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## UEP Says Consumers Misled on Egg Prices

Consumers are not being told the full story on food price increases and, in the case of eggs, consumers are given misleading information by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, according to Dr. Gene C. Masters, Executive Vice President of United Egg Producers, an Atlanta-based national egg marketing cooperative.

"Eggs have been singled out in many press reports in recent weeks as a major contributor to higher consumer food bills," Masters noted. "But these press reports fail to point out that eggs are still lower than they were even three years ago, that for many producers prices moved above the cost of production in December and January for the first time since December 1970, and were not high enough in February to meet average cost of production." "Consumer prices for eggs during the first weeks of January are said to have been up 40 percent from January 1972 when producers were losing about 8c per dozen on all eggs produced," he said. "The cost of producing a dozen eggs has gone up at least 33 percent in the same period."

Masters says USDA's information on egg prices reported in the Department's Food Basket Series is misleading. He says the USDA figures appear to be based on only large size eggs, not the total egg production, and includes some marketing expenses which should not be included in a quote of farm values.

"Large or larger eggs represent approximately 60 to 65 percent of all eggs produced by commercial egg producers," Masters said. "The other smaller sizes and undergrades sell at much lower prices but they cost just as much to produce. It is unrealistic to say that farm price of eggs is a certain amount without either including all eggs or stipulating on which size the

quotation is based."

Masters said the laying hen's food bill has gone up, too.

"If the housewife thinks the family food bill has skyrocketed, let her take a look at feed prices for chickens," Masters suggested. "Corn, the major ingredient in chicken feed, has increased 29 percent from \$1.22 per bushel in January 1972 to \$1.57 per bushel in 1973. Soybean meal, the major protein ingredient in feed, has gone up 128 percent in the same period from \$82.60 per ton to \$188.40 per ton. Fish meal, another ingredient, for the most part has been unavailable."

Other feed ingredients, equipment, and labor have all contributed to the increase in egg production costs during the past year, he added. The egg industry estimates it has lost over \$600 million in the past three years because farm prices have not equalled cost of production. Because of these losses, many producers are going bankrupt. "Naturally, as fewer producers remain in the egg business, the supply is going to get shorter and prices are going to get higher," Masters warned. "Unfortunately

for the egg industry, the farmer's receipts have not kept pace with his cost of production. This can not continue indefinitely.

Even at today's higher prices, Masters points out that consumers are getting a bargain. Last year's wholesale egg prices were below 10 years earlier and were also below 20 years earlier. Few foods can make such claims, he continued. He noted that when large eggs sell for 75c per dozen consumers are only paying 50c per pound for one of the highest quality sources of protein available. This is a bargain compared to what other protein foods are selling for today, he concluded.

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### Spring Poultry Meeting Date Is March 20

The annual Spring Poultry meeting for Southeast Pennsylvania poultrymen is planned for Tuesday, March 20 at 6:30 p.m. at Traimer's Restaurant, Quakertown.

Speakers for the evening will include Dr. John Dodge, Agway, Inc., Syracuse, who will speak on "Cash vs. Accrual Accounting." Dr. Kenneth Goodwin, Head of the Poultry Science Department at Pennsylvania State University, and Richard Ammon, NEPPCO, will report on timely poultry topics.

To make arrangements to attend the Spring poultry meeting, contact Clayton Detweiler, Pipersville, Pa. 18947, or call Fran at (215) 723-4355. Reservations should be made by writing or calling before March 15.



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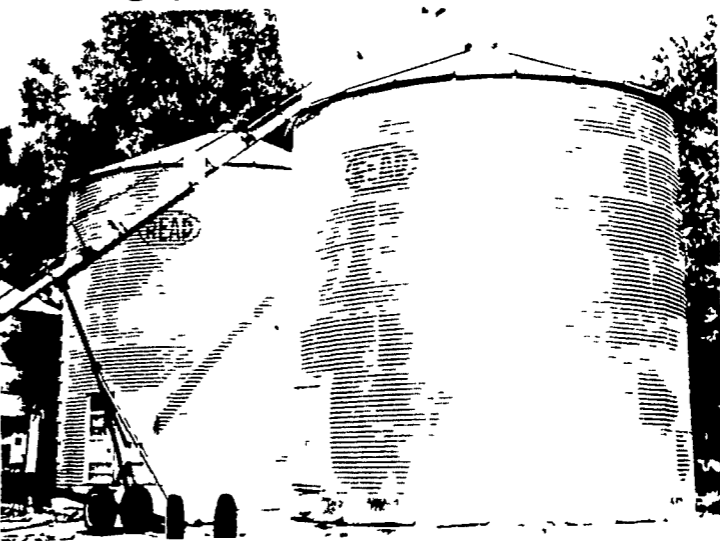
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