

**REMARKS MADE BY LOUISIANA COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE
AND FORESTRY BOB ODOM REGARDING
TRANSFER OF SUGAR ALLOTMENTS
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Sugar was the first agricultural commodity of any significance grown in Louisiana. In the 1750s, 250 years ago, Louisiana farmers began growing sugar cane following its introduction into the state by Jesuit priests from the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo.

A huge advance in the technology and subsequent value of sugar occurred in 1795 when sugar was first granulated on a commercial scale in what is now Audubon Park in New Orleans.

Over the next two centuries, Louisiana farmers and scientific researchers have been the leaders worldwide in developing new varieties, cultural practices, pest control strategies and sugar processing techniques.

For more than two centuries then, Louisiana has developed the technology, the infrastructure and the markets to grow, process and market sugar.

Sugar is Louisiana's largest agricultural industry. Sugar cane is grown in 25 parishes and results in some \$700 million to the farm community.

In addition, the value to the farmer does not take into account all the ancillary jobs related to the sugar that make up the commercial foundation and business infrastructure of all of South Louisiana. The total economic impact to Louisiana each year is in excess of \$1.7 billion. Sugar is by far the largest income generator within all of Louisiana agriculture.

Sugar is the backbone of the heritage, the history and the economy of south Louisiana.

The value of cane and sugar to Louisiana is evident.

But talk of moving sugar cane farming to California or Arizona ignores an essential ingredient readily available in Louisiana that is sorely lacking in those two states.

Sugar cane in Louisiana is grown in an area that averages 65 inches of rainfall a year. The sugarcane area of south Louisiana is subtropical. Louisiana receives huge amounts of rain each year. Although this past year we got more rain than we needed; nonetheless, large amounts of rain are critical to successfully growing sugar cane.

You only have to look at where sugar cane is grown to fully understand the importance of adequate rainfall to grow sugar cane. South Florida grows sugar cane. Hawaii grows sugar cane. Cuba and Santo Domingo in the Caribbean grow sugar cane. The one thing all these areas have in common, along with Louisiana, is abnormally high amounts of rainfall.

On the other hand, the major ecological fight going on in southern California and Arizona today is over the critical water shortage. You see in the news every week reports of major lawsuits involving retirement communities, farming operations, golf courses, existing residential areas, and a host of others interested in more water than is available. The overriding ecological question in southern California and Arizona is water.

The Colorado River serving those areas has been drained to the point of exhaustion.

This is because the population of this region, southern California and Arizona, has been exploding, yet this area is essentially desert, with 20 inches of rain, and in many cases much less, a year.

Over the 1450 miles from its source in central Colorado to the Sea of California in northern Mexico, just south of the California border, the Colorado River is used to water farms, factories and cities.

In Arizona one of the latest innovations is to use graywater from washing machines, bathroom sinks, tubs and showers to irrigate lawns and gardens for 100,000 homeowners.

And we are here today talking about displacing an industry which has the critical water needed to make it viable. We are talking about moving a sugar industry to somewhere that can't meet its current water needs, much less have the massive amounts of additional water needed to grow sugar cane.

There are also a number of environmental issues that must be dealt with when a sugar farming industry is contemplated. Where is there available irrigation to supply water in such an arid landscape? What will the rates of pesticide use and fertilization needed in such an arid landscape? What are the average wind speed calculations in Arizona and California and how will that impact sugar cane growing? Ten-foot tall sugar cane plants are fragile. It doesn't take much wind to blow them over.

Sugar processing leaves behind a lot of trash. What are the environmental considerations of the prospect of the residue remaining after sugar is processed?

This proposition hasn't been thought out very well.

There are no allotments needed for ethanol, but allotments are needed for sugar.

In spite of all the water and environmental shortcomings I see for sugarcane growing in Arizona and California, if they want to continue with this proposition for ethanol, let them have it.

But not an acre of sugar cane should go to these states for sugar production. We want to make it crystal clear that, in spite of what I have said, if California and Arizona want to use sugar for ethanol, so be it.

But the industry that we have developed, the farming practices, the processing infrastructure and the markets for refined sugar, we don't intend to lose one acre of it by allowing a shift of allotments to California and Arizona.

Mr. Shepherd doesn't want these allotments for use to establish a sugar industry. He wants them to use as bargaining chips to sell to the highest bidder. And Shepherd wants them for sugar, not for ethanol.

Not only do the areas proposing to take on sugar farming not have the water needed, there is no infrastructure. In nothing that we have seen is there any indication that any processing exists. Sugar processing plants are extremely expensive.