

A SUNFLOWER ASSOCIATION???

By

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As a long-time area sunflower contractor, closely associated with the growers, I should perhaps be able to give some appropriate comments, opinions, or concepts about a sunflower association related to this industry. This past year we saw the birth of a "Growers Sunflower Association" in our upper midwest sunflower producing area. Its goals were and are valid. Its organization was rushed but dedicated to its task as it was then hastily conceived. Its membership grew and seemed willing to serve the Association and follow the elected leadership. We might ask, "did it achieve its objectives?" Grower and processor alike would have to answer this question negatively.

LET'S TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT A SUNFLOWER ASSOCIATION - We should be able to see somewhat more clearly now as we attempt to establish some guidelines for the future:

1. Any association must serve the entire sunflower industry. In order to do this, I feel, an association should include in its membership representation from growers and processors involved with all classes of sunflower.
2. Associate memberships should be available to related industry such as chemical suppliers, equipment manufacturers, etc.
3. The purpose for the association should be well defined and carefully adhered to. Included in these purposes would certainly be:
 - a. Seeking the cooperation of grower and processor, through every means, to further and protect the interests of the sunflower industry.
 - b. To afford a means of cooperating with any government agency in all matters concerning the sunflower industry.
 - c. To promote and foster sunflower research including market research.
 - d. A means of collecting and assimilating cultural information such as seeding dates, fertilizer rates, insecti-

cide and herbicide applications, etc., and also the distribution of such information in the form of recommendations to all members.

- e. To inform and inspire interest in the sunflower industry, on the part of the general public, emphasizing the economic potential of the crop for the area.

The Association may well establish committees with representation from grower and processor. Included in these committees might be:

1. Membership promotion
2. Trading rules
3. Arbitration committee
4. A grade standards committee
5. Product research and promotion committee
6. Traffic committee
7. Public relations committee

While I believe it might be appropriate for the Association to assist in interpreting and evaluating "grower contracts", I do not feel that they should attempt to establish arbitrary limits for contracts between growers and processors. The sunflower industry, in the United States, is only an infant in our total agricultural picture. New areas are attempting to investigate the sunflower as a potential crop. I do not feel that the Association should attempt to pre-empt the growers' independence or to manipulate the natural activity of our free enterprise system by establishing economic barriers of any kind. A free and competitive market has always best served the grower and processor alike in the long run. This small infant industry has, in my opinion, a very considerable potential. I, for one, would like to see it grow from infancy exposed to all of the pressures of the world economic system. Only then will it be able to withstand the test of time and truly grow to be a mature industry of our country - and, equally important, it will come to serve the farmer and processor alike.

May I say in closing, I feel that to be a member of this Association should be a privilege and a membership fee should be established which will reflect the concern and interest of the prospective members. The membership fee should be sufficiently significant so that membership is given serious consideration and also allows the Association to serve its members. Applications for membership should be screened and the Association should establish itself as a corporate entity.

These are some of the thoughts I have had as I attempted a second look at the Sunflower Association in this area. Perhaps the future application of these guidelines may be helpful in our area and by others in attendance here from outside of our Midwest production area.