

# Lancaster Farming

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## Legislation, labor concerns dominate ag town meeting

**BY CURT HARLER**  
**MANHEIM** — Deputy Secretary of Agriculture E. Chester Heim outlined State Ag Department policy views and fielded questions from the audience in an agricultural town meeting held here Thursday.

The meeting was one of eight such meetings held around the state. A similar session ran Friday in Allentown.

Heim predicted a milk security proposal in writing would be presented to the state legislature within the next month.

He said the Department advocates a security fund and said he felt all parties agree there should be a fund although not all agree on the specifics.

The Department proposal, presented in Lancaster in December, calls for a fund to be built by dealers only at the rate of one cent per hundredweight until the fund reaches \$4 million.

Heim said the proposal would be sent to the General Assembly.

"That great melting pot of ideas should go to work on the proposal," he said.

Heim said the Department was backing HB 725, a measure to clarify wording in Act 319. Act 319 provides tax relief for farmers who keep their land in agriculture.

Courts in Bucks County

ruled that rollback payments required by Act 319 would have to be paid when land changed hands, even if it remained in farming.

The legislators' intent was to assess a rollback only if the land changed use.

Heim also said the Department supports "right to farm" laws. Such laws would restrict local governments from passing nuisance laws which restrict agricultural operations.

Another priority of the Administration, Heim said, is enactment of enabling legislation to allow creation of ag districts.

"We will work to secure the passage of such a bill, providing for the voluntary creation of ag districts," he said.

His statement indicated the districts could be administered by county governments which have the staff, funds, and facilities lacking in local governments.

Heim spoke highly of the state's new ag theme: "Pennsylvania Agriculture—we're growing better."

Processors and retailers alike seem to like what we're doing," he said.

He said the Department plans to go ahead with step-by-step renovation of the Farm Show Complex.

He said a new Complex is "a pipe dream right now."

The first step in such a plan would be construction of a new livestock barn.

Heim spoke highly of the potential for gasohol. "I came to this meeting in a car run on gasohol," he said.

"It works beautifully. I think everyone ought to try it."

Heim then threw the meeting open to questions from the floor.

About three dozen people, including farmers, two state senators, and many representatives of the

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Chester Heim, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, fielded questions from farmers and farm leaders at the ag town meeting held Thursday in Manheim. With Heim at the speakers table are, from right, Senator Richard Snyder, Manheim farmer Don Hershey, Ag Department Regional Director Eugene Wingert, and Senator Clarence Manbeck.

## Electricity from manure is reality

**BY DICK WANNER**

**GETTYSBURG** — Some 200 government officials and news reporters flocked to Mason Dixon Farms, Inc. near here on Wednesday to witness a working methane digester supplying methane gas to run a generator big enough to supply Mason Dixon's electrical needs.

One of the TV commentators present noted this was his seventh methane digester story, but, he said, "...this one seems to work."

In a big shed, Richard Waybright, one of the farm's owners and managers, squinted into the glare of TV lights and told his audience just how well his system had been working since last fall, and how the farm has ended an eight-year search for energy self-sufficiency and pollution control.

Energy self-sufficiency is important to Mason-Dixon because it's big—2700 acres and more than 1600 cows, nearly 700 of them milking.

The farm has been in the Waybright family for eight generations, but Richard and his son, Burt, were the first Waybrights to host the

kind of crowd that gathered Wednesday.

It included Pennsylvania's Lieutenant governor, Secretary of Agriculture, at least one Congressman and newsmen from all over.

After they'd heard Waybright explain what was going on at the farm, the guests walked a short distance down a farm lane to hear something else—the clattering roar of a 120 kilowatt generator that is now supplying half the electrical energy needed to run the Waybright farm and dairy.

Last year, the Waybrights spent \$30,000 on electricity. This year, they expect to spend only half that, and are looking forward to the day when they'll be supplying not only their own electrical needs, but a surplus for sale to Met Ed, the power company that gained fame in the Three Mile Island incident.

Richard Waybright told the gathering Mason-Dixon also expects to begin construction soon of a still to produce alcohol for fuel.

The electrical generator

roars away inside a red metal building insulated heavily to cut down on the 24-hour-a-day noise. The engine is fueled by a mixture that includes 10-percent diesel fuel and 90-percent biogas.

Biogas is a mixture of methane and other gases produced by the fermentation of liquid manure

from a 700-cow barn in the long red building next to the generator house.

The building covers a black rubber bag 95-feet long and 20-feet wide. Below the bag is a manure pit, as wide as long as the bag, and 15-feet deep.

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## Tax topics highlight legislative week

**HARRISBURG** — Believe it or not, both the federal and the state governments are trying to do something about the farmer's tax burden.

At the state level, the Governor's Commission on Tax Reform met in Erie on Wednesday with one of their specific objectives being to take testimony from farmers. Both the Grange and Pennsylvania Farmers' Association were there to tell the commission members about the impact of property taxes on farm operations.

And in Washington, Congress was getting close

to repealing a universally unpopular inheritance tax measure passed in 1976. Congress is also about ready to change a provision of the Social Security law that was seen hurting retiring farmers and some other businessmen.

In Erie, Nick Mobilia, Jr., vice-president of the Erie County Farmers Association, told the tax commission that farmers pay twice as much as non-farmers do to support the public school system. He

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## Hallowell takes stock after a year in office

Predicts passage of security fund.

talks Farm Expo.

says Pa.

will be No. 1

in '81

**HARRISBURG**— Penrose Hallowell, in an exclusive interview with Lancaster Farming, reviewed his first year's work as Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture.

He pointed out several cost saving moves taken by the department under his direction, noted legislative accomplishments, and talked about personnel changes made this past year.

His predictions for the second year of his administration included the hunt of using pressure from

the Governor's office to pass a milk security fund and the goal of making Pennsylvania Agriculture "Number 1 in '81" by "growing better."

Throughout the interview, his close ties to the Republican Governorship of Richard Thornburgh were emphasized.

"I look at the past year from three points of view," Hallowell said.

He said he tried to follow priorities laid out by the Governor.

Thornburgh called for

elimination of duplication, coordination of efforts and opening of lines of communications, plus elimination of bad politics.

"I did fire a few people. We had some alleged improper activities going on," Hallowell said.

One of the regional directors who was terminated is charged with making employees.

Macing is requiring employees to contribute to the political party in control. The former director is being prosecuted.

"We are working with 25 fewer employees," Hallowell noted.

The reduction in rural affairs, random egg sampling and dog law personnel was made to favor economic development of the state's agricultural base.

Two new employees were hired for the marketing division.

"We are bragging that agriculture is soon to be the first most important industry in the state," he said, referring to the slogan Number 1 in '81.

He said the promotion for Pennsylvania goods unveiled at Farm Show was well received by both the public and the food industry.

"Pennsylvania: We're growing better" logos are already appearing in state newspaper ads.

The slogan will concentrate on milk, potatoes and eggs. The Department has, with help from the state Poultry Federation, hired a person to work on egg promotion.

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