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Lancaster Farming

Vol. 19 No. 29

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, June 1, 1974

\$2.00 Per Year

FARM TRENDS

by Dick Wanner

FERTILIZER SHORTAGE IS (IS NOT) AS BAD AS WE EXPECTED

The fertilizer shortage will not be as bad as expected, according to a USDA report issued last week. Nitrogen will probably be short 5 pct.; phosphate as much as 15 pct. -- but there's enough potash to meet needs.

On the other hand, the report points out, a 5 pct. reduction rate in nitrogen application rates should have only a "negligible impact" on yields, while a 15 percent reduction in the phosphate application rate is "not expected to adversely affect yields greatly."

The report, "United States and World Fertilizer Outlook: 1974 and 1980," also points out that substantial increases in crop production of 1973 can be expected for several reasons: Greater acreage, good weather, higher nitrogen use.

Over-all acreage of major crops is expected to be up 5 percent from last year. Weather conditions so far have been very favorable, a sharp contrast to the 1972-73 crop year. And, though nitrogen use may be 450,000 tons short of demand, it'll still hit 8.8 million ton -- that's 500,000 tons above last year's record utilization.

We use a record 5.1 million tons of phosphate fertilizers last year. The demand is for 5.5 million tons

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Lehigh, Country Belle Stir Legislature Action

A bill which could help protect the financial interests of farm cooperative members was introduced into the Pennsylvania House of Representatives last week by Francis Kennedy, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. Kennedy, a Butler County farmer, introduced the bill after listening to complaints from members of the Country Belle coop in the western part of the state. Country Belle members told him they stood to lose as much as \$26,000 each as a

result of their organization's money difficulties.

Kennedy's bill would require that cooperatives be bonded, exactly as commercial dairies and private milk dealers are bonded now. And it would apply to all coops, not just dairy. In its present form, the bill sets a ceiling on the amount of the bond at \$200,000. But Kennedy told Lancaster Farming on Friday morning that the ceiling might have to be raised.

Asked if \$200,000 was anywhere near sufficient, Kennedy replied that the money itself wouldn't do much to stave off economic chaos in a situation like Country Belle, with a deficit of \$960,000, or Lehigh Valley, which turned up \$3.8 million short. "The real power of the law, if it's enacted, would be the fact that the bonding company would be looking over the coop's shoulder. The bondholder wants to protect

their interest, and in doing so, they'd be looking for signs of mismanagement and anything else that's going wrong. This would help to protect the farmer members."

Pennsylvania dairymen stand to lose millions because of the financial woes of Lehigh, Country Belle and Queen City dairy cooperatives. Queen City is a

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Annual Dairy Issue

Dairying - the Large And the Small of It

The small family farm is viewed by some as an outmoded institution, unable to cope with the realities of today's wild free market economy. Others view the family farm - or perhaps it should be said the farm family - as a repository and a breeding place for the values Americans cherish most, a moral touchstone for a society of urban centers wallowing in physical and spiritual decay.

We're told that corporations must inevitably take over farming because of their economies of scale, their more efficient use of labor, capital and management. On the other hand, we're told that family farms must be preserved if we're to save open space around our cities, especially in the Northeast, and if we're to keep the strength of character of a prosperous rural population.

Big farm, little farm. It's a debate we can't hope to answer here, and maybe nobody will ever decide which is best for agriculture or the country. We did feel that it would be interesting, though, to interview a corporate dairy farm and a family dairy farm, to see in what ways they differ and in what ways they're alike.

So, last Tuesday, we talked to the management of Bryncoed Farms in Chester

Spring, a 2000-acre complex which is owned by Luden's Candy Co. in Reading, and we talked to Jacob Diener, a Gordonville dairyman with 30 cows whose daily herd average, per cow stayed above 70 pounds for about two months.

The two operations are certainly different, but they're alike in some ways. We attempt to draw no conclusions from their contrasting styles, except for the fact that both are successful.

Bryncoed - 250 Cows, Going on 500

Bryncoed Farms is an impressive complex of 2000 acres and some of the most modern dairy equipment in the area. It could be said - and has been - that Bryncoed is farming with money and not for money. But herd manager Bo D'Avanzo and farm director Phil Schiaroli both insist that the purpose

of Bryncoed is to make money for Luden's Candy Co. That objective has been complicated somewhat in the past few weeks by the fact that the farm is shipping its considerable output of milk to the Lehigh Valley Coop, but both Schiaroli and D'Avanzo said they'll weather that difficulty with much less trouble than a small farmer.

