

# Alternate market for tomato growers

**EAST LEWISBURG** — Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell and State Representative Reno Thomas Thursday announced that alternative markets are apparently available to those farmers affected by the American Home Foods cancellation of 1640 acres of tomato contracts in Central Pennsylvania.

"A successful meeting in East Lewisburg concluded with proposals from Furman Canning Company and a green wrap packaging operation that could use up to 1800 acres of red and green tomatoes," said Hallowell. "A top priority of the Department is to help farmers who have been affected by the rapid disappearance of their markets."

"Fortunately, the meeting was instrumental in finding new markets for this year's tomato crop and alternative crops for future years," said Rep. Reno Thomas, Snyder County, who had requested the meeting. "I am very interested in pursuing the progress of these proposals in the coming weeks."

Furman Canning Company announced plans to contract 500 acres, in addition to the 300 acres they have already contracted of red tomatoes for their plant near Allentown. In addition, Furman's will be paying a freight allowance to offset the cost of shipping. For further information, contact Norman Geise, at 717/473-3516.

Also discussed at the meeting were plans for a green wrap packaging plant that would create 30 to 50

jobs during the summer months and require up to 1000 acres of green tomato contracts for their operation. Rep. Thomas has worked with the Mifflinburg Bank and Trust and the Pennsylvania Department of Commerce to finalize the financial needs for the green wrap packaging plant.

Extension Vegetable Specialist Peter Ferretti discussed the cost of growing green versus red tomatoes. Barney Staller of American

Home Foods discussed the possibilities of growing mustard seed, corn for popcorn and adzuki beans for chile as alternative crops in future years. Amos Zimmerman, Union County Extension Agent, discussed the potential for soybean production as an alternative to red tomatoes.

Regional Director Marlin McClellan chaired the meeting which was held Tuesday at the Farmers Best.

## Ag trade surplus already up

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — U.S. agricultural exports were \$8.2 billion greater than agricultural imports during the first four months of fiscal 1980, resulting in an agricultural trade surplus about 55 percent ahead of the same point in fiscal 1979, Thomas R. Hughes, administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, reported Thursday.

Trade data for October 1979 - January 1980 show total export value was \$14.3 billion, up 34 percent

from the same period last year. Export values rose for all commodity categories except tobacco. Leading value gainers were cotton and lint, up 73 percent, and grains and feeds, up 65 percent from the year-earlier level.

Hughes said that although the United States produced a large cotton crop in 1978/79, strong world demand has pushed prices well above last season's level. In addition, cumulative (October-January) U.S. cotton exports of 2.8 million bales are far

ahead of the 1.7 million shipped during the same period a year ago. At 238,000 bales, U.S. exports to Europe during January were 2½ times those of January reflecting the USSR's absence from the market.

The total value of leaf tobacco exports decreased nearly a fifth during the first four months of fiscal 1980 as slightly higher prices only partially offset a drop of nearly one-fourth in volume.



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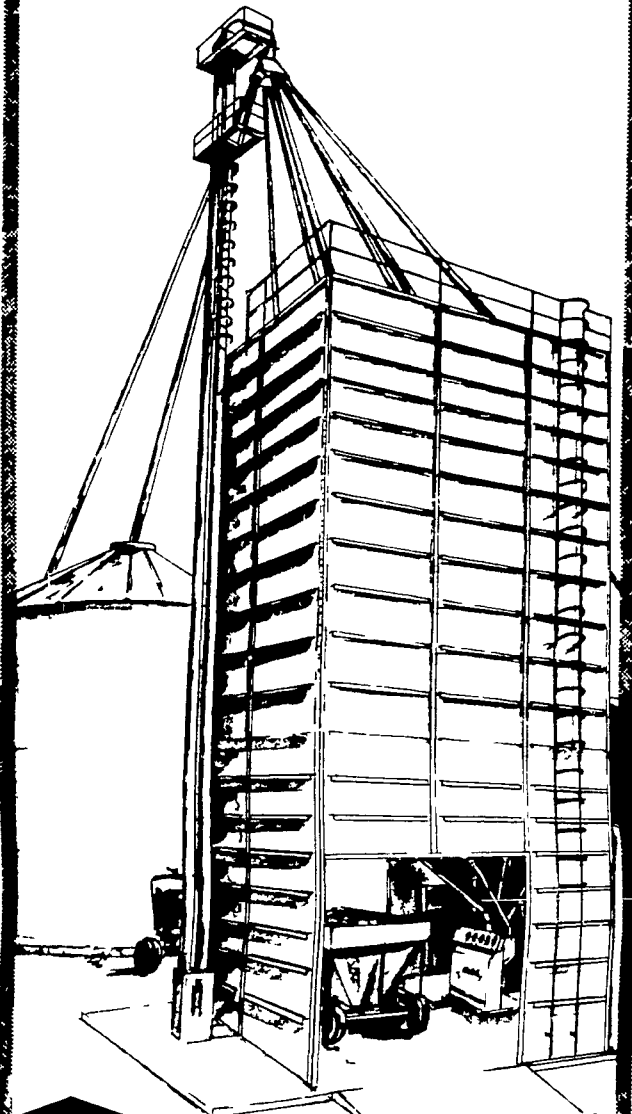
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