

In the 1960s, soybean stocks again became burdensome as production exceeded usage. High dependency on government and private industry for research and market development funding led farmers to initiate farmer-funded checkoff programs. States began forming soybean associations affiliated with ASA to involve more farmers, and ASA began funding research to find new uses for soybeans and ways to reduce production costs.

In 1975, the American Soybean Association Market Development Foundation was created from the American Soybean Institute and a funding agency called the American Association Market Development Fund. The Fund's purpose was to receive farmer checkoff funds, review market development programs and budgets, authorize ASA to conduct these activities and pay for services provided by ASA.

Overseas Operations Expanded

ASA opened an office in Caracas, Venezuela in 1984, to serve the South American market. This brought the number of ASA international offices to 11 including Brussels, Hamburg, Madrid, Mexico City, Peking, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo and Vienna.

ASA launched a truth-in-labeling campaign in 1987, to call attention to the hidden use of highly saturated tropical fats in foods. ASA asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to require food manufacturers to stop calling tropical fats "vegetable oils" and to put an end to "and/or" wording on food labels. The truth-in-labeling campaign was part of a new initiative to expand domestic use of soybeans and soybean products.

About this time, exports to the Soviet Union increased from 2.5 million to 91 million bushels. Palm oil imports declined as U.S. consumers became more concerned about saturated fats in their diets, and soybean oil use increased. ASA promotions for soybean oil use to control road dust and for newspaper printing inks also helped boost demand.

Competition for overseas customers led to bold new actions by ASA farmer-leaders that set the organization on a new course in 1989. After more than a year of study and discussion, ASA's farmer delegates approved a resolution to work toward a national soybean checkoff. Federal legislation to create a one-half of one percent checkoff for market promotion, research and industry education was introduced.

Years of ASA market promotion in Eastern Europe and continuing efforts in the Soviet Union gave U.S. soybeans an advantage. With the collapse of Communism, Romania turned to ASA for help in ordering U.S. soybeans. In Western Europe, ASA implemented a major consumer education campaign and European purchases of U.S. soybeans increased 22 percent.

Soyfoods and Biodiesel

For each of the past two years, ASA has hosted a soyfoods luncheon on Capitol Hill to demonstrate why soyfoods are becoming increasingly popular in the U.S. and overseas. The event provides an opportunity for policymakers and their staffs to experience how great soyfoods taste in addition to being good for them. ASA promotions such as this play a big part in the success of farmer-friendly legislation.

When the Child Nutrition and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Reauthorization Act of 2004 was signed into law on June 30, 2004, the bill marked an important step forward for soymilk in federal nutrition programs. As a result of ASA lobbying, the new law allows children who for religious, health or cultural reasons cannot drink cow's milk to be served soymilk with only a note from the parent, which is a significant improvement over the old practice, which required a doctor's note.

Soymilk manufacturers have expressed enthusiasm for the new provisions and high interest in working with schools to increase distribution of soymilk. The value of the ASA-supported provision to the soy industry

has been estimated at millions of dollars annually.

And last October, ASA achieved one its most important legislative victories when President George W. Bush signed into law a bill containing the first-ever biodiesel tax incentive. Biodiesel is a cleaner burning fuel made from renewable resources such as soybean oil.

For every 100 million gallons of soy-based biodiesel demand, the price of a bushel of soybeans is expected to increase by 10 cents. That could add an average of another \$2,000 to the bottom line of farmers growing 500 acres of soybeans. The tax incentive took effect Jan. 1, 2005, and lasts for two years.

It is expected to provide an economic surge in several sectors of the U.S. economy including manufacturing, agriculture, and all sectors that provide support services to these industries. It's estimated that the tax incentive could create up to 50,000 jobs in the U.S. over the next 10 years. The provisions will significantly benefit the U.S. economy and could increase U.S. gross output by almost \$7 billion.

From its humble beginnings, the ASA has nurtured and promoted U.S. soybeans into an \$18 billion industry while maintaining soybeans as a viable cropping opportunity for U.S. producers. Today, soybeans are planted on more than 74 million acres, which represents 28 percent of all U.S. cropland.

It is the vision of ASA's leaders that the Association will lead a dynamic industry supplying the preferred soy products to the world, while improving the quality of life and the environment.

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