

Delaware farmers

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along with slaughter cows and fat heifers. The Delaware group was told that production of chickens and pigs for meat is not encouraged because of the lack of local grains to feed them.

Until recently government subsidies permitted Puerto Rican farmers to buy cheap

cows from Wisconsin. But lately the price of these animals has nearly quadrupled, so they now raise most of their own herd replacements. That's not easy to do on a grass diet. The heifers grow slower, freshening a year later than they would on richer, mainland feed.

As the Delaware group toured the island's dairy

region, they came across herds in some mighty peculiar places. One farm they visited was located on a river bed. When the river floods, the herd is evacuated to higher ground. In another place they saw a farm right on the edge of the ocean, with cows cooling themselves in sea water and grazing on poor quality grass growing around the base of palm trees along the shore.

During their stay the Delaware group also traveled across Puerto Rico's mountainous interior to the arid southern coast, center of the island's vegetable production. There they saw tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, watermelons, chickpeas, yams, potatoes and other crops being grown under irrigation, and visited a packing plant where fresh cucumbers were being readied for shipment to New York and other East Coast markets.

As in the States, many of these vegetable farmers were using plastic mulch to hold down the weeds. Even so, notes Extension agent Dave Woodward, weed control appeared to be a serious problem. He also reports that, like the California truck farmers the group visited last Winter, the Puerto Ricans grow their plants on the tops of hilled rows, rather than without furrows, as is done in Delaware. Apparently this is because all the crops are raised under some form of irrigation — either open

ditch, center pivot or trickle systems.

All these crop-watering methods were already familiar to farmers in the Delaware group, either from previous travels or from direct experience. But they did see one revolutionary new system that impressed them very much.

This is a high-pressure trickle irrigation system developed in Israel and now being demonstrated on a 300-acre farm near Ponce with funds provided by the Puerto Rican government. Among advantages of the system are the fact that it pumps water uphill, delivers it further and more evenly, can be used to apply fertilizer and other chemicals such as pesticides, along with the water, and does not leave plastic hose residues in the field.

The fully automatic system has six filters which can be easily cleaned in the field by back-flushing. To keep hoses and buried irrigation tape from becoming clogged during use, phosphoric acid is run through the system along with the water and other materials.

So far, about 20 acres of tomatoes are being irrigated by this system. These will be mechanically staked and trellised using Israeli-developed techniques which are expected to produce up to 60 tons an acre. This is much more than the yield Puerto Rican farmers are presently getting.

In sponsoring such crop production demonstrations, say Haenlein and Woodward, the local government hopes to get more farmers to go into vegetable production.

The idea is for the island to improve its own food supply and also increase exports of fruits and vegetables.

The Delaware group visited one agricultural experiment station where tropical fruit trees from various parts of the world are being tested for their suitability to local growing conditions, as part of this drive towards greater self-sufficiency. One of the trees the visitors saw there was a dwarf coconut palm from the Philippines with waist-high nuts within easy reach for harvesting.

Besides the climate and its effects on farming, one of the major differences Extension agent Dave Woodward noted between Puerto Rican farming and that back home in Delaware was land ownership.

The average Delaware farmer owns most of his land. What he rents is usually privately owned, too. By comparison, many Puerto Rican farmers work land leased from their government. Even land that's privately held is likely to be farmed by someone other than the owner. So farming there is often a landlord/laborer enterprise.

Typically, explains Woodward, some doctor, lawyer or contractor owns or leases land. This person may or may not live on the farm. Even if he does, in most cases he hires a manager to supervise the workers who in turn do the actual labor. Dairy farmers, for example, do no milking or related chores themselves but hire professional milking crews for these tasks.

The farm labor situation is further complicated by the fact that most agricultural

workers on the island (which is a U.S. Territory) come under the federal hourly pay scale. This means that their minimum pay is the same as on the U.S. mainland. But in contrast to the States, agricultural workers in Puerto Rico are limited by law to a 40-hour week. After that they get paid time and a half — which can make farm help quite expensive at times.

In their travels around Puerto Rico it was obvious to the visitors that farming in the tropics is not necessarily easier than it is in a climate such as Delaware's — in spite of the impression you get of being in a land of "milk and honey," where fruit hangs ripe for the picking even from trees growing wild along the roadside.

