

Mushroom Business Booms; Lancaster County Assists

Most associate the mushroom with steak, with creamed soup — or the shape of a cloud produced by the Atomic bomb . . . but down in the Kennett Square area of southwestern Chester county, the mushroom business has mushroomed into a major economic factor.

Low, whitewashed buildings without windows line the roadsides near Oxford, Kennett Square, Toughkenamon, Avondale — in fact from Chester to Oxford there are 600 mushroom growers producing 65 per cent of the world's crop.

Sit down with officials at the American Mushroom Institute in Avondale, or talk with growers like the Lositos or Frezzos, hard working people of Italian extraction who have the knack to grow the succulent fungus. Hear their story. It's amazing what a role this area of some 25 square miles maintains for the world's dinner tables.

90% of Square Footage

Have a chat with Nablo Delaurentis, president of the AMI, or Anthony Losito, vice president, both producers, marketers and now kingpins in telling the mushroom story.

"This area contains 75 per cent of the nation's mushroom growers," the two men told, "and 90 per cent of the square footage in mushroom beds" at one time the district that even extends into Lancaster County produced 80 per cent of the nation's mushrooms, but, through their example, the business expanded in other regions until today 65 per cent of the total crop comes from this tiny kingdom that still retains the well-earned title of the "World's Mushroom Center."

Here is indoor farming, farm-fragmented air conditioning. This is done by the thermometer and hygrometer, by heating and re- is one branch of farming where the producer can control the growth of his product, can "force" its product into more rapid development or slow down its ripening process.

Crop May Ripen Fast

"But take a hot, humid day and your crop is apt to be ready long before you're ready to market it," Guido Frezzo told at the E. Frezzo & Sons establishment on the southeast edge of Toughkenamon. With his father, Emidio, his brothers Joseph and Gabriel, Guido explained the entire grow-

ing process in the midst of composting season, when houses were being filled for the "sweating out" period where temperatures may bounce in a few days to 135 or 140 degrees, otherwise, steam boilers may be used in the period of sweating out or air conditioning to lower temperatures when the crop is growing.

It's hard work, and the Toughkenamon Italian extraction is respected throughout the neighborhood for industry.

Where does the produce of these low whitewashed houses go? Mr. Losito answered that 25 per cent goes into the fresh market, 35 per cent of the crop is canned, and 40 per cent goes into canned soups and gravies Canning, as well as growing, is another major industry in the Mushroom Capital.

\$15 Million Return

"In 1954, from a production of 50 million pounds, growers received approximately \$15 million," Mr. Delaurentis and Mr. Losito report. On the other hand, annual consumption in the U. S. is only approximately one half pound per person. That's why the Institute was established. Other officers include Mrs. Marie Ebebecke, secretary; Herman Ferrare, treasurer, while Howard J. Walton, II is chairman of the board.

Lancaster County offers a boost to Chester county's mushrooming mushroom business. Tobacco

stems are used extensively in spawn, and another former agricultural waste product has found a new outlet.

"New York is our largest fresh outlet, along with Philadelphia," the Institute tells, "while canned markets extend all over the nation" There are 13 canneries in the southwestern Chester county



FUTURE FARMERS' CHIEF
—Don Dunham, 19, of Lakeview, Ore., has been elected president of the Future Farmers of America, meeting in convention at Kansas City, Mo.

region.

Like other farmers, there are problems of disease and pests plaguing the mushroom man "We have animal pests, fungus molds and airborne disease to contend with," Mr. Delaurentis explained, adding "and each one of these may be broken down into at least 1000 divisions

May Check Cancer

Most heartening of all recent news to the mushroom producing section of Chester county is that certain kinds of mushrooms in the diet show ability to stop the growth of some cancers transplanted into mice.

Origin of this development was

in some central European countries where people eating a certain species of mushroom— Boletus Edulis — reported very few cases of cancer. Now tests are underway at Michigan State University to see how an extract from Boletus Edulis can retard growth of some types of experimental cancer in mice. Extracts from 10 different species have been found to contain some principle able to slow tumor growth in mice.

What was once Pennsylvania solution to one of man's most vexing problems of health. The mushroom may carry the answer.

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1. Pull your party lever.
2. PUSH UP the little lever in the first column, second row, over the name "Johnstone."
3. PUSH DOWN the little lever in the first column, first row, over the name "Burkholder."

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SWIFT ILLUSION — Delta-winged F-102A jets aren't streaking down this runway at Palmdale, Calif. The all-weather, day-night interceptors are parked on the runway. Streaks resembling lines of movement in a time-flash picture are tire marks left by previous jet landings at the Mojave Desert base.