

# There's a New Image of Agriculture

Vocational agriculture is undergoing an upsurge of new interest among high school students across the nation, according to Dr. David R. McClay, head of the Department of Agricultural Education at The Pennsylvania State University.

He says a new image of agriculture is developing as young people see agriculture as many fields of work in addition to farming.

As vocational programs expand to meet the demands for agricultural training, more teachers are needed, Dr. McClay said. The

situation in Pennsylvania is typical. With opportunities expanding, this year's class of agricultural education candidates includes both men and women.

The job picture looks excellent for these teacher candidates, he says. While their peers in other subject

areas look forward to stiff competition for a handful of teaching openings, agricultural teachers are in prime demand. Other states are writing McClay for news of available agricultural teachers. But it looks like Pennsylvania will have none to spare in the foreseeable

future.

There are now 327 Pennsylvania high schools and area vocational-technical schools, according to Dr. McClay. What's more, a number of schools plan to expand or add new programs next year.

What's the reason for this sudden boom in agricultural

education? High school vocational agriculture programs used to come under the old Smith-Hughes Act. By definition they were pretty limited in curriculum. In fact, they excluded non-farm agriculture.

Then in 1963 Congress passed a new vocational education act which changed all this — making it possible for students at the high school level to enroll in any field, knowledge or skill that was useful to agriculture. This meant greater flexibility in curriculum and opened the field to many students who otherwise would have overlooked a career in agriculture.

At about the same time, vocational agricultural programs in the high schools got a shot in the arm from what McClay calls "the new image of agriculture." Agriculture is not just farming anymore in the eye of the public, he explains. Instead, there's a growing recognition that the field includes not only farming but the whole range of agribusiness — the processing and marketing of food and of agricultural products, a growing industry in ornamental horticulture, forestry, agricultural mechanics, the handling of laboratory animals for all kinds of research, and a multitude of other job areas that call for the special knowledge and skills that can be acquired through the study of agriculture.

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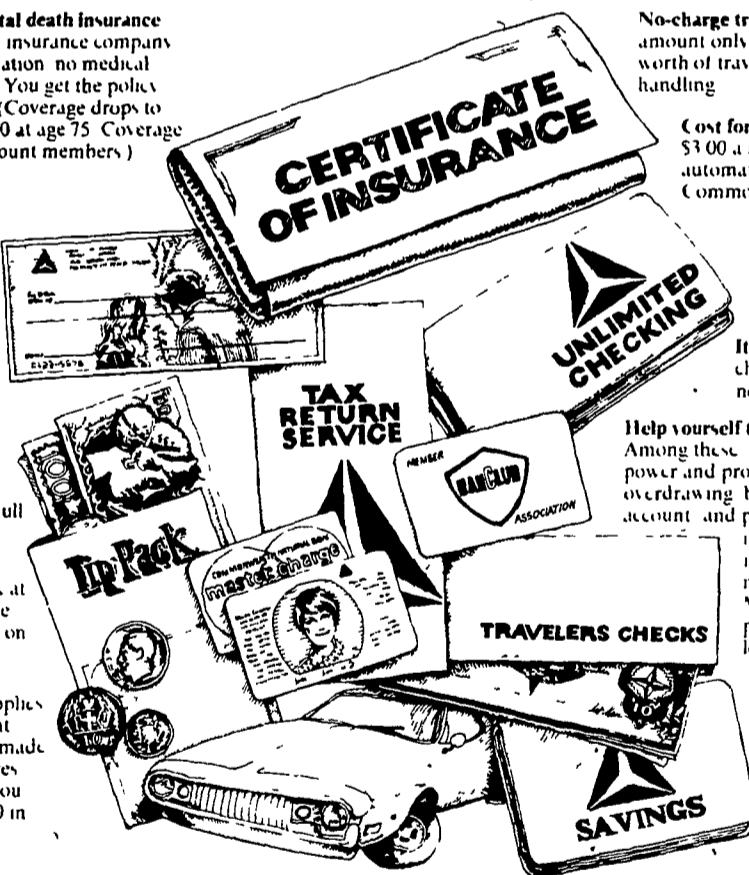
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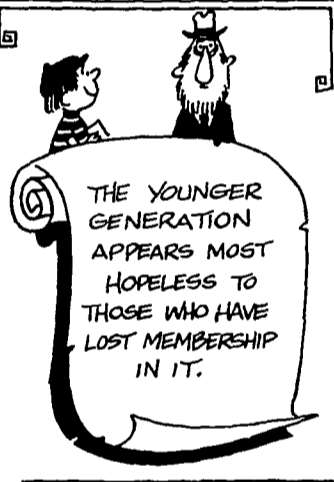
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