

OUR READERS WRITE, AND OTHER OPINIONS

Farmers need group support

Dear Editor:

Over the past few decades, the automobile has placed most of the best cropland of the United States within commuting distance of large cities. This fact has made it possible for people to experience the best of both worlds: the natural beauty of the countryside and the cultural and job opportunities of the city. Unfortunately, people who work in the city but live in the country for the most part do not farm the land which they live on. Therefore, our valuable cropland is needlessly being lost as more and more houses are being built upon it.

An article in the May 1980 issue of the "Saturday Review" states that every day twelve square miles of America's farmlands vanish forever. Although urbanization is not responsible for all loss of farmland, it takes a large amount of land away from farming. Between 1967 and 1975 approximately 6.2 million acres of cropland were urbanized. This may seem like a small amount if we consider the fact that the United States has about 400 million acres of cropland. However, we must remember that the amount of productive farmland is finite and the demand for residential land is growing. By 1980, it was estimated that approximately 1.7 million acres of farmland were being lost annually.

What is causing farmers to give in to the pressures for urbanization of their cropland? A major factor has been the increase in land value. This has resulted in the fact that a person can often make more money by selling his land than by farming it. The high cost of land is also preventing young people from buying farms. Therefore, farmers are often willing to sell their land at tremendously high prices to developers instead of being satisfied with selling at a lower cost to fellow farmers. There are ways, however, that farmers can fight against and even halt ur-

banization of cropland and not be forced to face serious financial setbacks.

A major way for farmers to deal with the problem is to encourage one another not to allow their croplands to be eaten up by housing developments. Group support is much needed in agriculture. Farmers should seriously consider selling lands at lower costs to fellow farmers because this practice will ensure the continuation of agriculture. And they can feel satisfaction knowing that some of God's good earth has been preserved. Farmers who feel that they should receive high prices for their land regardless of the buyer should consider setting up legal agreements whereby fellow farmers who may not be able to pay the high price immediately will be able to make payments on the land over a longer period of time. It is only common sense for farmers to show one another preferential treatment in order to protect one another and agriculture just as unions protect their members and their occupation.

Another program which some counties and states have adopted is the purchasing of development rights. The difference between the value of a piece of land used for agriculture and its value as residential or commercial real estate establishes the price of that land's development rights. The farmer must ask the state or county to buy his rights from him. If his request is granted, the farmer retains the title to his land but neither he nor subsequent owners are allowed to urbanize the land. This not only benefits the farmer and saves precious farmland but also saves the state or county in the long run from building and repairing new roads to the new housing developments. Farmers who encourage their politicians to begin or continue such programs on a larger scale along with providing tax credits to farmers

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Middle Atlantic Order Market Administrator Joseph D. Shine announced recently a Class I milk price of \$14.84 per hundredweight for April 1984. This price is up one cent from March but is 53 cents below last April's Class I price.

Order No. 4 prices are announced for milk testing 3.5 percent butterfat f.o.b. plants located within 55 miles of Philadelphia, and also within 75 miles from the nearer of Washington, DC or

and establishing zoning laws which prohibit or restrict development on agricultural land are helping themselves and agriculture.

The threat of urban expansion is real, but it can be overcome. Farmers must be aware that they can stop the process, and they must if agriculture is to survive. Not only does the United States but also foreign countries are depending on the farmers to take a stand now because only agriculture on productive land can produce the food which humans need in order to survive.

Sincerely yours,
Patti J. Sager
R2 East Berlin

Class I milk price \$14.84 for April

Baltimore, Md. There is also a six-cent direct-delivery differential applicable to producer milk received at plants located within 55 miles of Philadelphia.

Shine announced a Class II milk price of \$12.10 per hundredweight for February 1984 and a butterfat differential of 16.2 cents for the month. Both the Class II price and the butterfat differential were unchanged from January.

The April Class I price and the February Class II price are based on the February 1984 Minnesota-Wisconsin manufacturing milk price of \$12.06 per hundredweight at a 3.5 percent butterfat content.

The USDA reported that the wholesale price of Grade A butter

at Chicago for February was \$1.4125 per pound and the nonfat dry milk price was \$.9105 per pound, f.o.b. plants in the Chicago area.

Now is the Time

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distributed according to the In-trastate Laws of Pennsylvania. These laws may not distribute your estate according to your desires. This has often happened in the past and there is little that can be done about it without a will.

We urge all family heads, and property owners to contact a lawyer and have him help with making a will. The cost will be considerably less than settling an estate without a will. There is some very good information dealing with "wills" in the "Estate Planning" bulletin available at any Extension office. The Extension Service is an affirmative action equal opportunity educational institution.



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