

Lancaster Farming

VOL. 27 No. 233

Four Sections

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, June 12, 1982

\$7.50 per year

Dairy farmers reject referendum

BY SHEILA MILLER

HARRISBURG — "I thought it would pass even though I knew it would be by a small margin," remarked a somewhat disappointed Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell Wednesday afternoon after his official announcement that dairy producers in the state had voted to reject a proposed milk marketing program. This proposal would have assessed 3/4 of one percent of farmers' milk checks for financing.

Hallowell's announcement brought to a close the 1 1/2-year effort by the Department of Agriculture to provide a promotion vehicle to increase sales and consumption of milk through research, education, and advertising.

Dairy farmers throughout the state cast their ballots determining the fate of the referendum from May 8 through May 22. During that period, 13,021 eligible producers voted either individually or through a milk cooperative's bloc vote. Bloc votes were cast in favor of the program. Hallowell reported.

When the final count was tallied by a teller committee composed of Glenn Ellenberger, Allentown, James Fink, Harrisburg, and Robert Stover, York, the number of farmers opposing the marketing program was 7,678, or 59 percent. Those voting in favor of the program numbered 5,343 or 41 percent, Hallowell announced.

By volume of milk production, the "no" vote totaled 335,534,663 pounds, or 54 percent; and the "yes" vote represented 287,037,687 pounds, or 46 percent.

Invalid or spoiled ballots accounted for 787 of the votes received but not used in determining the referendum's outcome.

After reciting the statistics of the vote tabulation, Hallowell expressed his appreciation to everyone who worked in disseminating the (milk referendum) information and trying to explain how this may or may not fit into the needs of the dairy farmers in improving their economic conditions.

"The extremely high number of ballots, representing 83 percent of the total eligible to vote, shows that

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Pa. Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell answered questions by television reporters on Wednesday afternoon following his announcement that farmers in the state voted down a proposed milk marketing program. Here he talks with WGAL-TV's Gene Shenk.

Governor signs key ag bills

HARRISBURG — Another full week for agriculture legislation came to an end, just as the state legislators were wrapping up their session for the year. And with the stroke of his pen, Governor Dick Thornburgh signed into law the Right to Farm and Milk Identification bills.

The signing of House Bill 1823, the Right to Farm bill introduced by Lancaster's Noah Wenger, and Senate Bill 149 sponsored by Senators Frank O'Connell (R-20th), Edward Helfrick (R-27th) and Patrick Stapleton (D-41st), took place in the Capitol Thursday morning, just two weeks after the bills' final passage from the House.

When signing the Right to Farm bill, the governor noted the im-

portance of this type of legislation in keeping Pennsylvania farmers in business. He stated that this legislation will help to ease the pressures felt by the agricultural community in the face of urban sprawl by protecting them from nuisance actions.

This law applies to farms that are operating within existing state and federal laws. It stipulates, however, that only those farms that have been operating satisfactorily for at least one year are protected. These farms must not be less than ten acres in size, or they must have an anticipated yearly gross income of at least \$5,000.

"I'm quite pleased that the law has finally been signed," stated

Rep Wenger. "I think it's an important step in our continuing effort to preserve the family farm."

Wenger added that he has been working on the concept of the Right to Farm legislation for almost 2 1/2 years. He recalled that he introduced the legislation during the 1979-80 session after hearing more and more reports that lawsuits were being brought against farmers by housing development residents in the country. Un-

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National dairy leaders present

surplus ideas to ag subcommittee

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. House Agriculture Subcommittee on livestock, dairy and poultry hosted an all-day hearing on Wednesday to sift through a number of ideas and proposals designed to remedy the dairy surplus.

There was an opportunity for all bills to be discussed, said Barry Piatt, aide to Congressman Tom Harkin (D-Ia) who is

chairman of the subcommittee. Piatt noted the hearing included testimonies from congressional sponsors of dairy support legislation, Deputy Agriculture Secretary Richard Lyng, dairy cooperative leaders, consumer groups and a two-unit panel from the National Milk Producers Federation.

All of the various proposals will

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Market loan plan to begin

HARRISBURG — Establishment of a \$1 million State Department of Agriculture program to help finance low-interest loans for improvement and construction of farmers' markets for the benefit of Pennsylvania's family farmers was announced Friday by Gov. Dick Thornburgh.

The Pennsylvania Farm Market Loan Program is designed to make low-interest loans available to farmers who wish to finance land, equipment and construction costs to establishment permanent direct marketing facilities.

"Improvement of marketing to support rural economic development and improve the quality of life for family farmers has been a priority of this administration," Thornburgh said.

The creation of the Farm Market Loan Program is the end result of cooperative efforts between the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and farm market organizations throughout

the state to make the best use of available state resources.

State Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell pointed out that the state is a national leader in the direct marketing of farm products.

Direct marketing insures a reliable market for farm products and keeps nearly \$150 million in local economies each year, Hallowell said.

Once the program is in full operation farmers interested in entering or expanding direct marketing operations could be eligible for 10-year loans at interest rates of one-half of the federal discount rate.

Individual farmers could receive loans up to \$25,000 and groups of farmers are eligible for \$50,000 loans. The interest rate will be variable and be set on January 1 of each year.

Program loans made during 1982 will be offered at six percent interest, which is one-half of the federal discount rate set on June 1

The state will finance up to 50 percent of the total loans in conjunction with approved funding institutions, such as local banks.

Loan requests will be considered by a five-member loan committee appointed by the secretary of agriculture after approval has been obtained by farmers from their lending institutions.

It is expected that the members of the loan committee will be named shortly and the loan applications processing can begin.

Pennsylvania is the leading state in the nation in the number of roadside farmers market facilities and is also tops in the direct marketing of milk.

The new loan program is made possible by rural rehabilitation assets from the U.S. Farmers Home Administration program of earlier years. The program will continue as a revolving fund similar to the program of the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority.



Joining Governor Thornburgh in the long-awaited signing of the "Right to Farm" bill, HB 1823, are Noah Wenger, representative from Lancaster County and prime sponsor of the bill; Dennis Grumbine, hog farmer from Lebanon County; and John Barley, dairy farmer from Lancaster County. The bill signed Thursday at the Capitol, is designed to protect farmers against nuisance ordinances and law suits.