

# Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

"Maybe the best way to keep the peace is to have the most tractors." That's the headline from an

agricultural promotion piece distributed by the Agriculture Day Foundation. It was part of a kit

designed to help the media observe National Agriculture Day.

The promotion piece went on to point out that an exploding world population has tremendous food demands that many countries are not able to meet. "Those who have land don't have technology. Those who have technology don't have land. Many have neither. But we have both."

The Ag Day promotion suggests that we need a foreign policy that puts our agricultural capacity to work in a way that will save millions from starvation, win the U.S. stronger

friendships and help American agriculture find additional profits abroad to finance better food values at home.

That was just one piece from a kit that contained perhaps a dozen items on the Agriculture Day theme, "Thought For Food."

Agriculture Day was launched in 1973 by a Minneapolis agri-business publisher and is held annually to help educate the American consumer about American agriculture - its contribution, concerns, and challenges. It's truly a national observance now with volunteer events and

activities throughout the country to give nonfarm consumers a chance to learn more about the world's most productive food system

Another Ag Day promotion piece said, "Before you complain about the high cost of food remember it's a mixed bag." It showed the contents of a shopping bag, including toothpaste, light bulbs, and other nonfood items usually bought at the supermarket and lumped into the food budget. The mixed bag showed how a consumer can spend \$40 on Tuesday and have nothing to eat by Saturday

"With inflation nipping away at him daily, the consumer looks for culprits and the farmer often becomes the target. Too often the shopper forgets that the farmer as well as food processors, packagers, transporters and distributors, also face inflated fuel, labor and equipment costs

In spite of rising food expenditures, which according to government reports have more than tripled in the last 20 years, food is still a bargain. If egg prices increased at the same rate as housing costs since 1958, eggs would cost over \$3.40 a dozen."

The Ag Day information goes on to point out that if milk prices increased at the same rate as housing costs in the last 20 years, milk would cost over \$4.50 a gallon. Compared to current prices, the average American family spends about 17 percent of its income on food, compared to 27 percent in Germany, 31 percent in England, and 32 percent in Japan.

Other Ag Days themes dealt with the need for chemicals in modern

agriculture, the cost and value of the many services provided by those supposed culprits the middlemen, and information that pointed out that cotton isn't cloth, corn isn't cereal, and sheep aren't sweaters.

A farm coloring book included in the kit provided something for the kiddies and also gave good basic agricultural information. Things like, "An acre of the farmer's land is nearly the size of a football field. With a large tractor and plow, a farmer can plow an acre the size of a football field in about 16 minutes." Or, "On one acre of land a farmer might grow enough wheat to furnish your family with bread for nearly 10 years."

Other interesting agri-facts: On an acre of ground, an American farmer might raise enough potatoes for your family to have French fries one meal every day for more than 20 years.

The hamburger meat from a single beef steer will make about 720 quarter-pound hamburgers - enough for your family to have hamburgers each day for nearly six months.

One pig that the farmer raises could furnish your family with about 20 pounds of bacon, 30 pounds of ham, 30 pounds of pork chops, and 80 pounds of other meat.

Those are just a few examples of the kind of coloring book information that was provided for the younger generation. I hope consumers take the Agriculture Day theme seriously when they sit down at their dinner tables and think a little about food - where it comes from, what it really costs, and how fortunate we are in this country to have such a bountiful supply,

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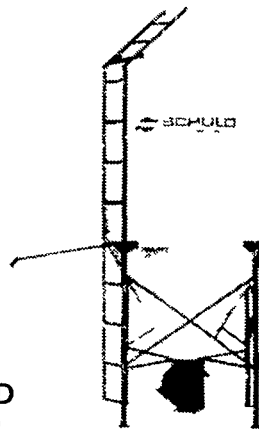
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