Crawfish tasting-trade show on

By CALVIN LEAR
Staff writer

The 1988 Louisiana Crawfish Tasting and Trade Show kicked off at the Cajundome Friday, with Lt. Gov.-elect Paul Hardy saying crawfish and Cajun are hot, and "when you're hot, you gotta' take advantage of it."

The show continues today at the Dome, beginning at 10 a.m. and is open to the public. Tradesmen are displaying the latest technologies in producing and marketing crawfish, while Cajun and local oriental restaurateurs are offering samples of the south Louisiana delicacy.

The country's discovery of the Cajun culture and Cajun food has been a boon to the crawfish industry, Hardy said.

"They only way we can mess up is if we don't work together," Hardy said.

"We are hot," he said, urging the industry tradesmen to take advantage of the situation.

The Cajun craze the nation is undergoing began in part when "(Chef) Paul Prudhomme burnt a fish in a skillet," Hardy said, in reference Prudhomme's well-known blackened redfish dish.

In addition to the displays and the food, crawfishermen spent Friday attending several seminars designed to help them promote their product. The seminars and the show are presented by the Louisiana Crawfish Farmers Association.

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Dr. Meryl Broussard, the Reagan administration's national program leader of Aquaculture, told LCFA members that he realizes how important the industry is to Louisiana in spite of what his boss said earlier this year.

President Reagan shed national attention on the crawfish industry when during his State of the Union address in January when he targeted it and three other specialized industries for federal budget cuts.

Reagan has proposed eliminating such funding from the federal budget for each of the last six years, and each year Congress has voted the funding into the budget, Broussard said.

"Aquaculture is one of the few bright spots" in agricultural development, he said. He said $19 million in aquaculture grants will be available to the industry this this year.

The developing crawfish industry and other aquaculture-related businesses allow farmers to diversify, Broussard said. Aquaculture-related businesses employ about 15,000 Louisianians.

One job is created for every 10-20 acres of aquaculture produced, he said, adding that the industry will play a key role in lowering the United States' annual trade imbalance of $3.5 billion in fisheries.

"It is important for the U.S. to maintain the cutting edge on technology that now it has," said Broussard.

Lawrence Adams, president of the LCFA, said he hoped the seminars will help address marketing problems the industry is experiencing.

"We need someone to assist us with that," he said. Adams said the demand for crawfish is up and that getting the product to prospective buyers has been a problem.
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