

# Study says Pa. food system in trouble

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

HARRISBURG — "Pennsylvania's food system is in trouble."

This is a basic premise and conclusion of a study released this week in Harrisburg by Rodale Press, of Emmaus, publishers of "Organic Farming" and other magazines in the gardening and health fields.

At a news conference in the Capitol Building attended by Lt. Gov. William W. Scranton III, Robert Rodale said that the state's food production system is suffering from "Detroit Disease."

"Like Detroit that continued to build big cars after the end of the cheap energy era," Rodale said, "the Pennsylvania food system is turning out a product that requires more energy than is needed or wanted."

Title of the approximate \$30,000 study, funded and conducted by the Rodale organization, summarizes the alternative directions seen for Pennsylvania concerning food production. Title of the study is "The Pennsylvania Food System: Crash or Self-Reliance."

The study concludes that Pennsylvania is too dependent on the importation of food from as far away as California — a practice that not only needlessly drives up the cost but leaves Pennsylvania wide open to possible disruption in food supplies.

According to the study, Pennsylvania imports 73 percent of all of its food at an annual cost of \$8.4 billion dollars.

"A total of \$400 million is added to the cost of this food to pay just for its transportation into the state," Rodale pointed out.

The study also said that such food must be picked before it is ripe and thus comes into the state less tasty and nutritious than it might be if grown locally.

Another of the major problems facing the food system and Pennsylvania agriculture is the continuing loss of farmland due to development and soil erosion, the study emphasizes.

"Intensive chemical farming, with continuous planting of row crops and use of heavy equipment that compacts the soil is making the soil erosion problem even worse," according to the study.

"If the amount of land being farmed continues to decline as it has since 1950, Pennsylvania will have no farms by the year 2030 — a mere 50 years away."

The study stresses the vulnerability of the state food system due to supply disruptions that might be caused by such things as an oil embargo, a labor dispute or drought in Florida or California.

Among its major general recommendations, the study concludes that Pennsylvania must get started toward better food self-reliance.

"Pennsylvania can produce

much more of its own food," the study states, "and a good place to begin might be with vegetables."

"To produce all our vegetables within the state would require about 335,000 acres — 4.5 percent of our total farmland. Pennsylvania has the climate, soil types and land to be totally self-reliant in vegetable crops.

"What is perhaps needed more than anything to bring about this change are local markets so our farmers can be sure of selling their produce for a fair profit."

Other recommendations listed in the study to increase food self-reliance include expansion of the role of home gardens and an increase in local fertilizer production.

But the state can never become totally food self-reliant based on consumers' present diets.

The study points out that certain crops, such as oranges, bananas, rice, sugar, peanuts, coffee, tea and cocoa, can't be grown in the state and there isn't enough land to produce all the meat that is consumed.

"To meet all our food needs — with the exception of beef and items which cannot be grown here — would take approximately 4.6 million acres, about 60 percent of our total cropland," the study states.

"Just to produce all our beef locally would require about 9 million acres, 20 percent more farmland than the state has.

"But if we took the land left after meeting all our other food needs and grew beef on most of it and cut our consumption by 80 percent (to about 24 pounds per person yearly) and substituted wheat, potatoes and beans, Pennsylvania could be almost totally self-reliant."

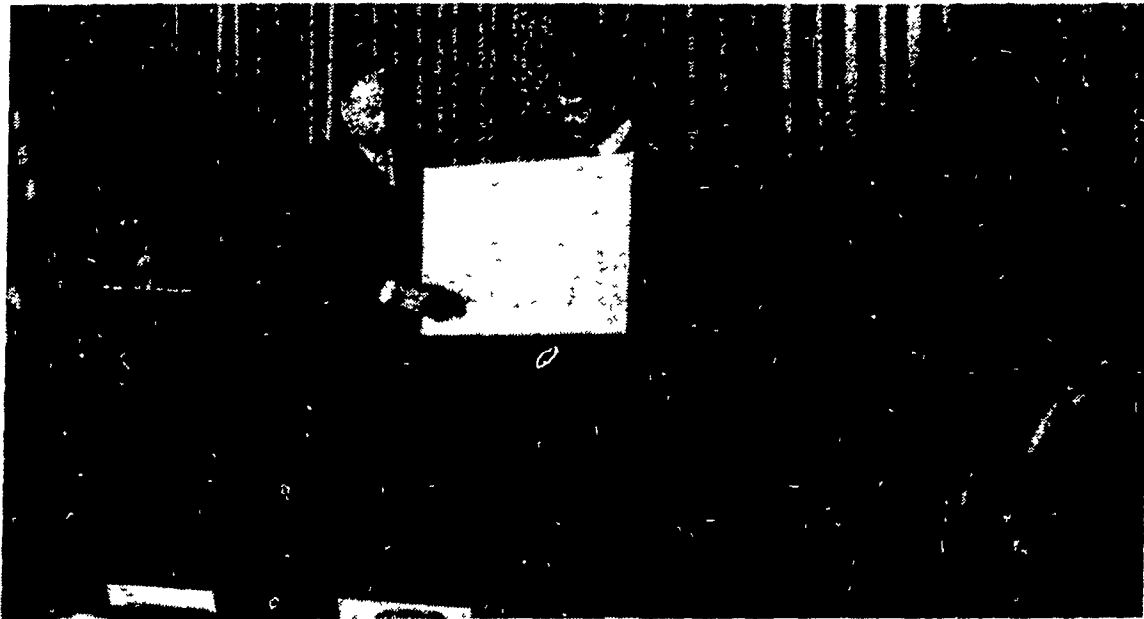
The study admits that total self-sufficiency is a questionable goal in itself. And perhaps the goals should be reducing food costs, averting the risk of supply unavailability when that risk is unacceptable and increasing the economic viability of Pennsylvania.