Haenlein says that among the island's prime agricultural problems is the need to develop better forage plants — particularly legumes — to supplement grass as a dairy feed.

Telling Puerto Rican farmers how we do it here isn't necessarily the answer, however. "To transplant the agricultural techniques and tastes of a temperate zone to a tropical country requires a lot of adaptation," points out the dairy specialist.

The exchange of information can work both ways, he adds. While the Delaware farmers on the recent tour could sometimes have given their hosts some advice on improving management, they themselves stood to benefit by what they saw in the area of parasite control on dairy stock, and grassland production efficiency.

Eastern FFA

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achievement on state level competition.

Jim Eshelman, a sophomore FFA'er, won the scholarship, an honor based on guidance department ratings of chapter members' overall curriculum performance.

The Dekalb Senior award, based on scholarship, leadership and program, went to Ray Smeltzer.

One unscheduled presentation was a lighthearted one from chapter members to advisor Gerald M. Kiger. The

chapter presented Kiger with a new briefcase, replacing one that had been stolen earlier this year. Accompanying the briefcase was a set of handcuffs, which officers of the chapter used to fasten the gift to advisor Kiger's wrist.

Wrapping up the program was well-known area speaker W. Grant Hurst, of Lancaster.

A language teacher at McCaskey High for 43 years, Hurst has been on the lecture circuit for 38 years with his topic, "Developing a Sense of Humor."

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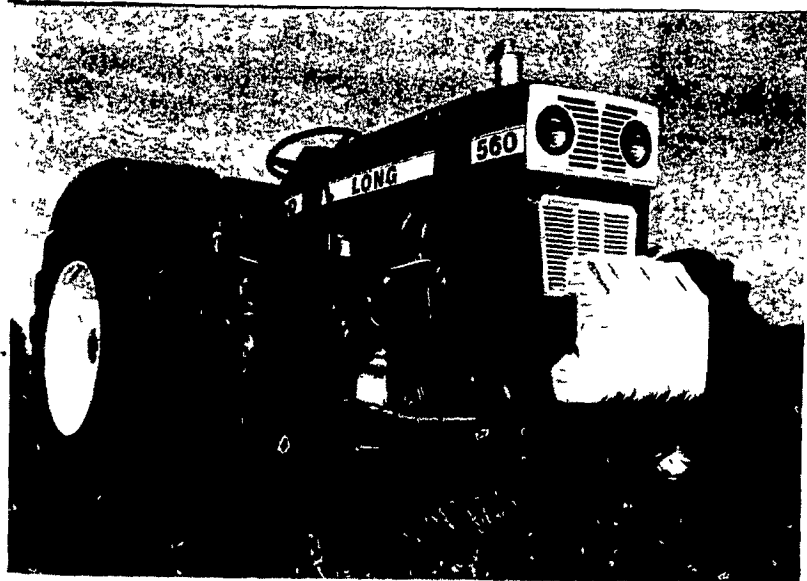
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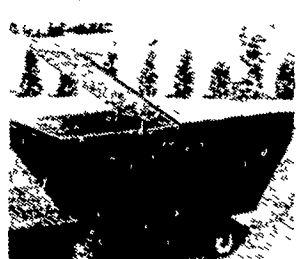
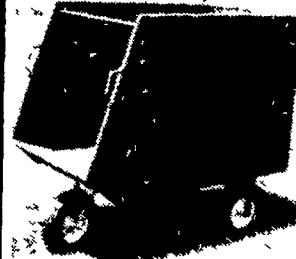
Egg production up

HARRISBURG - March 1979 egg production in Pennsylvania totaled 322 million, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. The March production was 14 per cent above the 283 million eggs produced in March 1978. The March average of 14.9 million layers was 11 per cent higher than a year ago. Egg production per 100 layers during March was

2,158 compared with 2,114 in March 1978.

The nation's laying flock produced 5.88 billion eggs during March, three per cent more than a year ago. The number of layers during March averaged 288 million, compared with 280 million in March 1978. Egg production per 100 layers during the month was 2,041 compared with 2,034 a year ago.

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