

Farm earnings can hardly be grouped

By JERRY WEBB

University of Delaware

NEWARK, Del. - When farmers start talking collectively about how "we aren't making any money" I have to wonder. No doubt things happen that affect the pocketbooks of virtually all farmers—things like low corn and soybean prices and high fuel costs.

But wait a minute—not all farmers grow corn and soybeans and not all farmers use a lot of expensive fuel. So how can you lump them all together and conclude that "farmers aren't making any money?"

So many differences exist between types and sizes of farms, management abilities, traditions, attitudes and so on, that it's impossible to deal with farmers as a group.

The Pennsylvania dairy farmer who keeps a high-producing, home-grown herd on five acres can't be grouped with the Delaware crops farmer who tills a thousand rented acres with highly financed machinery. The confinement swine producer who owns his own brood sows and feeds his own corn is in a different posture than the guy who buys both corn and feeder pigs and tries to show a profit through shrewd buying and selling.

Even the farmers who seem to operate the same way are so different as to defy grouping.

Farmers are generally pretty strong-willed in-

dividuals who manage their businesses the way they see fit. They make decisions that create nice profits or cause great losses. So how can they be bunched together in common complaint?

Maybe in North Dakota where dryland wheat production is the only enterprise it's a little easier for farmers to compare notes. Here in the Mid-Atlantic states it's almost impossible. Consider the different kinds of farmers from the large scale corn and soybean producer to the small specialty crops operator. We have dairy farmers, broiler producers, swine growers, and cattlemen. We have farmers who grow only corn and others who have some of almost every crop that will sprout in this climate. We have the mushroom people and the potato farmers and a couple of guys who specialize in horseradish. Then there are sod farmers and turkey farmers, and greenhouse growers and table egg producers. The list of specialists goes on and on.

You also have the fellows who choose to diversify—they grow corn and soybeans and feed them to their own dairy cows and their own feeder pigs. They raise vegetable crops too and it's not at all unusual for them to have at least one broiler house.

Now try to compare farmers who are just starting out with lots of rented land and heavily financed, highly productive farm machinery

with the older fellows who will then own acres with ten-year-old machines paid for with cash.

One guy will tell you he can't make any money on \$2 a bushel corn. He's no doubt telling the truth. Look at his production costs—maybe \$80 an acre for land, \$90 an acre for fertilizer, seed, fuel, pesticides, and the other direct costs of production. Add another \$30 an acre for machinery, \$15 for grain storage and you come up with a production cost of \$215 an acre. Raise a hundred bushels of corn per acre and sell at \$2 a bushel and it's a losing proposition. No matter how many acres are tilled, with those economics you lose.

And then there's the guy with 400 productive acres given to him by his father 50 years ago. He has smaller, older equipment. He gets better yields and he makes money—production costs \$90 an acre, machinery \$20, storage \$10, taxes and land maintenance \$10. It's hard to get his costs over \$130 an acre. At 120 bushels an acre and \$2 a bushel he still gets \$110 and acre of \$44,000 return for labor and management, and his land.

Give some farmers \$2.50 corn and \$8 soybeans and they do quite well. Others find it hard to break even. The same is true for the hog man who raises his own feed. It really doesn't matter to him when corn sells for \$2. He's not selling corn, he's

feeding it. His production costs and income costs are figured on pounds of pork produced and price per pound at the market. If he has low feed costs because he's a good producer and because he has low land and machinery costs—and if he has low pig costs because he raises them himself—and if the market is strong as it is right now, he can do fairly well.

Out of all this wordage

come a few fairly obvious truths:

Not all farmers are in the same boat;

There are more ways to gain and lose money than with corn and soybeans;

The farmer who owns his land and has his machinery paid for is in a much stronger position to fight the price squeeze;

Diversification is still a pretty important word in the farm prosperity picture.

What does this all mean? I think it means that if a farmer tells you he isn't making any money he's probably not lying. But he's also not speaking for all farmers. There are as many variations on the profitability of modern agriculture theme as there are farmers. That's why Uncle Sam has such a hard time setting up government programs that work.

Md. 4-H public speaking winners selected

WESTMINSTER, Md. - Two girls from Montgomery and Somerset County and a boy from Harford County took top honors in the Maryland 4-H public speaking event in Westminster, on May 5. Thirty six 4-H members from across the state competed in the three divisions of the contest. The event is the top state honor in the 4-H public speaking program, which includes county and district competition prior to the state event.

In the junior division, Jill Hudson of Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, demonstrated her superior public speaking ability among nine to 11 year olds in a talk on "Family Involvement in My 4-H Project"

Cindy Twining, champion from the 12 to 13 year old division, voiced support for the International Year of the Child in "A Plea for the Children". The intermediate champion is from Princess Anne R3, in Somerset County.

