

# German and Pa. farm practices aren't alike

By JOANNE SPAHR

CHRISTIANA, Pa.—For many farmers of Pennsylvania Deutsch descent, Germany is the motherland—the old country—the ancestral home they've always longed to visit but never will.

However, for Christoph Weber, age 23, who is now residing near Christiana in southern Lancaster County, Germany is home, and the pace to which he will be returning in another month or so with tales of the United States and its agriculture.

The tall, lanky German is on exchange to the United States through the cooperative efforts of the German Farmers' Union and the Future Farmers of America. Arriving in Washington D.C. on June 29, his scheduled amount of time in this county was three months, a span of time which is slowly drawing to a close. Before he leaves, however, he will become a bona fide tourist and will travel around the country, seeing the USA in general with other exchange students from his home country.

At present, he is living with Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Metzler, Christiana R1. Gerald is a 1976 American Farmer who is now in partnership with his father, J. Robert Metzler, on a 150 acre dairy farm near Atglen.

Metzler, himself, was an exchange student to Switzerland through the FFA, so the two have common ground on which to stand and communicate with each other, as well as love of farming to share.

However, there are basic differences between the two men. Initially, Christoph was not raised on a farm. He grew up in Kolin, Germany, and is now a student at the University of Bonn, studying agriculture with a major in animal production. Weber has hopes of starting his own farm, although he says that many agriculture students are not able to do this. Instead, many ag majors begin working for feed or fertilizer companies rather than actually tilling the soil.

"It doesn't happen very often that an outsider can start farming," says Christoph with a good command of the English language. "Farmers love their jobs and the family farms stay together forever."

However, he does tell of a rather unique method in which outsiders do acquire farmland.

"If no one in the family is interested, sometimes they will give you a farm," he explains in earnest. There is one catch, however. In return for the farm, the new owner pays for the living expenses of the retiring farmers for the rest of their lives, and when they die, if they have children, the farm recipient must pay for the children, as well.

On the other hand, if an aspiring young farmer does have a chance to buy acreage, the per cent of interest on loans in Germany is much lower than here—three or four per cent.

"But, you must have some money, yourself, to begin with," cautions Christoph.

Naturally, after living and working in Lancaster County, Christoph has some

definite impressions of farming in the area.

Initially, says Christoph, "it is easier to farm here." On the average, Americans have more land per farm than the Germans do. The mean in Germany, according to Weber, is about 25 hectares or 62 acres. The milk prices are about the same, and so is the degree to which farmers have mechanized their operations.

There are many differences, however. For one thing, Germans don't have extra fields for hay. Instead, they make this crop from their pasturelands. Christoph says the pastures are better kept in Germany than they are here, and that they are smaller, but that fertilizer is used on them to increase yield.

They also do not feed steers. Instead, bulls are fed inside on a corn silage-chop ration for more efficiency. One breed of beef cattle that they don't raise is purebred Aberdeen Angus, which Christoph says is not as efficient as other breeds.

The Germans prefer a cross of three breeds. They like a Black Holstein-Angus cross, and in the next generation, they go to a Charolais cross. In the southern part of Germany, Simmental is also raised.

In the dairy industry, Christoph does say that the American dairy herds are better than the German's because they only began importing bulls about eight or 10 years ago. According to Weber, Ivanhoe Star is a favorite stud.

He also adds that for a herd size of 50 animals, the Germans commonly build parlors, a practice he had not seen done in the county to this point.

Weber also noted that Germans do not build the "high silos" we enjoy here. Instead, they prefer trench silos.

In reference to the swine industry, he pointed out that there are "no red pigs" in Germany, and that Hampshire is one of the preferred breeds.

On the whole, ham is



Christoph Weber, 23, is on exchange from Germany to the United States through the Future Farmers of America and the German Farmers' Union. He is staying with Gerald Metzler, Christiana, a 1976 American Farmer, who is in

partnership with his father, J. Robert, on a 150 acre dairy farm. Christoph has been pitching in with the work ever since he arrived on the farm in the beginning of October.

cheaper than beef in Weber's country, so the Germans enjoy this meat more frequently than they do beef at the dinner table.

In sizing up the contrasts, Christoph has one broad conception of American farming which most farmers would not willingly accept, and in fact, might try to refute at first. According to Christoph, American farmers are "too wasteful."

He backs his statements up with facts, ones that are hard to dispute.

For instance, he points out that we have four times as much land as the Germans, yet we don't utilize it to the fullest. For instance, because they fertilize more, in a good year the German will get 80 bushels of wheat per acre, a figure that overshadows our production.

And, Christoph points out, we're wasteful with feed.

In the Summer it is the German practice to feed only shortfeed and not corn silage, because, according to Christoph, "the animals get enough energy from the pasture."

And, he says, the Germans

only spread manure two times a year—in the Spring and Fall. They let it decompose and then they spread it on the fields, a practice which Christoph says puts more humus in the soil.

So, there's no doubt about it, Christoph will have some new agriculture experiences to tell about when he goes home, which was his aim when he decided to explore American agriculture.



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