

This 48,000-bushel grain bin is full to the top with soybeans. It's on the Lebanon

County farm of Mark Hershey, owner-operator of a feed processing business.

Farmer in the Spotlight . . .

Mark Hershey Combines Farming, Feed Processing

Mark Hershey, owner-operator of an unconventional feed business in Lebanon County, is not so much in the business of selling feeds, as he is in processing raw materials for clients interested in making their own grain rations. Farmers have come from as far as 100 miles away to take advantage of the unique service which Hershey has been providing for 13 years. Specifically, that service is to process soybeans which the farmer grows himself, and will

mix in his own feed. As far as is known, Hershey, an independent operator, was the first to process soybeans in Pennsylvania. He is still one of only several in the state. Hershey cooks raw beans under 100 pounds of steam pressure for 15 minutes. By doing this, the oils of the soybeans are left intact and the resulting product rates high in nutrients, palatability, and digestibility. Raw soybeans are said to have an offensive taste, but the flaked, cooked beans taste

good enough to even become a snack for the farmer in the barn. Protein, fat, and TDN percentages for this feed ingredient are 38 percent, 19 percent, and 87.6 percent respectively.

With ninety acres of his own soybeans, Hershey can sell some concentrates in the conventional way; and if demands are there, he buys additional quantities of grain crops either locally or from the Midwest. At the present time a bushel of soybeans is costing him \$4.80. Processing the beans costs \$10 per ton bulk and \$11 per ton bagged.

In terms of volume, the current year has not been one of the best for Mark. So far this year he has taken in around 60,000 bushels of beans, compared to 125,000 bushels for all of 1971. This is not to say, however, that business is in a slump. "Labor", says Hershey, "will be the biggest inhibiting factor in agriculture for the next 10-15 years." Therefore he prefers not to be involved with problems in finding more good help and maintaining additional equipment. In addition

to the feed business itself, Mark also farms a total of 190 acres, half of which is in soybeans, and he has approximately 10,000 chickens producing eggs that are sold on either the wholesale or retail level.

This country was in the depth of the Depression when Hershey was a young man, and that background has much to do with the man's industriousness and tolerance of hard work. In 1931 he started an egg hatching project for FFA, and it grew over the years until he had as many as 70,000 chickens. Various economic developments, however, led to a decision to cut down on the number of broilers and layers, and switch, instead, to the unique soybean operation. Somewhat concerned about

present trends in U. S. agriculture, Mark Hershey displays strong sympathy for the American farmer, who makes up only 4 percent of our country's population, and yet has to produce food for much of the rest of the world. "Farmers are just not getting a fair shake", he comments. Mark does not agree with U. S. trade policies regarding agricultural products and is not optimistic about the possible struggle farmers may have to face in order to survive the economic pressures. "If we had full employment," he suggests, "so that more capable young men would stay on the farm, we would be better off. I can't blame the young people for leaving; farmers just can't compete with the offers being made in town."

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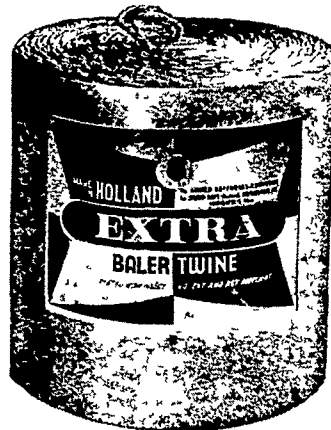
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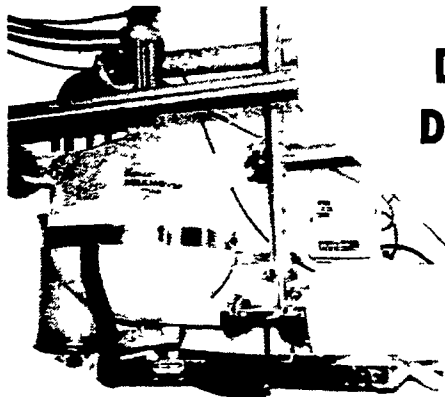
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