

IOWA FARMERS UNION
Lobby Plaza Hotel, Des Moines, Ia.
January 16, 1950

Dear Fellow Farmer:

Enclosed with this letter is "The Farmers Union Offers a Program" which we submit to you for your examination. The FARMERS UNION feels that 1950 is going to be one of the most crucial in the history of our country for the "family type farmer". Legislation which can prevent millions of family type farmers from being driven off the land in the next decade will or will not be passed in the immediate future.

The FARMERS UNION is sponsoring farmers elected by Farmers Union members to go to Washington, D. C., to ask for the immediate passage of the BRANNAN PLAN and to press for continued support at 90% of parity on hogs which goes off March 31, 1950.

The FARMERS UNION disagrees with the Farm Bureau concerning many important farm program issues. The Farmers Union is for 100% of parity. The Farm Bureau is against it. The Farmers Union is for the Brannan Plan—The Farm Bureau is against it. The Farmers Union is opposed to "60% to 90% flexible, sliding scale price supports"—The Farm Bureau is for "flexible price supports." Inasmuch as it is an old American tradition to debate issues when they arise (as Abraham Lincoln and Douglas debated the issue of slavery), the Farmers Union has on many occasions tried to get the Farm Bureau to debate "The Brannan Plan and other farm programs in general". The Farmers of this area has the right to know that the Farm Bureau refuses to debate these questions, not only here in Floyd County, but all over the State of Iowa. The Farm Bureau refused to debate these issues at Osage on January 12, 1950 after their fieldman had named that date as suitable with them. Their State President Howard Hill was contacted but refused and would not send a substitute from all of the hundreds of "paid Farm Bureau Officials" throughout the State. After exhausting every avenue of getting the Farm Bureau leadership to debate, the Farmers Union is going ahead with a meeting on January 25, 1950, in the Union Hall, Ellis Auditorium in Charles City at 8 p.m. We shall continue to try to get a representative from the Farm Bureau to defend their farm program position. We believe farmers have the right to hear the BRANNAN PLAN debated and decide for themselves who is supporting the right farm program for the family type farmer. Everyone is invited to this meeting.

We are sending this letter to you because the Farmers Union is going to organize around here. Our dues are \$7.50 a year. We think we're twice the organization for only half the money. If you want to join before we get around to you send your dues to the Iowa Farmers Union, Lobby Plaza Hotel, Des Moines, Iowa. If you are interested in building a Farmers Union around your area let us hear from you.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR THE FAMILY TYPE FARMER. JOIN THE FIGHT FOR 100% OF PARITY. JOIN THE FARMERS UNION.

Sincerely yours,

Merle Hansen
Fieldman, Iowa Farmers Union

THE FARMERS UNION OFFERS A PROGRAM

Eggs in 1937 were near 20¢ a dozen. Coffee could be bought in many brands for from 19 to 25 cents. At that time a dozen eggs could buy or almost buy a pound of coffee—now it takes about three dozen eggs to buy one pound of coffee. (This is a good example of "flexible price supports." Flexible price supports let farm prices drop without a corresponding drop of the things we buy. Lower prices are all right IF it means lower prices for the things farmers buy). Considering the cost of feed, baby chicks and labor in producing eggs, farmers can't produce eggs for the present prices. Time and time again farmers have come through a period of prosperity—just as we are now—but within a few years many farmers were broke and being driven from the land. There is a story about a wheat farmer in the last depression who planted more wheat to make more money to pay his debts. But it cost him more to produce wheat than he received for it, so the more wheat he raised the more money he lost and the more in debt he became. FARMERS WENT BROKE IN THE LAST DEPRESSION WITH GRANARIES OVERFLOWING, TOO MANY HOGS, TOO MANY EGGS, TOO MUCH CORN on the one hand; and on the other hand PEOPLE WERE STARVING. We MUST act to prevent the same thing that has just happened to egg prices from happening to all farm commodities.

The price of eggs teaches us that we must have a farm program which will guarantee the farmer a floor under his prices and also put this food into the breadbasket of the consumer at a price he can pay. If we again find ourselves in a situation where farmers go broke because they have produced too much and the city worker starving in the midst of plenty—WE HAVE FAILED.

