



Panel members on ag's future at York include, from the left, David Wolf, Sperry New Holland; Bill Fleet, Pioneer Hi-Bred International; and Gene Swackhamer, Farm Credit Banks of Baltimore.

## York Agri-Business seminar looks to future

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

YORK — Some of January's worst, weatherwise, may have cut attendance at this year's annual York Agri-Business seminar, but enthusiasm from a trio of forward-looking speakers warmed the ag imaginations of those attending the meeting at Avalong's Restaurant.

Focusing on the theme "Agriculture in the Future," York Extension Service and the Chamber of Commerce co-sponsored the 21st annual session that brings together farmers and ag-business industry representatives.

Speakers looking to the future of the food production industry were Gene Swackhamer, president of the Farm Credit Banks of Baltimore, Dave Wolf, market research manager for Sperry New Holland, and William Fleet, eastern regional agronomist for Pioneer Hi-Bred International. Swackhamer offered a bit of the classic bad news, good news commentary, with the speculation that, while interest rates are expected to climb over the next year, the increase is likely to be limited to one or perhaps one and one-half percent by 1985.

"We have probably experienced the floor, or near floor, of interest rates, and will see upward pressure in the future," he projected. "Politicians are not likely to create lower interest rates, even in his election year."

With interest considered the third highest input in farmers' budgets, the Farm Credit administrator suggested that producers get in touch immediately with their lenders to establish lines of working credit.

The government's \$190 billion deficit continues to play a major role of influence over the nation's interest rates. While approximately 30 percent of that national debt is currently financed by foreign money, Swackhamer believes that the continuing strength of the U.S. Dollar will likely cause the volume of that investment to diminish.

If - or when - that foreign investment is withdrawn, government debt will need other sources of financing, putting the squeeze on market interest rates as the government competes for funds with domestic borrowers.

According to the Baltimore district bank president, Paul Volker of the Federal Reserve has warned that there will be no more credit crunches, just higher interest rates, since a tight rein on the volume of the nation's money supply means keener demand for the limited amounts of capital available.

David Wolf, Sperry New

Holland's manager for market research, noted that computers will undoubtedly be a tool of the future including the use of these microchip aids to "tape" harvesting at various speeds and conditions to determine the most efficient machine techniques.

Ridge tillage equipment will aid in conserving and utilizing every last drop of moisture available to a crop, likely moved through fields powered by a fuel of the future, gasohol.

Alfalfa croppers could anticipate the day when they no longer have to keep one ear to the weather station and one eye on the sky, if crop passing machines described by Wolf become commonplace.

Such equipment could harvest hay crops in all weather conditions, even rain, wringing out the dry matter for high quality forages with less spoilage, while making available "green juice" for protein additives, and "brown juice" that could be recycled into fields.

But such futuristic cropping and harvest methods will still have their roots in some of agriculture's proven basics, according to Pioneer regional agronomist Bill Fleet.

Fleet sees science going back to such basic conservation practices as crop rotation, but with a better understanding of just why these methods work as well as they do.

Geneticists are expected to continue improving plant systems efficiency, through breeding nitrogen-fixing capabilities into such species as wheat and barley, and developing greater water usage efficiency in alfalfa strains.

Seeds will commonly be treated with systemic materials, using time release fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides for long-term plant protection and growth stimulation.

Electrode equipped sprayers may someday utilize positive or negative electric charges that would cause spray solutions to better adhere to plant foliage.

In a science known as "allelopathy," natural chemical toxins, produced by the roots or foliage of certain plants known to limit other species from growing around them, may be incorporated in food crops and fiber to prohibit undesirable plants from springing up. Plants would, in effect, be self-weeding.

Following their individual presentations, the trio of speakers was teamed with moderator John Smith for a question-answer panel discussion.

Also featured on the program was a film, "Agri-America 2003 A.D.," produced by the Production Credit Associations of the Farm Credit system.

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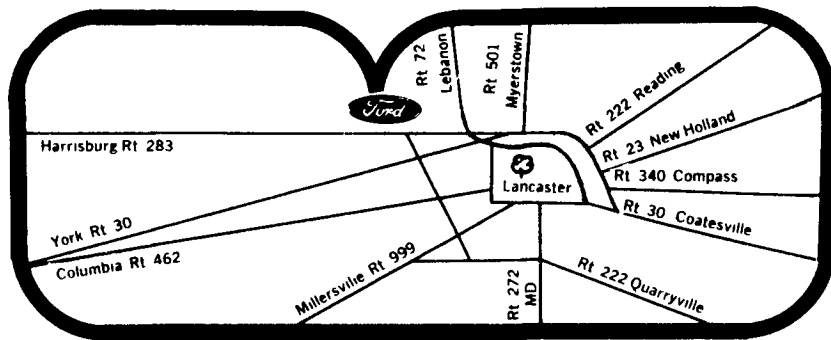
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