

Scene from Christmas Past



Remember those old-fashioned Christmases of years past.

The gifts beneath the tree are all conceived and crafted right in the home — a doll bed hand-hewn in the workshop; a homemade sled whose metal runners were formed from iron bands torn off a discarded farm wagon; dolls and stuffed toys sewed by the dancing light of the fireplace; a tin horn that will help welcome

the new year; and small wood trinkets, like a yo-yo or top, carved with a jack-knife and used as stocking stuffers.

Even the tree ornaments are hand-made from scraps of cloth and wood.

May this year's holiday season be as warm and happy as those fond memories of Christmas past.

Ag Area Security Act creates planning tool

UNIVERSITY PARK — The Agricultural Area Security Act was signed into law in June 1981, and allows local government to create agricultural areas within their communities.

Stanford Lembeck, Extension community housing and planning specialist at Penn State, says the act created a preservation tool by authorizing counties to purchase development easements.

"Generally speaking, a development easement is that portion of a landowner's property which gives him the right to develop his land for homes, stores, or factories," says Lembeck. The value of the development easement can be evaluated and separated from the value and use of the land for farm use. Paying a farmer the market value of his development rights while keeping the land available for agricultural production may help preserve farmland.

The act also calls for the local governing body, county commissioners, agricultural area advisory committee, and the Commonwealth Agricultural Lands Condemnation Board to review and approve farmland in the agricultural areas proposed to be taken by condemnation.

Lembeck points out the key features of the act:

- An "agricultural area" is

proposed by the owners of 500 or more acres of land suitable for agricultural production.

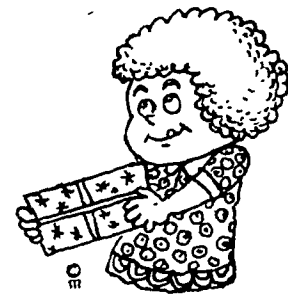
- Unconnected parcels of land may be included in an agricultural area.

- The program is locally based. The governing body of a township or borough creates the "agricultural area" after thorough evaluation by citizens, the local planning commission, and a local agricultural area advisory committee comprised of three active farmers, one local resident, and a member of the governing body.

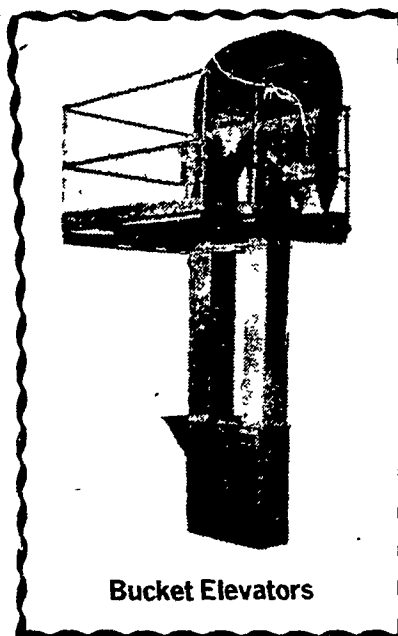
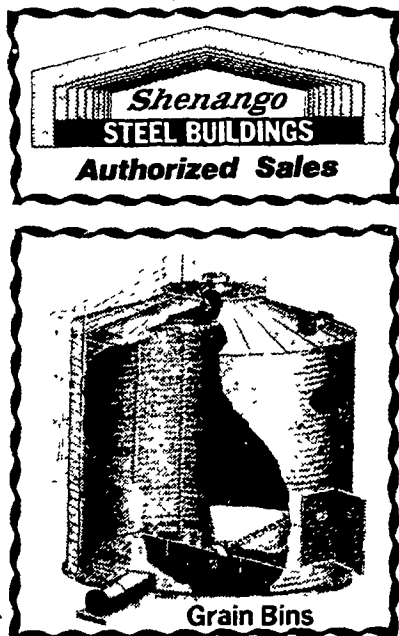
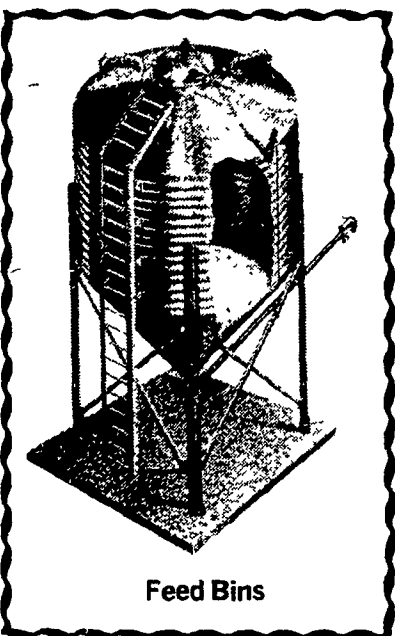
- Once an "agricultural area" is established, participation in it by landowners is voluntary.

- Each agricultural area has a lifetime of seven years, after which, it is reviewed to see if it should be continued or be terminated.

To benefit landowners who voluntarily participate in the program, local governments have been asked not to enact local laws or ordinances within the "agricultural areas" which would unreasonably restrict farm structures or farm practices. Commonwealth agencies are modifying their administrative regulations and procedures to encourage and enhance viable farming in these agricultural areas.



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