we have been rapidly losing.

However, I was pleased to note Secretary of Agriculture Benson's statement of November 9, that in the first nine months of 1955 one-third more CCC surpluses were disposed of overseas than during the same period of 1954, and that these sales brought a total of 1 billion 300 million dollars.
Now let us consider the cotton surplus as an illustration of the problem. We have approximately 8 million bales of cotton in government warehouses, and by the end of this year we may have 4 million or more additional bales. At the same time, our share of the world markets for this great money crop for South Carolina and many other Southern States, has dwindled from 60 per cent to less than 30 per cent of the world total. It is in danger of being lost altogether. Cotton acreage in this country has been reduced from 25½ million acres in 1953 to 17 million acres in 1955, but more cotton was produced in 1955 than in 1953, even though there was a reduction of more than 8 million acres during that period. By reason of the drastic acreage cut in 1955 alone, 55,000 cotton farm families were put out of business. An additional 130,000 farmers, already making less than $1,000 per year, were reduced to an income of less than $900 per year. Senator Eastland of Mississippi and I, with the support of 60 Senate colleagues, have introduced a bill which we believe will help the Government cope with this grave situation confronting our cotton farmers. It has two purposes: To assure cotton sales in the world market at competitive prices and to establish quotas on imported foreign manufactured cotton goods.

A program of this nature is essential if we are to prevent complete disruption of the economy of the cotton-producing and manufacturing areas of this country. South Carolina, as you know, is a leader in both of these functions which are so vital to our national economy. I advocate increasing world sales on an orderly basis not only for our cotton surpluses, but also for other crops which are so vital to our economy, such as tobacco,
corn, grains and dairy products.

3. Improvement Of Domestic Marketing System For Farm Produce. I believe it is imperative to improve our domestic marketing system of farm produce throughout the United States. Last summer cantaloupes which sold at 3 cents each in South Carolina were sold in Washington for 35 cents each. This is a deplorable situation which should be remedied. Growers must get more of the profit out of the crops they produce. Also I hope our state will continue working to improve our marketing system for farm produce.

4. Expansion Of Agricultural Research To Enable The Farmer To Produce At A Lower Cost. I favor more expenditures for expanded research projects and extension services, such as those at Clemson College, to teach our farmers how to produce their crops for less money. Increased research is vital to secure greater knowledge on the use of fertilizer, methods for fighting insects, diseases, soil erosion, marketing, etc. Certainly one way to offset the problem of rising prices on farm implements and supplies is to find methods of reducing the costs of raising the crops. With the farmer paying more and getting less, he must learn to produce at a lower cost.

5. Improvement Of Disaster Relief Program. Recent natural disasters such as floods, droughts and freezes have cost farmers millions of dollars. We must improve our disaster relief programs. Drought aid should be extended to cover hogs, poultry and farm workstock, as well as cattle. Legislation should be enacted to provide assistance to cover farm animals affected by a shortage of feed grains, as a result of natural disasters.
6. **Payments To Farmers For Retiring Acreage Growing Price-Supported Crops.** If the diverted acreage is planted in legumes or other soil-conserving crops, a larger payment should be allowed than if this is not done. This proposal is not a complete solution, but I believe the reduction in acreage would aid greatly in avoiding large surpluses, thereby relieving the government of the expense of disposing of the same. If such a plan is adopted, it would be preferable for it to be tried on a voluntary basis—a voluntary plan is more desirable than a mandatory one—however, if it should not function properly on a voluntary basis, then compulsion may have to be used, and the Secretary of Agriculture should be given the needed authority to make it work.

During the past session, I joined Senator Russell and several other Senators in introducing legislation that would have given relief to thousands of peach farmers in South Carolina, Georgia and other states who lost their crops as a result of an early season freeze. This bill would have granted temporary additional crop acreage to these farmers. Had the bill passed, such farmers would have been authorized to grow a substitute money crop, to provide a livelihood for their families and farm workers. This bill was approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee and by the Senate. The House Agriculture Committee tabled the bill. Legislation of this type is just as needed as ever, and should be enacted as soon as possible.

I am happy to inform you that the Agriculture Department has agreed, at my urging, to negotiate a peach crop insurance program with South Carolina peach growers. It is hoped that such a pilot program will be available to our peach growers in 1957.
It is not difficult for any of us to recognize the problems existent in agriculture. It is extremely difficult to arrive at workable solutions to these problems. Nobody knows the practical approach to their consideration like the farmer himself, and I urge you to give thorough study to the suggestions and recommendations which come from the farm bureaus in the various counties of the state and from our agricultural leaders, and then give the Congress the benefit of the consolidated thinking of our farmers. With unity of purpose, I am confident that adjustments can be made in agricultural laws which will improve the lot of the farmer in this State and Nation.

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