

PFA calls for market-oriented Farm Bill

SYRACUSE — The development of a new four-year national farm program beginning in 1985 is the key challenge facing agricultural organizations this year, according to Keith Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA).

Eckel made the observation this week during an address to the National Policy Development Conference of the New York Farm Bureau attended by over 100 county Farm Bureau leaders.

New York Farm Bureau is a sister organization of PFA, a voluntary, general farm organization which represents over 22,800 farm families in Pennsylvania. Both organizations are affiliated with the nationwide American Farm Bureau Federation.

Eckel said new farm programs should be fashioned to avoid past mistakes and yet be flexible enough to adjust to changing times.

Overall the 1985 farm bill should be market-oriented, Eckel said, to allow supply and demand, rather than the government, to determine commodity production levels and price.

Eckel elaborated, "Because Pennsylvania is ranked the fifth largest dairy state and because over 12,000 PFA members are dairy farmers, our association has a particular interest in the dairy program that will be contained in the 1985 farm bill. We believe the purchase of dairy products by the Commodity Credit Corporation to be a proven and essential stabilizing mechanism for the dairy industry. But never again must we allow the price to be supported at a level that encourages farmers to

produce for an artificial market. PFA favors a system where the dairy price support level would be automatically adjusted according to the amount of net dairy products purchased by CCC."

Loan rates for farm commodities should be flexible enough to allow the U.S. to remain competitive in the world grain export market, Eckel said. Target prices should be continued in the new farm bill, Eckel said, but should also be market-oriented.

"Farm policy should allow farmers to take advantage of market opportunities without worrying about government in-

terference at home and abroad," Eckel told the county farm leaders, "American agriculture, if not restricted by government control, will continue to meet the needs of this nation and a large portion of the world." PFA believes that free and fair trade should be protected by the 1985 farm bill, Eckel said.

Another area that should be addressed in the upcoming farm bill debate, Eckel said, is fair marketing practices between producers and buyers. "Farmers" he said "must be able to join together to obtain a fair price for

their products in order for a market-oriented agriculture to function properly." Fair marketing legislation should include the following, Eckel said, "First, it should establish procedures for defining bargaining units. Second, it should establish accredited associations to bargain as exclusive agents for all producer-members of bargaining units. Third, it should establish good faith bargaining between accredited associations and handlers/processors. Fourth, it should establish minimum requirements and rights in the operation of accredited

associations. Finally, it should establish guidelines for resolving bargaining impasses by mediation and arbitration by a joint settlement committee utilizing the principal of last best offer selection."

Eckel reminded the farm leaders, "The 1985 farm bill is a very complicated subject with many varieties to be considered. All commodities and their support programs are inter-related and change in one program should be made only after careful consideration of the impact it will have on all other commodities and their programs."

Prompt poultry payments urged

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A spokesman for the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association last week testified in support of national legislation to guarantee prompt payment from processors for poultry growers.

Robert Weaver of R1, Winfield, Snyder County, expressed the statewide farm organization's support for the legislation during a hearing of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry in Washington, D.C.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R - PA) introduced the bill, S. 2997, earlier in the week to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act which provides payment security for livestock producers. S. 2997 would require poultry processors to pay growers within 30 days unless they have agreed to different provisions under a separate contract.

Weaver told the subcommittee that, "The recent trend of con-

solidation of processors and wholesale purchasers into fewer, large-scale operations had made it increasingly difficult for poultry producers to effectively bargain for prompt payment and payment security in the raising and delivery of poultry."

Weaver told the committee that he personally lost thousands of dollars because the processing company he was raising poultry for began falling behind in payments from two weeks after delivery until the delay reached four months before the company

finally declared bankruptcy last year and went out of business. "The processing company was able to do this," Weaver said, "because the contract we had to enter into did not provide for a maximum time period for the payment of the poultry we deliver."

In addition, Weaver said, because the poultry producers did not have a payment timetable they were placed on a lower payment priority while the processor met other financial obligations.

"This is not the end of the story,"

Weaver said, "The bankruptcy of the processing company forced me to seek another market for the poultry I would raise. I had to search six months before I could find another company to market my poultry. Since I had no market for my poultry, I had to go through this entire six month period without receiving any income."

PFA is seeking payment for poultry producers within 15 days of delivery and establishment of their status as first-line creditors in bankruptcy actions.

Greenhouse seminar on Oct. 16

NANTICOKE — The Annual Northeast Greenhouse Seminar will be held at the Luzerne County Community College Conference Center, Nanticoke Tuesday, Oct. 16, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Raymond Sheldrake's, W.R. Grace Co. topic will be the

Geranium Story. He will also end the day with a question and answer period.

Gordon Gleason, President of Gleason Industrial with talk about Mechanization of the Greenhouse and Thomas Bidgood and Harry Anthony both of Monsanto will

discuss Energy Saving Greenhouse films. Richard I. Diamonte, W.R. Grace Co will talk about Soil Mixes and Fertility

According to Al Skala, Extension Agent, reservations are due in the Luzerne County Extension Office no later than Monday, Oct. 8



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