

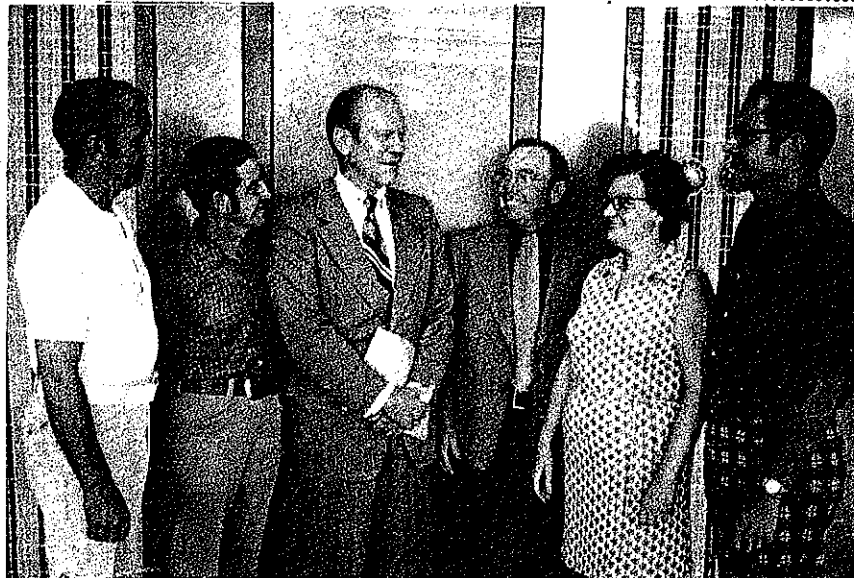
# The West Michigan Farm Bureau News

JOHN E. STEFFENS  
6690 WALKER, RFD 2  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49504

Volume Eight

Sparta, Michigan • December, 1973

Number 12



The new Vice President of the United States (third from left), Gerald R. Ford, is shown above with members of the Kent County Farm Bureau during the annual meeting of the Peach Ridge Fruit Growers Association held last August in Sparta. They are (left to right) Royal Klein of Sparta, former county Farm Bureau board

member; Wilbur Reister of Sparta; Mr. Ford; John Steffens of Grand Rapids, present county board member; Mrs. Steffens and James Robinette of Grand Rapids, past county president and board member. Vice President Ford is a long-time member of the Kent County Farm Bureau.

## Farm Bureau President - Elton Smith Calls for 'Aggressive Action' to Preserve Farmland

The president of the State's largest farm organization called for "aggressive action" to preserve agricultural lands for food production, in his report to members at the 54th annual meeting of the Michigan Farm Bureau in Grand Rapids.

Elton R. Smith, Kent County dairyman who heads the 60,709 family member Michigan Farm Bureau, placed the availability of farm land ahead of other agricultural concerns such as the energy crisis, rising production costs, and environmental issues.

"Some people fail to realize that land is a necessary resource to those who make their living from the soil. It is also vital to the economy of Michigan and to the well-being of every citizen," Mr. Smith said. "We cannot wait any longer; we must move now on land use planning. Guidelines must be established at the state level to coordinate and make local programs effective."

In analyzing the effects of the energy crisis on farmers, Mr. Smith pointed out that while agriculture uses less than five percent of the nation's oil and gas - agricultural products sold abroad pay for the oil the

disastrous."

The Farm Bureau president told the 1,000 farmers in attendance that they could not afford to be "lulled into apathy by one year of respectable prices." With the federal government calling for all-out production next year, Mr. Smith reminded farmers that they should work to improve their marketing system. "If we have all-out production here, and if production is increased in other parts of the world, we could face a different situation."

Mr. Smith's report opened the Farm Bureau's four-day annual meeting at the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium. An awards program was held Tuesday evening with county Farm Bureau leaders sharing the spotlight with well-known recording star, Ray Price.

Other highlights of the convention included meetings of Farm Bureau Women, Farm Bureau Services, Inc., Farmers Petroleum Cooperative, and various commodity sessions.

Young Farmer activities during the convention included a discussion meet, crowning of the 1974 Michigan Farm Bureau Queen, and a banquet Wednesday evening with Dr. John Furbay,