

Getting started in farming

This is the first of six articles on how to get started in farming. Subsequent releases will appear on a weekly basis and will cover methods of getting a farm, choosing a farm, financing farm enterprises, managing finances and budgeting for financial changes.

NEWARK, Dela. — A lot of people think it would be really "neat" to get back to the land. There's something very appealing in the idea of owning a farm these days.

Perhaps it's because many of us are rather tired of the relative sameness of suburban life styles, the limited space, the traffic noises, the endless rushing about. By contrast, life on the farm seems blissfully serene and independent.

Farming does offer many satisfactions, but it also involves a lot of expense, a lot of hard work, and considerable financial risk, says University of Delaware Extension farm management specialist Don Tilmon.

Return on farmers' equity has

averaged less than five percent since 1960, he says. Land appreciation has been greater than 10 percent in Delaware and other mid-Atlantic states in recent years, making this an attractive investment. But land costs are high—ranging from \$1500 to \$3500 in many areas.

Many people think only of the production problems when they plan to get into farming. But farm production is market specific. "Production without marketing equals failure," warns Tilmon. "If you plan to produce perishable goods, your markets must be arranged in advance."

Evaluate the market possibilities carefully before you go into production. Take dairying, for example. Entry into most milk markets is somewhat restricted and involves securing the right to sell milk in a particular area. In some cases this may mean transporting milk a hundred miles or more. The transportation costs involved will reduce the potential

margin of return on your dairy enterprise.

For milk in Pennsylvania, and for vegetables, fruits and turf near metropolitan areas, there are sometimes opportunities to sell at the farm. Other market options include roadside marketing of fruits and vegetables. But this must be on a scale large enough to be commercially rewarding.

If, after carefully evaluating all the factors involved, you still think farming's for you, the next step is to acquire a farm. Next week Tilmon will discuss the various ways this can be done.

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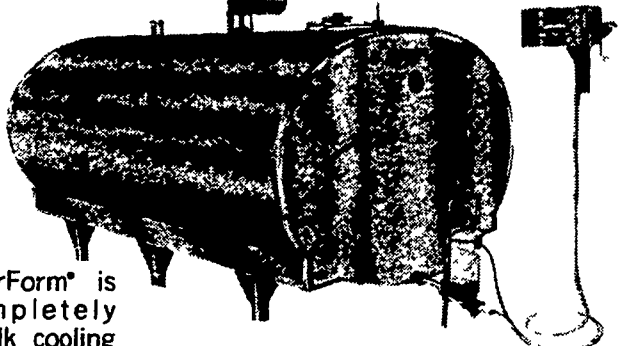
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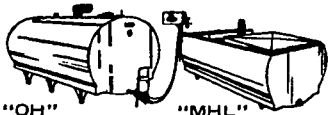
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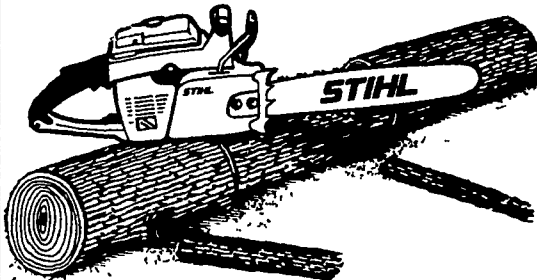
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