The FARMERS UNION believes that it is not necessary to go through that misery again and therefore we support the BRANNAN PLAN as a possible solution for the following reasons:

1. BRANNAN PLAN has income supports at about 100% of present parity ratio.

For the year 1949 parity will average about 103%. Could you get by on 60% of last years income or even 75%? There is a farmer-banker-businessman organization, which has been receiving \$15 a year from many farmers, working for a 60% or 75% flexible, sliding scale price support program. But from 1930 to 1934 we received 66% of parity. Consequently, the 60% or 75% floor of flexible, sliding scale price supports is a trap door which will drop farmers into depression and disaster. After March 31, 1950 the Government is no longer obligated to support the price of hogs at 90% of parity (the same condition that existed with eggs December 31, 1949). Eggs were supported at 90% of parity until December 31—the support price dropped—the price of eggs dropped. Eggs are now supported at 75% of parity on a national average which would mean in the Midwest that farmers would get 25¢ a dozen (27¢ a dozen when delivered to plant). The FARMERS UNION is the ONLY farm organization for the BRANNAN PLAN. The FARMERS UNION was the ONLY farm organization which refused to compromise for less than 100% of parity or for that matter no other farm organization even came up to the 90% mark.

2. BRANNAN PLAN has adequate supports for livestock and livestock products—about 85% of Iowa farm income.

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Under the present program about 85% of Iowa farm income does not have adequate price supports. Under the present program only six commodities must be supported at 90% of parity--wheat, cotton, tobacco, rice, peanuts and CORN. All of these crops except CORN are "cash crops." But the family type farmer in Iowa who raises CORN is also a livestock farmer and most all of his corn is marketed through livestock or livestock products. Yet, under the present law, the only provisions for supporting any livestock products is about the same set up that is now in effect on eggs. The BRANNAN PLAN gives us 100% income supports on corn, cotton, wheat, tobacco, whole milk, eggs, farm chickens, hogs, beef cattle and lambs.

3. BRANNAN PLAN will support perishables--eggs, pork, etc., in a way to put food into hands of people who need it.

Let's take eggs as an example of the present method of supporting perishables. We cannot subscribe to a theory of "scarcity", of taking eggs and other products off the market to keep the price high. Eggs should not be dried and put in a hole some place, but should move into the breadbasket of the consumer. Under the Brannan Plan eggs would be supported at 45¢ a dozen. You would sell your eggs on the market for whatever you would get--say 30¢--then you would take your receipts to the PMA (old AAA) office and they would pay you the difference between the market price (30¢) and the support price (45¢). This method was used on cream during the war. This method would tend to increase the amount of eggs the consumer could afford to buy and yet give the farmer a decent price for his produce.

4. BRANNAN PLAN is for the Family type farmer.

Under the Brannan Plan no one single operator would receive income supports from the Government after a gross of \$25,000. It would not limit the operation to \$25,000 but after \$25,000 the farmer would be on his own. Under the present program there were individual potato growers who received as much as a half a million dollars. Government funds should not be used to help the big operator grow bigger.

The Brannan Plan also has soil conservation practices in it to qualify for price supports. It will be administered by farmer elected committeemen just as the AAA program is now administered. THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE WOULD HAVE NO MORE POWER UNDER THE BRANNAN PLAN THAN HE HAS UNDER THE PRESENT PLAN.

We support the Brannan Plan as the best way of getting that 100% of parity for the family type farmer. We believe we must have a program designed for the people living on the land, not for the landlords living off the land. We advocate farm income for farmers. We need a graduated land tax to arrest the increasing growth of corporate agriculture and absentee ownership. This land should be owned by the farmer who farms it. We support REA just as we support parity--100%. We support the AAA (now PMA) and believe it is doing and has done a real job in helping farmers through both good times and bad times. We believe we must stop big business from taking the driving reins away from the people. We believe organized people must become stronger than organized money. We believe in the little people getting together and therefore we support organized labor. For our complete farm program or further information write to Iowa Farmers Union, Lobby Plaza Hotel, Des Moines, Iowa.