

Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

Crop farmers face an interesting dilemma this year. It centers around a continuing cost-price squeeze.

One economist I was reading recently was comparing the 1980 situation to that of the post-World War I era, when a cost-price squeeze and a collapsing world market turned into an economic disaster and triggered the start of the great Depression.

It may not be that bad, but some farmers are definitely worried. Prices for everything they need to grow crops have increased since last year. Fertilizer and fuel prices have shot up dramatically. Machinery prices continue their upward spiral. Even land rents are higher than last year, and prospects for corn and soybeans next fall don't look that encouraging.

It probably means the good managers who aren't borrowing a lot of high-priced money will still make a little profit. But those with expensive rented ground and lots of borrowed money start out in trouble.

There seems to be a kind of cautious optimism. Caution, because of the obvious economic facts of crop production, and optimism because they are farmers and it's spring. They're always optimistic during those first warm days when the tractors start rolling and they're plunged into the midst of what they do best.

That optimism is tempered this spring by

problems they know lie ahead. There's only so much belt tightening a farmer can do — and some of them have run out of notches.

Weakening grain markets, triggered by reductions in pork and poultry production and an uncertain world situation could mean even lower crop prices this fall. And that could spell disaster.

Farming is a strange business, unlike most others.

Plans are made in the winter that are virtually irreversible and unstoppable. Once a decision is made to till certain acres and plant certain crops the rest just follows in sequence — fertilizer, fuel, pesticides, seed — must be purchased. Equipment replaced and repaired.

When the ground warms up farmers go to the field with the hopes and plans of a long winter in their hip pocket and that look of eternal optimism on their faces. Then they watch as the bugs and the drought and the diseases and all the other plagues take their turn.

After all that, if there's anything left to harvest, they return to the field in a great flurry of activity designed to reap the crops that feed a hungry world.

Six months or more after those plans were set, they finally reach the reality of so many bushels in the bin and a market that will pay them

so much a bushel.

Sure, some can hold on and wait for better prices, but some need the money and must sell at whatever the price.

Those who hold on often find the price the next spring even less that it was at harvesttime. And the cost of storage must then be added to those other costs that have gone into the crop.

It's not an easy way to make money. Maybe that's why no more than four percent of the population has the kind of optimism and risk-taking ability to hang in there.

It looks as though 1980 will be a particularly important year for many farmers. The stakes are so high and the opportunity for loss so great that many will be unable

to make the cut. Even those who are well financed and are good managers will find this a difficult year.

Any kind of natural disaster, such as a prolonged dry spell or a wet fall, could turn it into a no-win year.

In spite of all these things,

farmers have returned to the fields, planting virtually every acre that's available with that same determined optimism that keeps farming strong.

Win, lose or draw, they're in for at least one more season.

HIGH PRESSURE WASHING OF POULTRY HOUSES AND VEAL PENS

BARRY L. HERR

1744 Pioneer Road, Lancaster, Pa.
Phone: 717-464-2044

LIQUID GLASS ITS WATERPROOF, ACID AND SALT PROOF

Apply like paint, when dry has a surface like porcelain.

Has lasted for 11 years in milk houses and still is in good shape

Some Uses:

- Poultry & Cattle water troughs
- Farrowing & Finishing Houses
- Water Proofing Basements
- Bunk Feeders
- Milking Parlors
- Mangers
- Use Instead of White wash

USDA APPROVED FOR MEAT PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS.

AT A FRACTION OF THE COST OF GLASSBOARD AND TILING!

LANCASTER CO.

J.B. ZIMMERMAN & SONS
Blue Ball & Strasburg, PA
717-354-4955

BRANDT'S SUPPLY INC.

601 E. High St.
Elizabethtown, PA
717-367-1221

LANCASTER & CHESTER CO.

LAPP'S HARDWARE AND DAIRY SUPPLIES
RD 4, Box 96, Loop Road
Quarryville, Pa. 17566
717-786-3970

BEDFORD CO.

BENCE FARM EQ.
Bedford, PA

BERKS CO.

LONGACRE ELECTRICAL SERVICE, INC.
602 Main St.
Bally, PA
215-845-2261

POTTER CO.

M & M BARN SALES
RD #1
Westfield, PA

MARYLAND

P & S EQUIPMENT INC.
3639 Grier Nursery Road
Street, MD 21154
301-452-8521

YORK & ADAMS CO.

PARADISE FARM & HOME CENTER
RD 1, Box 265
Thomasville, PA
717-225-1064

LEBANON CO.

HUBER'S ANIMAL HEALTH SUPPLIES
810 Tulpehocken Road
Myerstown, PA 17067

BRADFORD CO.

HARLAN MARTIN'S SURGE SALES
Troy, PA
717-297-3972

NORTHAMPTON CO.

ARTHUR MILLER SURGE DAIRY SUPPLIES
Wind Gap, PA
215-863-9712

FRANKLIN CO.

DON UPPERMAN DAIRY EQ.
1126 N. Franklin St.
Chambersburg, PA
717-264-6007

VIRGINIA

JOHN G. DALLAIN
RD 1 Box 113
Remington, VA 22734
703-439-3842

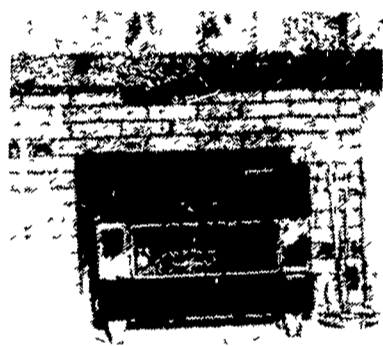
Direct Dealership Inquires to:

HORACE E. HEINDEL & SONS FARMS

Eastern Region Distributor
P.O. Box 3146, York, PA 17402
Call Jeff -717-755-8062

WANTED HOMEOWNERS WITH HIGH HEATING BILLS!

SURDIAC Coal Burning Stoves will comfortably heat your entire home for approximately \$150 to \$200 worth of coal during the entire heating season!*



• The most unique & maintenance free stove available today!

• Beauty, quality with minimal care and maintenance

ELMER L. STOLTZFUS

171 QUARRY ROAD, LEOLA, PA 17540

PH: 717-656-9041

NEE-LEE Corporation

- FARM BUILDINGS
- COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
- INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

The Steel Building Experts

Providing quality steel buildings at the lowest possible cost is our business. We have experienced people on staff who are well qualified to execute your building plans.

NEE-LEE BUILDINGS

- ★ For machinery storage
- ★ Livestock, crop storage
- ★ Farm shop
- ★ Combination uses

AUTHORIZED DEALER:

ZINN BUILDERS, INC.

1408 Marene Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17109
717-545-0231
Charles H. Zinn P.E.