

Methane Gas Project is Approved

Generating methane gas from manure and recycling sewage sludge for fertilizer are two of 18 new research projects approved recently by the Agriculture Research

Committee, it was announced by Agriculture Secretary Jim McHale. McHale said the committee approved \$179,793 to finance the new projects for

the next five months. Most of the contracts were awarded to Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania.

"It is heartening to see the thrust of our new projects are geared toward improving farm income," said McHale.

"Today farmers are faced with crippling fuel and fertilizer costs," said McHale. "If we could provide them with cheaper sources of fuel and fertilizers, we would help their income by reducing production costs."

The methane gas project will be done at Penn State. It

was proposed as a three-year project costing \$77,327 in research funds. The five-month budget approved was for \$12,700.

The public caught a glimpse of this project at the recent 58th annual Farm Show where a methane generator exhibit was installed. During the Governor's Farm Show Preview, McHale and Gov. Milton Shapp ate hamburgers that were cooked by the generated methane gas. Shapp at the time said that researching the use of farm waste is extremely important in view of our current energy crisis.

The sewage sludge project, also awarded to Penn State, was given a five-month budget of \$13,860. It is proposed as a five-year project which would have a total funding of \$217,500.

McHale noted that Penn State has already done some work on using sewage sludge taken from urban treatment plants to fertilize farm fields. The new project will study the effects of sludge on crop production and the mineral elements in the food chain.

Approval of the 18 new projects came at a special meeting of two research committees—one recognized by the administration and the other which is attempting to have its legality upheld in the courts. A majority vote of both committees was required to approve the projects, a stipulation laid down by the court while the case is still under consideration.

A 17-member committee was established by the legislature in 1972 to approve agricultural research projects. Atty. Gen. Israel Packel last year ruled the

committee unconstitutional on grounds the law would channel public funds through specifically named private organizations. Eight members of the committee were dropped, six representatives from the Council of Farm Organizations, one representative from the Food Processors Association, and one from the Pennsylvania Association of County Fairs. This left a nine-member committee consisting of four legislators, four representatives from the Department of Agriculture and the head of the Harness Racing Commission.

About \$400,000 of harness racing proceeds are used each fiscal year for agricultural research. Last spring both committees approved \$149,190 to continue a number of research projects for 1973-74.

The special meeting by both committees Jan. 17 resulted in approving \$179,773 for 18 new projects for the remainder of this fiscal year. Total research expenditures for this fiscal year will then total \$328,963.

Farmer Agrees to Hire First Welfare Recipient

The first contract for use of welfare recipients in farm labor was signed last week with Grant Keiffer, a Peach Bottom dairy farmer.

Lancaster County is the site of a pilot program which permits dairy farmers to train welfare recipients in farm labor techniques.

Paul J. Smith, secretary of Labor and Industry, said the program is part of the Pennsylvania Work Incentive Program (WIN) which has been in operation for several years but only now extended to include farm labor.

County farmers who employ through the WIN program get several bonuses, said Smith.

1 Out Of 3

Almost 60 million Americans go to school in classes ranging from nursery school to postgraduate college, a number equal to one out of three counted in the 1970 Census, or totaling the entire population of the United States in 1890.

First, they are reimbursed for training costs up to an amount equal to one-half the workman's salary.

Second, employers may deduct 20 per cent of wages paid to such workers from their federal income tax bill.

In addition, he said, farmers who employ WIN participants are assured of obtaining workers who have been carefully screened so even though they are unskilled, they have demonstrated an aptitude for such work and a desire to get off the welfare rolls.

James A. McHale, secretary of agriculture, said his department is cooperating completely in the program by helping to "get out the word" through its county agencies and other department personnel.

Farmers who desire more information about the program should contact the Lancaster state employment office at 225 N. Lime St.

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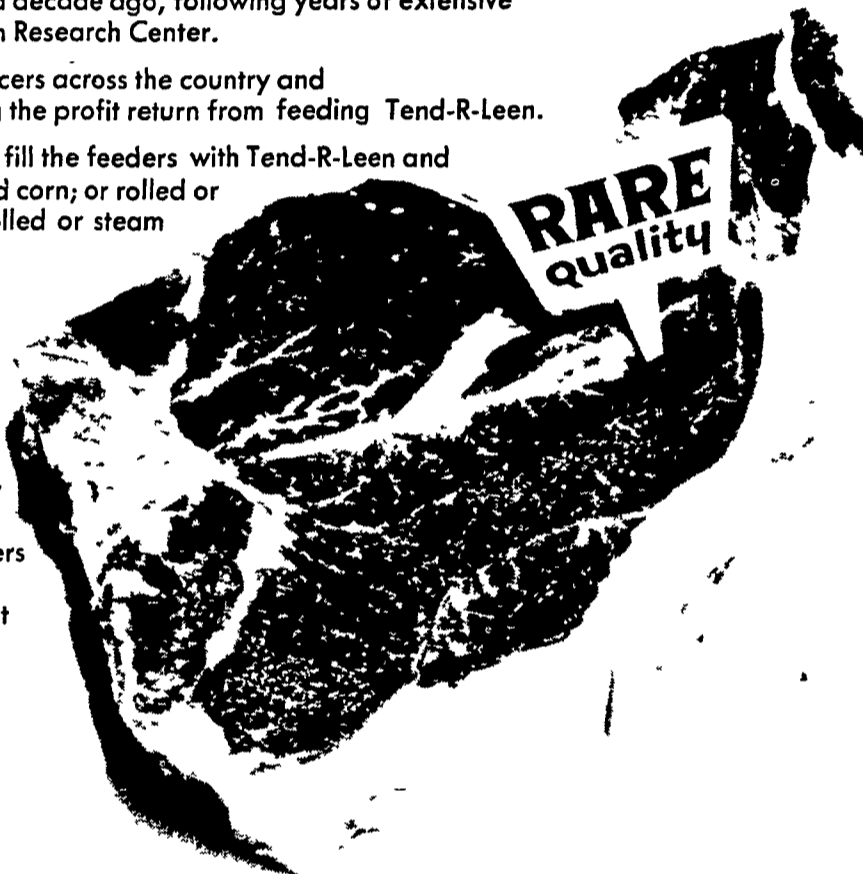
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