

Dairy specialist promotes international exchange program

NEWARK, Del — Delaware extension dairy specialist Dr. George Haenlein believes in the value of international exchange programs. Born and reared in Germany, now a U.S. citizen, Haenlein himself has benefited from first-hand experience with two distinct ways of life.

He encourages his agriculture students at the University of Delaware to spend time working and studying abroad so they can find out how people on the other side have dealt with problems similar to their own.

Six University agriculture students will spend the summer in Germany doing just that. Five will live and work with farm families in South Germany, while one will work at the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Munich.

These six Delaware students are among a group of about 300 from the entire United States who will be working on German farms this summer. Some German students will be coming to U.S. farms as well, in an exchange program sponsored by the Student Government Association of the German Universities on the European side, and by interested individuals such as Haenlein on the American side.

Last year, as part of the same program, Haenlein found spots for four University of Delaware students in Germany and placed four German students on Delaware farms, to the delight of everyone concerned.

For years, Haenlein has also been encouraging University of Delaware students to spend a semester of study in Vienna, Austria. Twenty from the University, including three from the College of Agricultural Sciences, spent the recent spring semester there taking a standard 15 credit course load.

Though the classes were offered in English, the students still found the experience challenging.

"It's a maturing experience," Haenlein explains. "Many of these students have never been away from home before. Not only do they learn the subject matter, they also gain confidence by learning how to get around and communicate in a foreign environment."

For these reasons, Haenlein would like to see summer school for credit in Europe established as a regular study and/or training-abroad program of the University of Delaware.

Whether or not such a formalized program is ever established, sending American students to spend a summer working on German farms is an education in itself. There are real differences in the American and European ideas of farmer training.

In the United States, as long as someone has cash or bank credit, farming and most trades are easy to enter. For instances, if you can bake a cake, and you can find someone who is willing to buy it, you are in business as a professional baker.

In Germany, as in a number of other Old World countries such as Switzerland and Sweden, it can't happen that way. Before you can call yourself a farmer, a baker, a chimney sweep, or a cow milker you must survive a rigorous program of training, practical experience and certification examinations.

It's a system that dates back to the Medieval craft guilds, and it has few parallels in the United States.

Before a student can even enroll in most colleges of agriculture in German universities, he or she must have already had a specified amount of experience working on a farm, and not



University of Delaware animal science professor Dr. George Haenlein helps U. of D. students David Perry, left, and Larry Webber make plans for the summer. The two will be living and working on farms in Germany.

just any farm, but a certified farm.

In contrast, many University of Delaware agriculture students have had no prior agricultural experience. It isn't required.

In the United States, farmers generally milk their own cows, perhaps with some hired help. In Germany it's customary to hire a milker just to care for the animals. A professional milker would be like a subcontractor for the cows, being paid monthly by the farmer on the basis of performance.

Here's how one becomes a milker in Germany. (The system is similar for becoming a farmer or for entering any trade.)

First the young man or

promotion from private to private first class.

After another two or three years as a journeyman, the student may be admitted to the master's examination. Only those who pass this examination may go into business for themselves as milkers.

By the time German people can call themselves milkers, or farmers, or plumbers, Haenlein says, they know their trade inside and out. In America, the land of opportunity, he says, the young plumber you hire may be learning on your kitchen sink.

Also, in America, couples from big cities are free to try their hands at farming as long as they can find the money for land, machinery and supplies. They may not have the slightest idea of what they're doing, but they have every right to try.

That's why the extension service is a must in this country, Haenlein explains.

Those farmers with a lack of experience especially need the county agents and specialists to show them what to do. In Germany a farmer already knows the basics, so the German

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