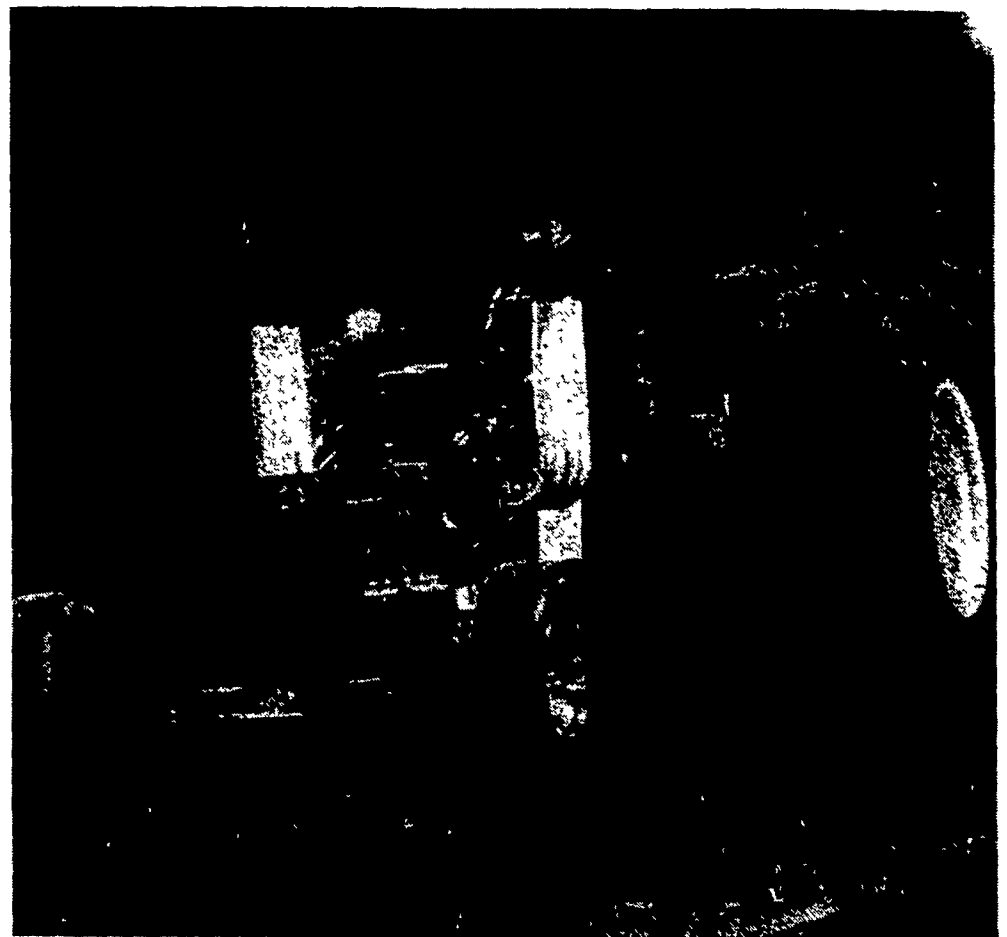
"The small farmer today pays high prices for the things he needs, he works long hours and he shows practically no profit at the end of the year," D'Avanzo said in his New England accent. He was a dairyman in Massachusetts before coming to Pennsylvania, and said that he has been a dairyman all his life.

Small farms are trouble, D'Avanzo believes, because they can't hire good help, and that's why individual dairy farmers must get up at 3 a.m. and work until 8 or 9 o'clock at night, every day of the week. "Here we've got nine people to help with the farm work. Each man works nine hours a day, and he works 46 hours one week and 54 the next."

Farm workers at Bryncoed get free milk and meat, hospitalization insurance, a retirement plan, and a rent free house in addition to their wages. For his labor force, D'Avanzo believes in

recruiting men who've farmed all their lives, preferably someone at least

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Buzz Kennedy, from Roaring Branch, Pa., did some roaring last Saturday night at the opening of the Buck Tractor Pull track. Driving a Massey Ferguson Model 55 tractor

with a 427 Ford engine, Kennedy took first place in the 7000-lb. modified event and third in the 7000-lb. open.

(See Story on P. 13.)

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