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Pa. producers dissect dairy plan; seek delay

BY DONNA TOMMELLEO
LANCASTER — At the unanimous request of a few dozen dairy leaders and individual producers, Tuesday, Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell announced he will petition the U.S. Agriculture Secretary John Block for a "substantial" delay in implementing the 50-cent price support assessment to give the state industry time to explore viable alternatives.

The move followed a two-hour discussion here designed to provide groundwork for alternatives to the amended price support program, slated to take effect Dec. 1, 1982.

"I am concerned that this program does not provide a solution to the dairy surplus problem in Pennsylvania or across the nation," Hallowell said.

The amended program freezes the support price at \$13.10 until 1984. Meanwhile, producers will be assessed 50 cents per hundredweight of milk sold beginning December and a second 50 cent check-off will occur in April if government purchases exceed 7.5 billion pounds of milk equivalent.

The secretary pointed out the federal program offered no attempt to increase consumption. Additionally, he added that Farmers' Home Administration "will not put new dairy businesses in operation nor fund large expansions." However, he noted transfers of existing operations will continue to be eligible for low-interest loans.

The federal program, said Hallowell, may help the government with its cash flow program but "doesn't do a whole lot for dairy farmers."

Much of Tuesday's testimony supported Hallowell's observations. It was no secret among those present that a large number of producers have indicated they will offset the deduction by adding more cows.

From many at the meeting came the plea, "Why blame northeast producers? Tax those who have significantly contributed to the surplus."

John York, an agriculture consultant, reported that Wisconsin increased production last year by 75 million pounds while the entire northeast in-

creased only one third of the Wisconsin hike.

"CCC purchases made in the Northeast are relatively small in comparison than those in other areas," York said.

"The program is in place. There's not much you can do about it," York added. "But there has been some talk about regionalizing the deduction."

York argued the assessment will not have as great an effect on Midwest producers for some are receiving up to a 37-cent per hundredweight premium in certain markets.

The meeting, which included representatives from the state's major dairy co-ops, farm associations as well as individual producers, ran the gamut of suggestions, criticisms, questions and concerns.

Hallowell was asked whether or not funds collected from the program could be ear-marked for promotion and advertising.

The Secretary noted such action required legislation but that the USDA may be receptive to the idea of a matching fund.

Raymond Diebold, a Dairy Area representative, expressed concern

that monies collected will end up in the CCC general account.

"How do we know that money will not be used buy more grain bins?" Diebold queried.

While some testifiers re-introduced the idea of a quota system, others argued against, suggesting the only way to dig out

(Turn to Page A33)



Being swamped in a sea of heifers, like Dauphin County dairyman Ray Kennedy, may not be an unusual situation for many dairy producers in the months ahead. As the federal 50-cent deduction looms closer, more and more dairymen have indicated they will keep their surplus animals or add cows to offset the difference. Ray Kennedy and his brother Dale are no exception. Read their story on page A26.

Annual Farm City Week 'cultivates' fun at Mall

LANCASTER — Lancaster County's annual Farm City Week, Oct. 18 through 23, officially opened Monday evening with a ribbon cutting by several dignitaries from the area, at the Park City Mall — site of all the scheduled activities.

On hand to introduce shoppers to the farmer's life, were Congressman Bob Walker, Lancaster Mayor Art Morris, Senator Clarence Manbeck, County Commissioner James Huber and

(Turn to Page A28)



Ahhh. From one member of the animal kingdom to another, comes a kiss and a pat on the head for a job well done at the Annual Lancaster Farm City Week's milking contest, Thursday night, at Park City. Z-Bear from Z-107 Radio earned a third place position after attempting to milk Irene the Holstein as hundreds of shoppers watched.

Potatoes, good but costly year

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ
LANCASTER — Pennsylvania potato growers seem to have ambivalent feelings concerning their crop this year.

On one hand is Howard Featherman, general manager of Pennsylvania Cooperative Potato Growers, declaring that, "this year we'll have the best potatoes in the nation."

But harboring a somewhat adverse opinion is Keith Masser, Stermann Masser Packhouse of Sacramento, Pa., and second vice president of the Pa. Potato Growers, who says it will cost him approximately \$1,200 this year for an acre of potatoes, although this figure does include interest payments on land and machinery. He expects to reap only \$1,000 to \$1,100 an acre.

Even the potato chip companies, an otherwise dependable market for Pennsylvania potatoes, have expressed opposite feelings toward using the local crop.

Mike Rice, president of UTZ Potato Chips, said during a May 1 interview, "The chip potatoes in Pennsylvania have not been advancing in recent years. . . We used to get all our potatoes from the York and Lancaster areas. Now we have to have potatoes shipped in from Western New York and North Dakota from late April to mid-October."

But Al Gizenski, buyer for Wise Potato Chips of Berwick, known as the largest potato chip company in the world under one roof, says he purchases a good percentage of Pennsylvania-grown potatoes, adding, "We see no problem with them. We buy them."

While opinions may differ and

attitudes remain inconsistent, figures for this year's potato crop show a very favorable year, as predicted by Featherman.

According to Laurie Anderson, public relations representative with The Potato Promotion Board in Colorado, Pennsylvania production is increasing, having moved from 16th ranking in the nation to the 'lucky' position of 13 within the last few years.

The Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service reports that 90 percent of the potato crop was harvested by Oct. 10, with 25,000 of the 26,000 planted acres being harvested. Since one acre of potatoes will produce approximately 25,500 pounds of potatoes, according to Anderson, this brings Pennsylvania's total to 637.5 million pounds. Compare this to the number one ranking potato state, Idaho, who weighs in at 9.633 billion pounds; and second place Maine who will see production figures of 2.5 billion pounds this year.

Another potato factor that neither side will dispute, is that the industry needs to improve their reputation as well as their quality. For though they are expecting 'the best crop in the nation this year,' the challenge is to have a consistently good crop, according to Featherman.

Currently, research at Penn State under the direction of David MacKenzie, research director and plant pathologist, is being conducted to find better ways to grow potatoes and to store them and to improve their quality.

MacKenzie heads the Potato Seed Farm at Black Moshannon, Centre County, which is funded by

growers' assessments, potato chip companies, agrichemical companies and federal and state grants. The farm was built to produce elite potato seeds and varieties that would help state growers compete in a highly competitive national industry.

Zane Smilowitz, professor at Penn State, says in reference to the research, "The number one problem is upgrading our storage. But we're working on quality too. We're trying to reduce the cost of the product and improve the production since we have the advantage of being near the markets."

Also on the positive side, the more than 300 Pennsylvania potato growers voted last spring to pass a referendum doubling their penny per hundredweight assessment, saving the 5-year-old research program.

As for the reputation of the Pennsylvania potato as it tries to

(Turn to Page A25)

**Farming
in a
shadow**



First in a series

Page A22