



Luke Nolt and friend check out the sprinkler irrigation system in use on the Nolt farm at Ephrata RD3. Luke handles most of the farm chores for his

father, Harvey, who works full-time at a lumber mill. Harvey Nolt has been using irrigation on his tobacco for the past 20 years.



A healthy looking, profitable tobacco crop is the end result of irrigation.

Irrigation Pays Off For Tobacco Growers

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can supply more complete information on stream regulations.

About the tobacco crop itself, Yocum said it's looking very good this year. "Tobacco farmers should have an excellent year if we have enough moisture to keep the crop going strong the rest of the season," he noted.

One farmer who's been irrigating tobacco for about two decades is Harvey Nolt, Ephrata RD3. Nolt was also one of the first area growers to switch from 38-inch to 30-inch rows for his tobacco crop. He's been growing tobacco since 1944 on his 40-acre farm.

Nolt's son, Luke, demonstrated the sprinkler system this

week for Lancaster Farming. A pump powered with a tractor PTO draws water from the Conestoga River which flows by the farm. A six-inch main line feeds the water into five-inch sprinkler lines which shoot arcing streams of profit onto Nolt's five-and-a-half acres of Pennmill 69 tobacco. Just across the lane from the tobacco field there's a patch of celery planted so it gets sprinkled, too. In dry weather, Luke said, they try to irrigate for about two hours a day. They also fertilize their crop with 12-12-12.

Along with most growers in Lancaster County, the Nolts market their tobacco in straight-stripped form. "The little extra we get for sorting it isn't worth the effort," Luke said.

"We sold our crop around the middle of March for 51-cents a pound, which is about what everybody got."

The Nolts sold their crop to a buyer who came around to the farm, a traditional way of marketing that's been going on for just about as long as there's been tobacco here. Would he like to see an auction where buyers had to bid against each other? "I think it'd be a good idea to at least try an auction," Luke said. "We try to grow good tobacco, and maybe we'd get a better price at an auction. I'd like to see how one would work, anyway."

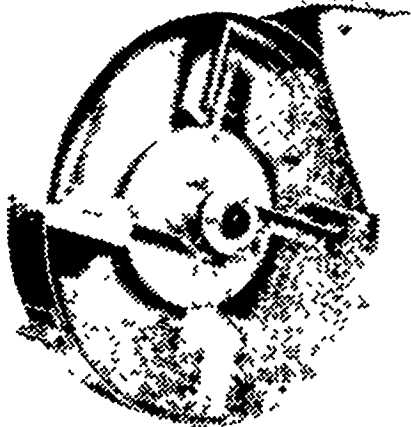
In addition to tobacco, the Nolts grow corn, rye and wheat to feed to their steers and hogs. They grow out about 80 hogs a year and around 50 steers, which they sell through the New Holland Sales Stables.

Luke handles most of the farm chore, since his father works full-time at a nearby lumber mill.