The new state champion in the senior division is Barry Trabant of Forest Hill in Harford County. The Harford County youth took the top award in the senior division 14-19 year old with a speech, titled "DNA, A Key to the Future".

Junior reserve champion honors went to Kelly Shaw of Fair Play. The Washington County youth's speech was titled "Farmers Daughter". Intermediate reserve champion was Ginny Miles

of Darlington for "Tibetan Alternative", and senior reserve champion was Jack Girod of Dayton. He spoke on the "Perils of Chicken Farming".

Winners in all divisions received trophies, courtesy of the Maryland State Fair Board.

The public speaking program is one of the many Maryland 4-H programs conducted by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service to promote youth development.

With offices in each county and Baltimore City, 4-H programs are open to all Maryland youth. Persons interested in more information should call the Extension office in their county.

YOU'VE HEARD THE TALK.

There's a better way to dry grain. It's called CHILLCURING™ because it means CURING without heat. Here's what the talk is all about.

THE GRAIN

Every kernel of grain is alive when it comes out of the field. It is a seed, able to grow because it has the ability to take on moisture. Likewise, it can be kept in a state of preservation by removing the moisture already in it.

But by heating the grain to dry it, the seed life is destroyed.

By removing heat and moisture from the grain, it becomes dormant, and stays alive. Then it can ripen to full weight, losing only water while keeping valuable protein, starches and sugar.

THE SYSTEM

It's simple. Grain goes from the field right to the bin. With the unique AIRFRAME™ and AIRFLOOR™ the grain rests on a solid bed that allows maximum ventilation.

Clean dry air is the best curing medium for the grain. GRAINLAMPS™ provide electric sunshine, cleaning and drying the air beneath the floor, before it passes through the grain.

Fans force air under the floor. Rising through the grain, this dry outside air carries away moisture and heat.

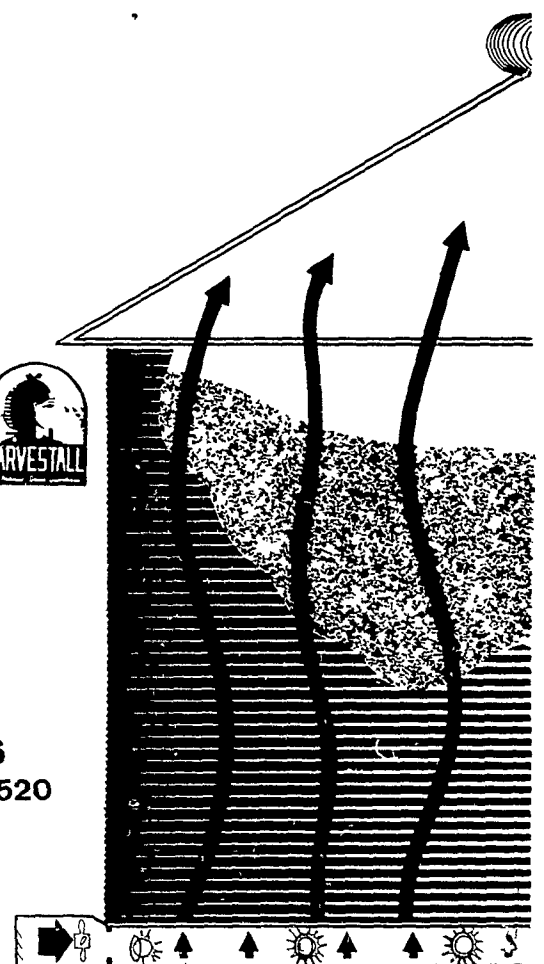
At the peak of the bin a jumbo 40" turbine, the WHIRLCOOLER™, puts nature to work for you. Wind and rising air keeps it turning, venting the system naturally.

A special HARVESTAT™ Control System monitors the curing process. A simple setting controls the GRAINLAMPS™ to make use of free, natural air.



Advanced Ag Products

RD 2 Box 174 Elverson, Pa. 19520
215-286-9118



THE FACTS

1. You can't beat Nature. HARVESTALL GRAIN CHILLCURING™ uses the same elements that ripen and preserve grain if left to itself: free flowing air and infra red rays (sunshine).
2. CHILLCURING™ has been tried and proven in 17 states on over 3000 farms. The research is in: CHILLCURING™ WORKS!
3. The CHILLCURING™ system uses only the electricity to power fans and lights, using about 1½ KW hrs. per bushel. Compare that cost to other systems that use increasingly expensive fuels to get disappointing results.
4. The grain goes from the field to the bin and stays there till you need it. Save time and money at harvest with the one step HARVESTALL CHILLCURING™ and storage system.
5. If you're in the market for grain storage, you owe it to yourself to look further into HARVESTALL GRAIN CHILLCURING™.