

Adams County farmers: We're all in this together

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

YORK SPRINGS — "We're all farmers first and second we're in beef, poultry, dairy or whatever."

With this common realization, a group of Adams County farmers representing all kinds of commodities met last Monday night and agreed to continue to meet to attempt to get a better handle on problems that affect all of them.

Meeting in the Bermudian Springs High School cafeteria, the group singled out four priorities of concern they want to look into initially. They are:

—Foreign investment and how it appears to make all kinds of financial investments in agricultural areas without concern for immediate return, seemingly trying to wait out the smaller independent producers who will fall by the wayside.

—More farmer input into product marketing and distribution of commodities after they leave the farm, particularly in the area of contracts.

—Having a hand in improving the competitive position of U.S. farm products in world markets.

—And, exerting pressure on Washington to devise a sound, long-range farm policy instead of

trying to move from crisis to crisis with every-changing ag programs.

Moderator of the farmer forum discussion at Bermudian Spring High School Monday night was Barry Oswald, vo-ag teacher. Also present was Bill Murray, of the Adams County Extension Office, a couple of Penn State representatives, as well as Farm Credit and about 20 or so farmers.

The forum grew out of continuing concerns in Adams County about the future of agriculture, beginning with German investment in poultry and culminating in the difficulties with the Milk Security Fund and Mandata Poultry Processing, which has economically hit some area farmers very deeply.

The group set up some sub-committees to look into each of their areas of major concern and set the groundwork of continuing discussion at later meetings. They group will next get together on Monday, June 13, at 7:30 p.m. in the Bermudian Springs High School cafeteria.

A lot of frustration was expressed at the session at the German investment in the poultry industry in the county.

"They have enough money to last six years and it seems like they're trying to push the little guy out," one farmer said.

"And then, they'll have control of everything."

Discussion also included reference to production controls, with farmers getting together to determine what can be produced at a fair profit and then getting the government to set controls accordingly.

Bitterness was expressed at ag imports which are subsidized by

other countries and then undercut domestic production costs.

PIK was singled out by the group as another of the federal government's last-minute ag crisis programs that will likely backfire at a cost of many billions of dollars.

The farmers want more say in the contracts they enter and expressed disfavor with such things as price fixing in the egg industry.

The group stressed that farmers themselves must get involved and take the lead in attempting

solutions to their problems.

They invited farmers from other parts of the state to similarly get involved.

As one farmer who's a former Mandata grower said:

"Until farmers learn to work together, they're going to have problems."

"Why two weeks before Mandata canceled their contracts, you couldn't get the growers together."

"Until farmers start sticking together, there will be more Mandata's."

Cooper joins ABC

LANCASTER — Staff writer Sylvia Cooper will be leaving Lancaster Farming to join Atlantic Breeders Cooperative, effective Monday. She will be visiting dairymen throughout the state to evaluate cattle under ABC's Linear Mate Program.

Under this program, cows are evaluated on 15 traits, on a scale of one to 50 and mating suggestions are given using ABC's bulls. The information about each bull's

daughters is then compiled on a computer so that comparisons can be made on different sires within the same herd.

Ms. Cooper received a B.S.

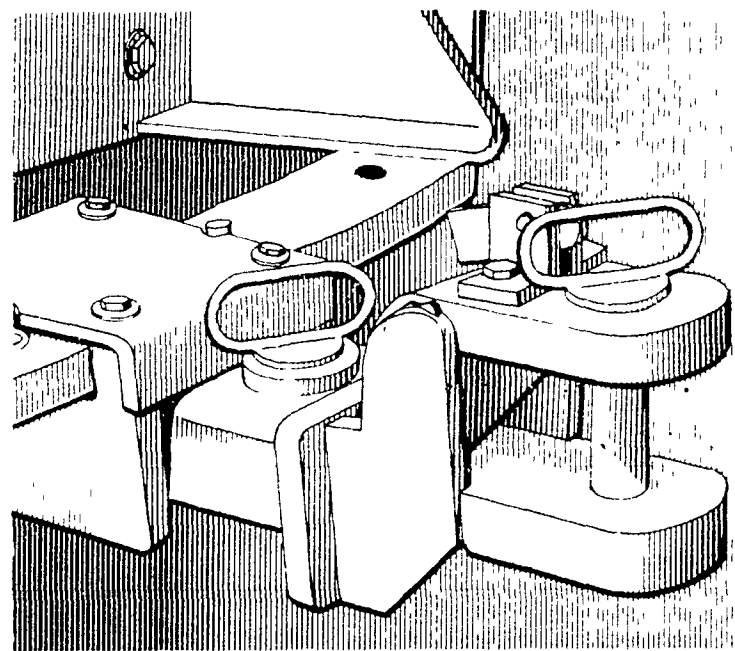
degree in dairy production from Penn State in 1982 and was an active member in the Dairy Science Club. She was raised on a registered Holstein farm near Slippery Rock.



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