

At Adams County meeting

Farmers, ag economist share price predictions for 1980

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BIGLERVILLE — World events and national politics have a major impact on prices received by farmers. Uncertainties in the world's situation and the fact that 1980 is an election year, make it difficult to predict any price improvement for farmers.

This was the consensus of farmers and Penn State Agricultural Economist Lou Moore, participants in the Young Farmer/Extension Service sponsored Outlook Meeting held last Thursday, at Biglerville High School. Vincent Lobaugh, R1 Aspers, President of the host Young Farmers Group, introduced County Agent Thomas E. Piper. Piper presided over the meeting

and called on Larry Yager, Extension Area Marketing Agent, to moderate a panel of farmers.

"High beef prices have provided support for pork," said Charles Lobaugh, R6 Gettysburg, expressing his opinion on the market outlook for swine. He urged pork producers to stick together to promote pork and work in unity to improve market conditions.

Caution is ruling cow/calf producers who are slow to rebuild cattle herds, said Ronald Funt, Arendtsville. However, farmers finishing cattle are holding them to heavier weights - a costly process. This is squeezing profit margins. Higher supplies of pork and poultry has placed the damper on prices. High interest rates and a conservative attitude among consumers will work to the disadvantage of the beef market, concluded Funt.

Fertilizer and fuel costs pose as decisive questions for crops farmers in 1980, according to Clair Wolf, R1 Biglerville.

Conversion of some soybean acreage to cotton in the south could help soybean prices. Commenting on tomatoes, Wolf cited carryover problems which

will influence 1980 contracting. He suggested that Adams County growers may benefit from the fact that the Musselman Company expects to obtain fewer tomatoes in Lancaster County in 1980.

What food commodity offers more value on a cost per pound basis than eggs?

This question was posed by Norman Blocher, R1 Aspers, who presented the view of the poultry industry. Citing the cost of production per dozen of 53.6 cents in 1980, Blocher predicted an 88 cents per dozen cost in 1990 and warned that the industry would have to adjust. He suggested that homemakers serving more egg dishes would brighten the outlook for poultrymen.

Looking at processed apples inventory, Nelson Kane, Bendersville, reported inventories of applesauce up 9 percent, juice up 45 percent and sliced apples down 50 percent from this time last year. He suggested that higher costs for fuel, spray materials and labor would increase grower costs in 1980.

Dairy farmers have enjoyed several good years but the future will have its ups and downs as the industry

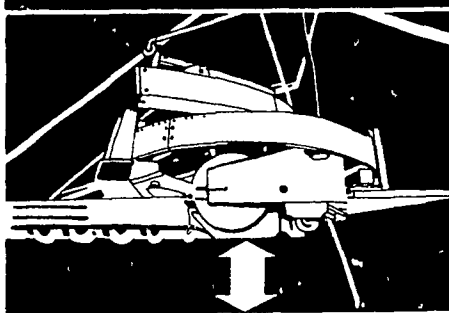
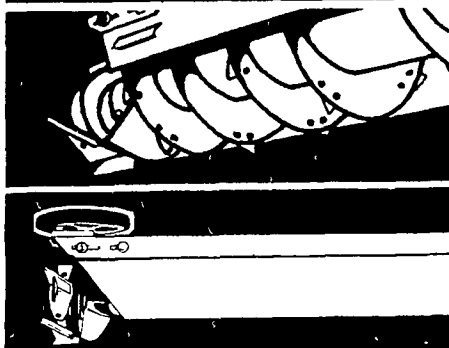

adjusts to changes, according to Vincent Lobaugh. He predicted 1980 milk prices to be favorable, but revealed that cow prices show how farmers are continuing to build herds. This will cause burdensome surpluses which can depress future prices.

"The Politics of Marketing" was the title which Lou Moore, Extension Agricultural Economist from the Pennsylvania State University placed on his agricultural outlook summary for 1980. He listed concerns for Afghanistan and Iran, the Russian grain embargo, gold, inflation, the energy crisis, high interest rates, wild expansion in poultry and hogs, consumer buyer power and attitudes as a basis for uncertainties we face.

In summary, shorter beef supplies have helped to keep poultry, pork and dairy prices up, said Moore. However, considering the rising price for inputs, net farm income is expected to drop 20 to 25 percent in 1980.

For consumers, the "bottom line" remains that consumer income has been rising faster than their costs and food is still the best bargain on the market, concluded Moore.

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