

Lost farmland

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Gamble expressed his interest in maintaining farming as a way of life.

"Agriculture is making a contribution to a way of life and I'd hate to see that disappear."

Gamble noted that the closeness of farmers and their attachment to the land along with their respect for its good has warranted keeping agricultural land intact.

Consumers Aren't Hungry

The Penn State economist, expounded on the theory that consumers don't often see

been "largely a failure in Pennsylvania," Gamble pointed the finger of blame at developers who too often pressure zoning officials into changing or altering the laws.

Gamble stated that subdivisions, which had been seen as the "cure all" hadn't been successful either. "Subdivisions really only cover small tracts of land and it is not a way to preserve farming land."

Noting that farms are easily separated in this manner, the economist explained that agricultural communities must remain in close contact if they are to be successful.

Calling the Clean and Green legislation merely a "delaying tactic" Gamble told the audience that the law had never been meant to

preserve agricultural land.

"There is no guarantee that the land will stay in production," he noted "it has really been a tax deferral and a slap on the wrist for those abusing it."

Gamble explained that attempts to establish agriculture districts such as had been done in New York had also fallen by the wayside.

"This type of agreement cannot work without cooperative understanding," he stated.

Exploring why these protections had mostly failed, Gamble noted that land for housing and industry offered more money per purchase which is an incentive to carve up farming areas. Agricultural bids for land couldn't in most cases compare to the huge sums offered by industry and developers.

Gamble offered two closely related alternatives which deal with the purchase

of developable rights in an area. In such cases, developers would have to consult with the majority of people in an area before being able to slice away pieces of land bit by bit.

"Cooperation on all fronts if really needed if this is to work," Gamble explained. "In some areas it has been effective."

While the future for preserving farming land is still in doubt, Gamble expressed his hope in getting people informed of the critical situation.

"We must convince people that society has rights in keeping the land as well as the individual," he related.

"But, the idea will not be firmly realized until everyone sees the need for raising more food."

"When a food shortage comes along then people will begin to notice," he stated. "We must educate the public!"



Hays B. Gamble
Ag Economist

the need for maintaining agricultural land because "they just aren't hungry yet."

"We haven't reached the point of a critical food shortage yet," Gamble stated "and therefore people just aren't willing to see our point of view." "It's wrong to assume that we won't need the land someday," he added. Gamble noted that all too quickly there will come a day when we'll really need the prime farming land to sustain the production of food.

"Once the asphalt of highways and pressure of building has taken over the land we can't reclaim it for food."

"The future of the society is really tied to the use of prime farming land," the economist warned.

While the problem of losing farming land has become a grave one, the solutions seem weak and even without hope according to the economist.

Noting that zoning has

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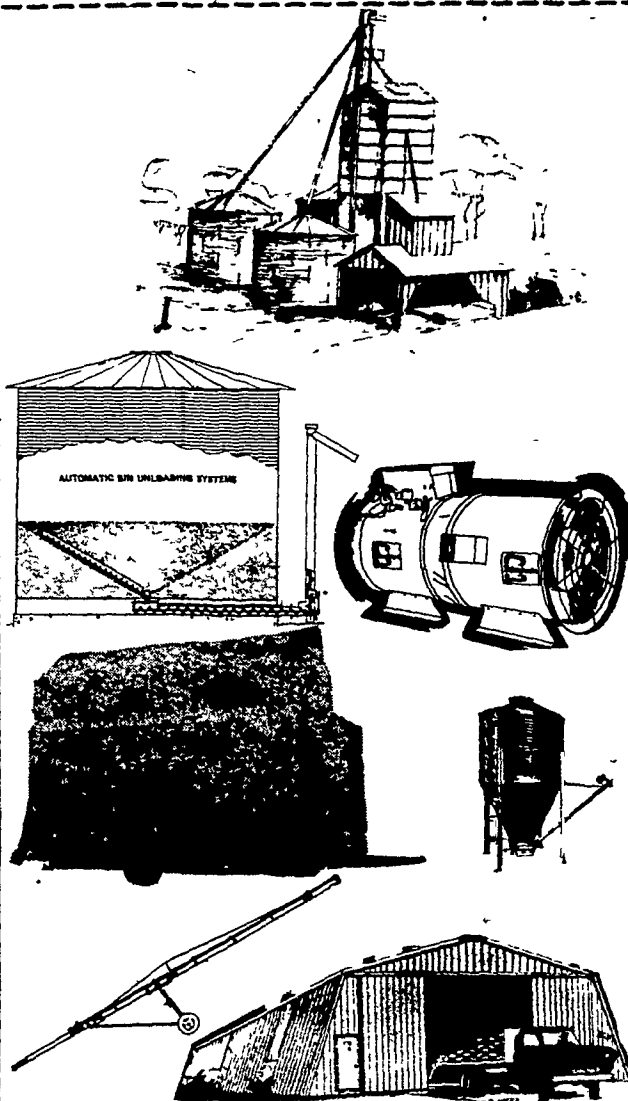
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