Church leaders organize Farmers advocacy group

A Farmers Advocacy Group has been organized by the Louisiana Interchurch Conference. The new organization will provide advocacy, educational, legal, counseling, and other services for farmers in crisis.

The group was formed Thursday, June 12, in a meeting called by the Louisiana Interchurch Conference in Baton Rouge.

The Department of Agriculture and the LSU Agricultural Center will cooperate in establishing an hotline for state farmers.

State Rep. Francis Thompson, Commissioner of Agriculture Bob Odom, Dr. Clyde St. Clergy from the LSU Agricultural Center, 12 farmers, attorneys and representatives of several state churches, attended the organizational meeting.

Rev. James L. Stovall, executive director of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference, stated, "This farmers' support group can give leadership to educating the citizens of Louisiana concerning the seriousness of the farm crisis, to helping the church respond to individual farmers, community needs, and to provide counseling and emergency help to families caught in the crisis. In addition, this group can support legislation and financial policies which will enable farmers to survive the crisis."

Rev. Stovall announced the interchurch conference has received a grant from Willie Nelson's Farm Aid to launch this new organization. He further stated the group is hopeful that contributions from churches, individuals, organizations and businesses will be received to support the advocacy group.