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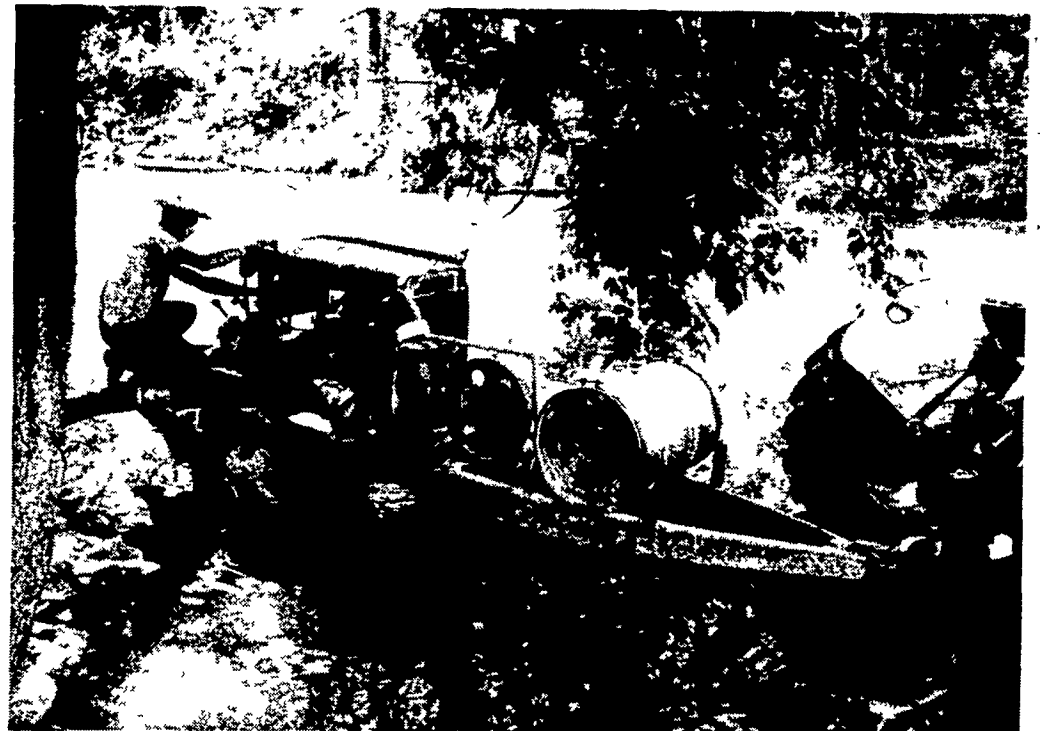
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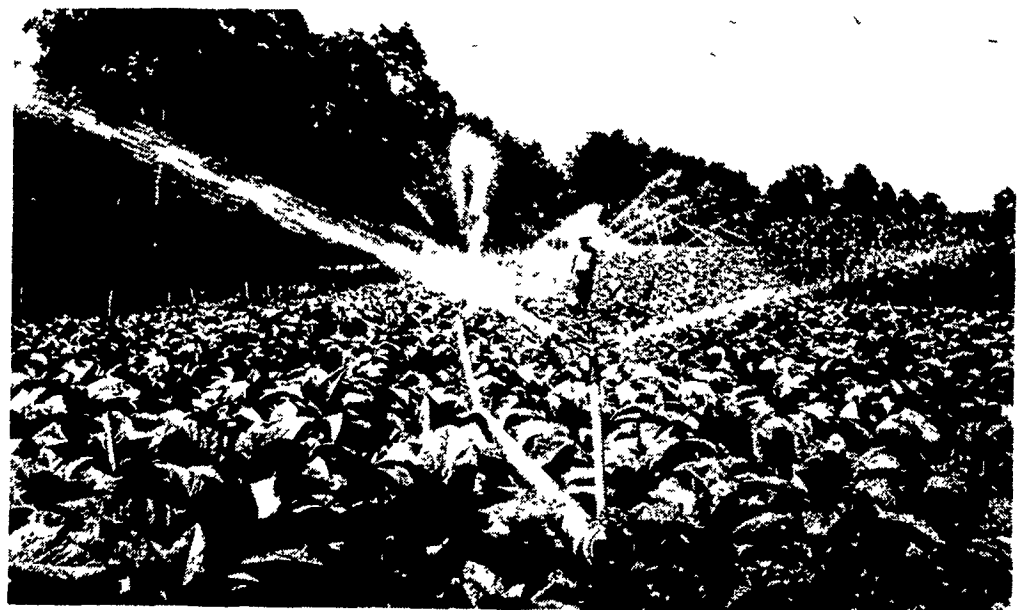
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Here's the power end of the tobacco irrigation system on the Harvey Nolt farm, Ephrata RD3. The

tractor's PTO drives the pump which draws water from the Conestoga River.

Lancaster Farming Photos



Checking the operation of irrigation equipment isn't a job for someone who minds getting wet.