Concerning the cut in beef consumption mentioned in the report, the study says it shows one way that the state could cope with a serious food emergency.

Three major recommendations are outlined in the study to move Pennsylvania toward a more self-reliant food system "with its accompanying economic and nutritional benefits:"

— A state plan for a food system to increase self-reliance and economic viability while decreasing the potential for supply disruption.

— An emergency state plan for feeding Pennsylvanians during a supply disruption and "given the current state of international affairs, national economy and state vulnerability, not to formulate one soon would be irresponsible."



Graph tracing the declining number of farms in Pennsylvania is explained by Richard Harwood, left, director of the Rodale Press Organic Gardening and Farming Research Center; and Medard Gabel, director of the study, which states that Pennsylvania's food system is in trouble. Seated at the right is Robert Rodale, head of Rodale Press.

— A more active role by the Pennsylvania consumer in his or her own food system that will make the overall system more economical.

More definitive recommendations for a state food system plan include protection of all remaining prime farmland, strong incentive and enforcement of widespread and effective soil conservation programs, more incentives for farmers to produce a greater diversity of crops for local consumption, reorienting agricultural research into the era of more costly energy and preserve and strengthen the family farm in such ways as guaranteed state loans to beginning farmers with deferred or reduced payments until five years after start-up.

"The \$7.00 loaf of bread and the \$45.00 jar of instant coffee will be a fact by the end of this century unless we act now to protect our own farms," Rodale said in his opening remarks to the news conference.

And the study ends by stating: "If Pennsylvania is truly concerned about the condition and future of its food supply, then the state must be willing to spend the time and money to develop a realistic plan of action, and then to spend even more time and money to see this plan modified, accepted and implemented. The time to begin is now."



Head of Rodale Press, Robert Rodale, emphasizes the rising price of food expected for Pennsylvania if the state does not become more self-sufficient and the decline in farmland due to development and erosion is not checked. He said bread could reach \$7.00 a loaf by the end of the century.

## Donaldson wins Pa. FFA award

FAIRFIELD — David G. Donaldson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Guy F. Donaldson, R3, Gettysburg has been selected Pennsylvania State FFA Proficiency winner in Fruit Production, according to David W. Teets, advisor of the Mason Dixon FFA Chapter at Fairfield High School.

Each year the National FFA Foundation provides awards for members who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in 22



David G. Donaldson

different proficiency areas. Donaldson will receive a \$100 check and a certificate at the State Mid-Winter FFA Convention in January. He will also compete in the Northeast United States competition in July and if successful, will be eligible for National recognition at the National FFA Convention at Kansas City in November of this year.

Donaldson began his FFA career as a 9th grade student at Fairfield

High School in September of 1977 and during the same year earned the Star Greenhand Award.

During the following years he became a very active member of the local chapter serving as treasurer, vice-president and president. He also served as Adams County FFA President in 1979-1980.

Agronomy, tractor driving, farm mechanics, apple judging, project book and parliamentary procedure are some of the contests he was involved with on the county, area and state levels.

He served as both local and county delegate to the Pennsylvania and National Convention and received his State Keystone degree in January of 1980.

He has earned the Star Chapter Farmer Award, Leadership Award, Scholarship Award and the DeKalb Accomplishment Award as the outstanding senior of the Mason Dixon FFA Chapter.

Donaldson graduated in June of 1980 and is employed on his parent's fruit farm where he plans to continue his involvement in the fruit industry.

## Meeting covers solar energy on farm

HARRISBURG — A solar film festival will be held on May 6 by the South Central Pennsylvania Solar Energy Association.

The film festival is open to members of the Association and to the general public, and will feature films which range in topic from solar greenhouses to various uses of solar energy on the farm.

According to Paul Swartz, secretary of the Association's Board of Directors, the film festival is a good opportunity for local residents to learn more about solar energy and to meet others with similar interests.

Five films will be shown between 7:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., following the Association's business meeting at 7 p.m.

The meeting and film festival will take place at the York Bank, which is located at Sherman and Market Sts., York. A \$1 donation is requested to cover the cost of the films.

The schedule of films to be shown is as follows: 7:30 Solar Frontier; 8:05 Sun Builders; 8:35 The Solar Greenhouse; 9:05 Sun Power for Farms; 9:35 The Power to Change.

