

## March food basket prices up 8 cents

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's average retail food basket cost the consumer eight cents more in March than in February, according to the monthly food basket survey report released today by Agriculture Secretary Kent Shelhamer.

Shelhamer said that the statewide average of 14 food products sampled in rural and urban stores was \$10.89 compared to \$10.81 in

February. "The March survey a second straight month of food price increases after a seven month decline," Shelhamer said. "This reflects seasonal changes in supply patterns as well as a five-cent increase in the cost of coffee."

Food basket costs had risen 32 cents in February after reaching a record high last July at \$10.96.

The monthly survey, conducted by the

Agriculture Department's Bureau of Rural Affairs, compared the prices of 14 sample "food basket" items in rural and urban stores and is aimed at providing consumers with retail food price trend information.

According to the survey, the average food basket price in March was highest in the northwestern part of the state at \$11.14. Lowest prices were recorded in the northcentral region of the state where the food basket cost an average of \$10.65. Four of the six regions showed food price increases during the month, with the greatest increase in the southwest central region where the cost of the food basket rose 51 cents. Prices declined 33 cents from February to March in the

northeastern region of the state.

The difference in the cost of the food basket purchased in urban and rural stores stood at 2.51 per cent. The food basket cost an average of \$10.77 in urban supermarkets compared to \$11.04 in rural stores.

The spread between namebrand and storebrand items decreased to about 10 per cent during the survey period. A comparison of eight of the 14 food basket items showed the average price of namebrand items to be \$7.92 while the same storebrand items cost only \$7.12. February figures had shown a 92 cent or 12 per cent difference, between storebrand and namebrand items.

Items increasing in cost

during the March survey include fresh pears, up from 47 to 48 cents a pound; coffee, from \$3.32 to \$3.37 a pound; bread, from 37 to 38 cents a pound loaf; cornflakes, from 66 to 67 cents a pound; whole chicken, from 58 to 59 cents a pound; ground beef, from \$1.06 to \$1.09 a pound; and American

cheese, from \$1.63 to \$1.66 a pound.

Items which decreased in cost were cabbage, from 29 to 24 cents a pound; canned peaches, from 36 to 35 cents a pound; and eggs, from 83 to 81 cents a dozen large eggs. Potatoes, canned corn and sugar all remained about the same in cost.

## Leadership conferences set

READING — The first session of the 4-H Public Affairs Leadership Program was conducted recently at the Berks County Agricultural Center, near here. Nineteen youths from Berks County participated in this first of three all-day sessions.

During the 7½ hour day, topics such as group building, values clarification, goal planning, role negotiation and community functions were discussed in depth. Even the luncheon was designed into an exercise of task management.

At the meeting, officers were elected and installed as follows: president, Karen R. Sattazahn of Womelsdorf; vice-president, Clay Henry of 110 Werstler Avenue in Gilbertsville; secretary, Susan Beth Stallone of 65 Cardinal Road in Wyomissing; and news reporter, Timothy J. Frei of 1649 Westwood Road in Wyomissing.

The advisors for the group are: Barbara Stratton, Extension assistant — public affairs leadership; Dr. W. Harry Schaffer, Community Resource Development agent of the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension

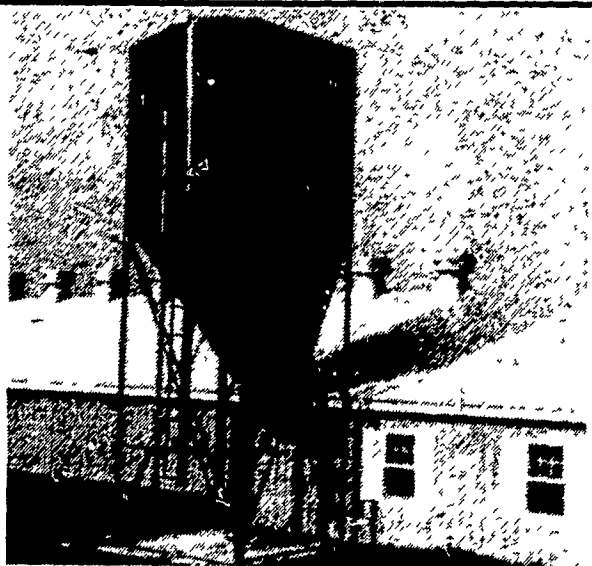
Service; and Mae D. Bleiler, Extension home economist.

Their next meeting will be Saturday, May 13. They plan to have elected and appointed government officials present to discuss local government operations.

The major objectives of the 4-H Public Affairs Leadership Program are to teach a process for group leadership, to develop an awareness of community services and operations, and to encourage participants to become future community leaders. The program is being sponsored by the Berks County Cooperative Extension Service of the Pennsylvania State University.

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The trucking industry's safety record has seen a steady decrease in accident rates in the past three decades. The near completed Interstate System where the fatality rate is half that of non-interstate systems, has contributed to this improved safety record. Estimates based on data obtained from state highway authorities and the Department of Transportation show accidents for tractor semi-trailers at 4.70 per million miles compared to 11.36 for passenger cars.



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