

Lehigh Valley Farms holds first annual meeting

ALLENTOWN — Atlantic Processing, Inc., a federation of dairy cooperatives that trades under the name of Lehigh Valley Farms, held its first annual meeting last Tuesday here at the Lehigh Country Club.

Officials of the organization reported sales of \$122 million and a net margin of \$907,000 for the first six months of the current fiscal year.

Chairman Alpheus L. Ruth, a Berks County dairyman, told the group that, in striking contrast to the national milk marketing conditions, API is not suffering from a milk glut. In fact, he said, the co-op "needs a lot more milk to keep the plants humming."

He noted API is adding considerable Class I fluid milk sales. "In the months ahead, API needs 90 to 100 million pounds of milk each month. Depending on the month we're talking about, that's 10 to 25 million pounds more than the members of the federation are committed for."

Ruth pointed out Lehigh Valley Farms is one of the members of API, accounting for about 60 percent of the federation's annual needs. He reported LVF is "on an aggressive drive to attract several hundred new members" and that the co-op leaders "recognize the opportunity to play an even bigger role in the federation by providing more milk."

Part of the selling message is that Atlantic guarantees a continuing market for the farmer's milk. Another is that API is making money — money they pass on to the bargaining cooperatives who ship milk to API in the form of patronage dividends.

Ruth added individual farmers are getting a distribution of cash in amounts averaging \$200. "These bonuses are welcome to farmers, especially in these times of galloping inflation," he said, citing labor costs, equipment costs, and "horrendous interest charges."

The Berks dairyman stated dairy farmers whose milk comes to API "are in a relatively happy position. They are in a marketing chain that is making money, and they are sharing in the proceeds."

He lauded belonging to an organization like API because it

gives bargaining co-ops the opportunity to grow, permitting them to prosper when there are wide-sweeping changes in government attitudes.

"The lower parity levels and the anticipated cutbacks in purchases by the CCC can be summed up this way," said Ruth. "The government is saying there will be more milk. If you want to make even more — then you sell it. Don't rely on Uncle Sam. Find your own markets. We have to be responsive to that attitude."

Ruth urged farm organizations to spend less time on internal affairs and spend more time developing markets and satisfying consumers.

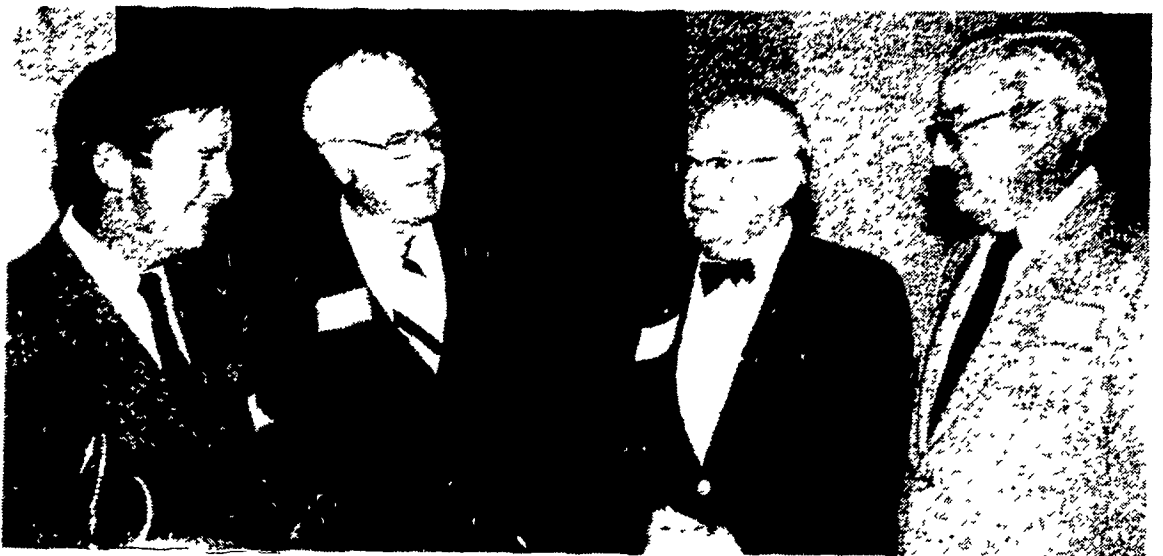
In summing up the current status of API and Lehigh Valley Farms, Ruth stated, "We have come a long way from the dark years and we believe we are in a position to make progress."

President Robert P. Barry predicted continued profits for the balance of the year, but at a slower rate in the third quarter. He described the federation's role as "filling the void left by proprietary dealers who have abandoned milk marketing because of a lack of commitment to the dairy industry. Because of stockholder pressure for profits, many dairy companies have been reluctant to make the capital expenditures needed for growth. API is willing to make the investment that will double or triple our business."

Barry and staff reported on API's marketing program in support of LITE, a lowfat milk. He disclosed the beginning distribution of LactAid, a specially digestible milk for people who are lactose-intolerant and have difficulty digesting milk. This ultra-pasteurized product will have an extended shelf life of 35 days.

The federation's ice cream operations were reviewed. According to Barry, the recently-introduced Lehigh Valley Farms all-natural ice cream has met with favorable consumer response in Pennsylvania and New Jersey markets.

In New York City, API acquired the production and marketing rights to the century-old Louis Sherry ice cream brand.



Discussing Atlantic Processing's and Lehigh Valley Farms' situation during the annual meeting held for the first time last Tuesday are: from left, Robert Barry, president;

Alpheus Ruth, chairman; Herb Forest, director of USDA dairy division; and Bart Patten, vice president, finance.

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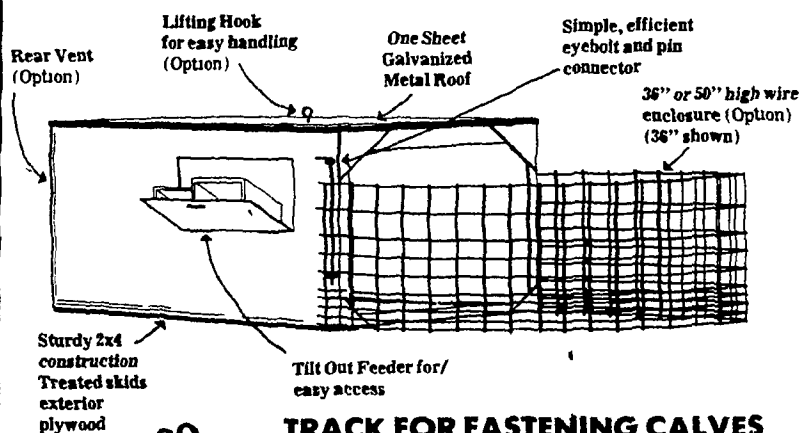
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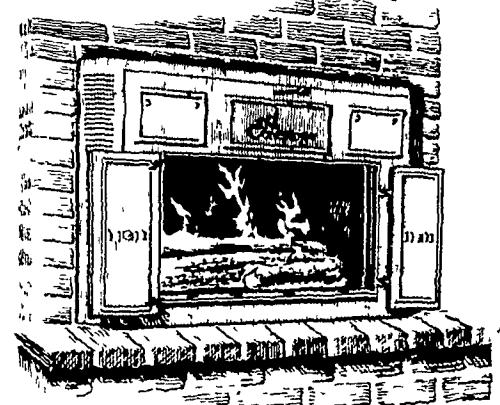
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