

Could Override Nixon on Beef Ceiling

FARM---

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efits in shifting from the present welfare program to the supplemental security income program," Mr. Nixon said, "it is unfortunate that the Congress has chosen this method of maintaining assistance levels

Cash Assistance

"I continue to believe that our long-term goal should be to provide income assistance in cash, rather than in food stamps or other forms of in-kind assistance that rob the individual of the chance to make his own spending decisions."

Mr. Nixon said he would propose legislation to correct what he termed "serious and costly defects" of provisions that could result in "high administrative costs and potential for great abuse."

At his news conference, Butz was full of praise for the bill, calling it "a historic turning point in the philosophy of farm programs in the United States."

For 40 years, farm programs have been based on the theory of "cutbacks" and "curtailment" of production, but the programs are now being shifted

toward a maximum production philosophy, said Butz.

He predicted continued higher prices for farmers and a further expansion of U.S. food exports.

Food Prices

Butz generally turned aside numerous questions about high retail food prices and food shortages by insisting that food prices have not risen as much as prices of other goods in recent years. This year will mark the first time in 15 years food prices have gone up more than incomes, he said.

As for complaints by bakers that bread may soon disappear from supermarket shelves because of the extensive U.S. exporting of wheat, Butz said "I class that as hysterical pressure."

He said wheat represents only a small fraction of the total cost of a loaf of bread. He added that the bakers did not mention that the new farm bill gives them a \$400-million "windfall" by repealing the 75-cent-a-bushel "bread tax" for flour millers.

The Agriculture secretary said he does not favor export controls to keep U.S. wheat at home, because other nations would retaliate with export curbs of their own. "We've got

to move to freer world trade," he said.

He said his view on export controls was not changed by Thursday's government crop report, which indicated lower than predicted yields of corn, wheat and soybeans. He said he believes the estimates may prove too low, and he added that the decrease in corn production is not very important because production of grain sorghum, which can be substituted for corn as an animal feed, is up.

Beef Ceilings

Butz reaffirmed his opposition to the retail price ceilings on beef, which ends Sept. 12, saying it was "a mistake from the beginning."

But he seemed to soften his criticism of the ceiling program, refusing to say whether he still is seeking to get the plan ended before the September date. He described himself as "only one voice" in the administration and said that, unlike poultry and pork, beef production is not seriously affected by short-term price ceilings.

Asked whether there is any indication that the White House is listening to his earlier call to end the ceiling program, Butz answered curtly, "no, sir."

Butz said he had the power to

go against the President's wishes and end the ceilings on beef, but he said if he did so the President might get a new secretary of agriculture.

The bill gives the agriculture secretary new powers over food prices, although the Nixon administration had not requested the provision.

Under the law, when the secretary certifies a supply of meat, poultry, vegetables or fruit will be too low and there is no other way to boost supplies, the President would have to make "appropriate adjustments" in the maximum prices charged under controls.

REAP Programs

Another feature of the new law requires the agriculture secretary to continue a program for sharing the cost of conservation practices on pri-

vate lands under the Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP).

"I stopped funding this program in fiscal year 1973 because it supported at federal expense actions which were short-term in nature. Fortunately, this new act provides that the practices supported be of a permanent nature and subject to contractual agreement for maintenance up to 25 years," Mr. Nixon said.

The legislation provides that for the rest of this market year and for the next one that ends March 31, 1975, minimum milk price support be increased to 80 per cent of parity, a formula used to gauge what farmers get compared to costs and living expenses. After that, the support would drop to its previous level of 75 per cent of parity.

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