

Farmers market termed success

By Dieter Krieg
HARRISBURG — The Farmers Market at the Farm Show Complex parking lot, which has been in operation since July 15, is nearing the end of its first season and is being dubbed a success by vegetable growers who have participated.

Conceived by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the market has been in operation every Tuesday and Friday — rain or shine — and has attracted farmers from more than 50 miles away. During the peak of the season, more than 40 vegetable and fruit growers took part in the program. Now, near the end of October, with the days of the market numbered, only 14 remain.

Participating farmers liked a number of things about the sales facilities, but also had some suggestions for improvements. Regardless of their feelings they all indicated a willingness and even an eagerness to participate again next year.

Earl Miller of Dover R3, for example, thinks retailing is the only answer. Owner of a 10-acre vegetable farm and 100 hives of bees, he sells all of his products directly to the

consumer either in Harrisburg or at his stand in York. This year he moved approximately half of his produce through the Farm Show lot.

"I estimate a couple thousand people came through here in a week when we were really busy," said Ernest Retherford, a farmer from Middletown R1 who specializes in watermelons and cantaloupes. He took about 10 per cent of his produce to the Harrisburg market this year and is hopeful of bringing more next year if the facilities open earlier next year.

Weather seemed to be one of the major problems the farmers had at the open market place. Heavy rains a few weeks ago really hurt them, they said, adding that light rains weren't too bad. On a particularly rainy day we can count on taking 90 per cent of our produce home — we don't even bother to unload," one fellow said.

Robert Morgan travels 55 miles one way from his 10-acre vegetable farm near Pitman. He told Lancaster Farming he sells all he can at the Farm Show and peddles the rest door-to-door in the Pitman area. Besides that, he also maintains a stand at his farm. When



The Farmers Market at the Farm Show Complex parking lot has been a success according to vegetable growers who participated in it. Conceived by the Pennsylvania Department of

Agriculture, the open-air market is now concluding its first season, and farmers who took part hope it will go on again next year.

asked what the market needs most to be improved, Morgan unhesitatingly responded "more customers."

"I haven't missed a day yet," Robert Wedde stated with a bit of pride when he was asked how long he had been coming to Harrisburg to sell his produce. "I like it real well, it's a good market," he said en-

thusiastically as he fetched a bag for a customer. "This is the coming thing," he continued, "people want fresh vegetables." Wedde has a 30-acre vegetable farm near Hegins, Schuylkill County, which is

located about 55 miles northeast of Harrisburg. He says he tends two other markets besides the one at the Farm Show, but sells nearly three-quarters of his

[Continued on Page 26]

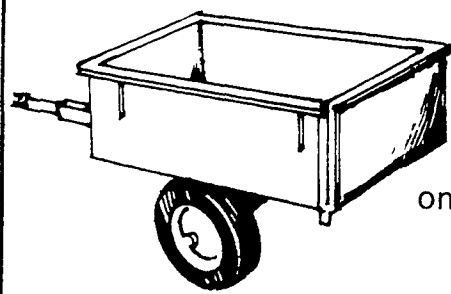
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