

Mushrooms

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been "sympathetic." The group from Pennsylvania met with Senator Richard Schweiker and Congressman Thomas Morgan, among others, earlier this week.

The import problem is not new. King points out that over the past 10 years importations of mushrooms have risen from zero percent to 40 percent of the market today. Furthermore, he notes that six mushroom processors have closed their

doors since 1972 because of insurmountable economic pressures brought on by mushrooms from abroad.

The U.S. International Trade Commission has looked into the matter and agrees to a point that imports are injurious to local growers. The Commission regards future threats of imports to be even greater, King reported. The reason is that the European Common Market countries have enacted legislation which

prevents foreign mushrooms from entering their lands. That leaves primarily the United States and Canada where foreign producers - notably South Korea and the two Chinas - can dump their product.

The Trade Commission, to relieve the problem, has asked for "adjustment assistance measure," but AMI officials deem that kind of a remedy to be inadequate. They want "tariff relief" or a "tariff rate quota," which would cut imports down to 25 percent at "favorable rates" and anything above that would be heavily taxed. An answer on the issue is expected on or about May 17.

King notes that actions similar to those initiated by Pennsylvania will hopefully be forthcoming from growers in the other leading mushroom-producing states - New York, Michigan, Delaware, California, and Ohio.

A story carried by the Associated Press earlier this week says that American mushroom growers and processors are faced with Asian competition where labor is cheap. They report that there are more than 100 mushroom canneries in South Korea, Red China, and Taiwan alone.

Raymond Kerstetter, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture, agrees that American mushroom

Lamb crop down

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about making money with sheep as they would with cattle," the specialist remarked. "Last year the cattle producers lost about \$60. per cow but how many tried sheep as an alternative?"

While many farmers still believe that sheep are hard on pasture areas, the livestock specialist noted that both sheep and cattle can be grazed together and if done properly will actually benefit the pasture areas. "The animals have to be kept in balance as far as numbers are concerned but the stigma of ruining pastures just isn't true."

Morgan firmly believes that radical ecologists have also caused sheep production to decrease. "Ecologists have exerted pressure to cut down the amount of sheep grazed between certain boundaries," he noted.

"This action is occurring mostly in the western states but it does affect the marketing situation here."

One issue that according to Morgan, has been overplayed is the protection of the coyote.

"The coyote population has been protected to the point that it is showing alarming increases and actually moving eastward in large numbers."

One of the main predators of sheep, coyotes have come under the ecologist's protection as it was feared the animals would go into extinction. Naturalists blamed western ranchers for killing and poisoning the animals to the brink of extinction although less concern had been expressed for the voluminous numbers of sheep being killed daily.

Bands of coyotes have been plaguing sheep producers as far east as Illinois and

Iowa and predictions note that the animals will steadily move eastward.

Many opponents of the coyote protection, agree that the animals are hearty enough to survive most any type of conditions and become readily adaptable to new environments.

Wild animals and dogs are still of major concerns to all sheep producers but do not pose as many problems of containing as with the coyotes.

Morgan notes that encouragement and advertising is needed for an increase in sheep production to occur. The American Sheep Producers Council has introduced several new marketing ideas but as a young organization it will probably take time before the production hits an upswing.

"Advertising had been traditionally hard to come by," Morgan told the producers. "It isn't as easy for a market-mark-off system to be successful at auctions as the number of sheep is just not as great as with cattle or hogs."

"Some market officials have tried to cooperate in a mark-off system, but comparing the time with the number of animals hasn't seemed feasible."

One of the worst marketing problems facing producers has been the decrease in per capita consumption over the past few years.

"People would probably eat as much lamb as we would produce but it is not always available," Morgan explained. "This marketing problem will have to be solved for future gains."

Although buffeted by numerous problems, marketing ills and production hindrances, sheep production still accounts for a sizeable portion of Pennsylvania's agricultural returns.

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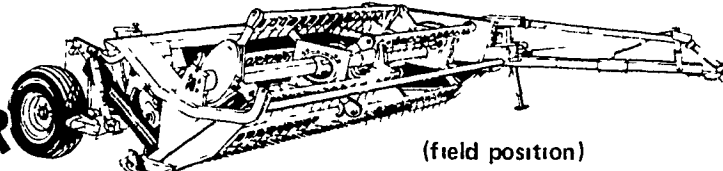
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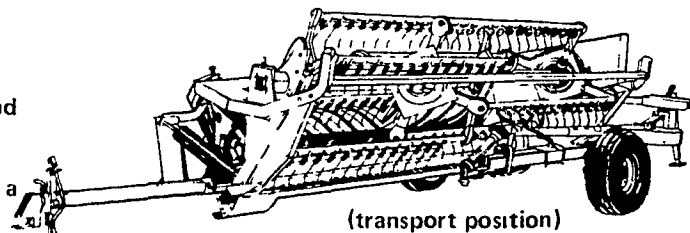
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producers are faced with a problem. The Associated Press quotes him as saying: "The imports are going to put our mushroom people out of business, after that the price will go up."

Samuel Losito, a Chester County grower who annually produces about four-million pounds of mushrooms per year in his 70 mushroom houses, says an American mushroom worker earns about \$20 per day, compared to \$1.00 per day for Asian counterparts. He has 115 workers on his payroll now, compared to 300 before imports forced him to cut down. The Toughkenamon area farmer told the Associated Press at the Pennsylvania Food Day last week that "very few chain stores will buy American mushrooms" because the imported kind can be ob-

Potato count down

HARRISBURG — Potatoes in Pennsylvania storages on April 1, 1976 totaled 550,000 hundredweight, according to the Crop Reporting Service.

This was 28 per cent lower than a year ago and reflects

tained so much more cheaply. There are no restrictions on mushroom imports as yet, and that's why AMI went to Washington to dramatize the dilemma last Monday.

disappearance of 485,000 cwt. during March 1976.

Stocks for the 25 Fall potato states, estimated at 67.3 million cwt., were 11 percent below April 1, 1975, but 20 percent above April 1, 1974. Disappearance for these 25 states during March 1976 was 31.8 million cwt.

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