

USDA Invites Comments On Open Dating for Meat

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed a change in Federal food labeling regulations to permit the "open dating" of meat and poultry products.

At the same time, USDA invited consumers to submit before May 21 their views on the proposal to determine which kind of open dating technique is best understood by the public and would therefore preclude confusion.

Officials of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—which administers the Federal meat and poultry inspection program—explained that the term "open dating" means different things to different people. Generally speaking, open dating refers to the practice of putting a calendar date on the package of a product—rather than a code number—to indicate the freshness of the product.

Such dates sometimes represent the date a product was processed... the date when fresh meat was cut up into retail cuts... the "pull" date, meaning the last day a product should be left on the retail store shelf to ensure its continued freshness... or, the last date a consumer can reasonably expect to use the

product in her home with full assurance of its quality or wholesomeness.

APHIS official explained that—because of these variations in the meaning of open dating—the practice of using a calendar date on a product label has not heretofore been permitted under Federal meat and poultry inspection regulations. Instead, meat processors were authorized to use a coded number which was understood by retail store personnel.

Consumer leaders have increasingly advocated open dating. In response to these pressures, some meat processors have unilaterally begun including an "open date" on their products. APHIS officials have become concerned that the use of idferent variations of "open dates" will lead to further consumer confusion, as well as to potentially misleading or false labeling in violation of Federal regulations.

The change in regulations proposed today would require that—if an "open date" is used on a meat or poultry product label—a calendar date must be used in conjunction with a qualifying statement that clearly indicates the meaning of that date—i.e., "date processed" or "do not sell

Funk Reelected to Market Board

Frederick Funk, manager of Funk's Farm Market, Millersville R1, was re-elected to the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Certified Farm Market Assn, at the group's recent annual meeting in Hershey.

Dr. Thomas Brewer, agriculture economist at Penn State University, told associating members that consumers like to shop at farm roadside markets because most supermarkets are too busy to furnish friendliness or listen to consumer complaints.

"In this world of electric data machines, and punch cards, is it any wonder people like to shop in the relaxed atmosphere of a roadside farm market?" Brewer asked.

Prices farmers receive for their products brought criticism from Henry E. Wilcox, director of Bureau of Markets, Pa. Dept of

after...

In addition, USDA is asking consumers to indicate what kind of qualifying statement would be most meaningful and subject to the least misunderstanding or miscalculation.

Anyone desiring to submit his views should send duplicate copies of all written data, comments, or arguments to the Hearing Clerk, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, before May 21.

Requests to make oral presentations should be addressed to Scientific and Technical Services, Meat and Poultry Inspection Program, APHIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Written submissions and transcripts of oral views will be made available for public inspection in the hearing clerk's office.

Formal notice of the proposed change and invitation to comment was published in the Federal Register March 21.

Agriculture.

He said farmers get eight cents a pound for apples that retail for

30 cents a pound and 14 cents a

quart for milk, that retails for more than double that.

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FEED LETTER

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You see, we don't mind making comparisons because we've done the research to know what our products can and can not do. So the next time you read ads with words of comparison, ask yourself "compared to what?"

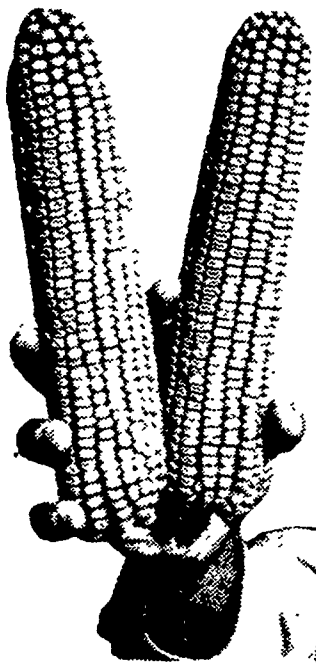
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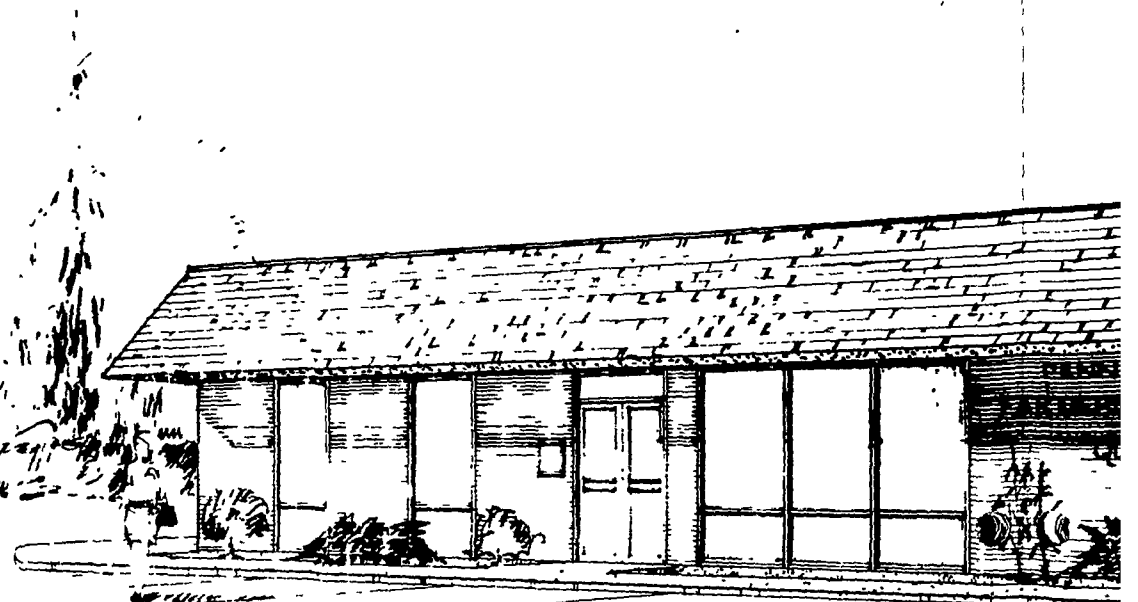
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Architect's rendering of the planned Penn Hill Office of Farmers National Bank of Quarryville

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