

Penn State Extension enters computer age

UNIVERSITY PARK — In just 5 months, the Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service has lifted its massive, statewide organization—including hundreds of extension workers with expertise in most anything but computers—into the computer age.

Using a \$1.9 million grant appropriated by the state in July, the extension has already installed 97 microcomputers in its 67 county and four regional extension offices around the state and at University Park, trained at least some of the staff in each office and developed teams of troubleshooters and software developers.

Specialized programs ranging from sizing dairy ventilation systems to monitoring local government trends are already under development by extension agents and specialists throughout the state.

Eventually, the microcomputers will be linked to a mainframe computer at Penn State's College of Agriculture, providing instantaneous access to a vast store of expertise and information.

Three years in the planning, the aim of the Pennsylvania Extension Computer Project is "to extend the educational power of the extension service," Thomas O. Mincemoyer, project coordinator of extension computer services, says.

As soon as approval came from the state legislature in July, the program shifted into high gear. County agents came to Penn State to attend two-day computer training sessions, returning to their home offices with Macintosh microcomputer systems in hand.

"We're not pioneers in this field, but I think we'll have a very up-to-date network," Mincemoyer says, proclaiming it an extension computer system that places Pennsylvania among the nation's leaders. "We'll be one of the first states to have powerful microcomputers in every county

that can be used as either stand-alone computers or as terminals to our own mainframe."

"These computer resources will also provide the framework for the College of Agriculture to build enhancements into its research and resident instruction programs," he adds.

A team of 10 extension agents are acting as computer support agents, and university personnel are "guaranteeing a 15-minute response" to computer questions from the offices in the counties.

Another 15 agents—with specializations in a wide range of extension areas and additional computer training—are creating software designed for the four extension program areas—agriculture, family living, community development and natural resources and 4-H/youth.

"If one agent solves a problem, that means 66 others can now, too," Mincemoyer says. Penn State's University Park campus will serve as a distribution center for the software, offering newly developed programs to all counties.

Claudia Cross, home economist for Bucks County, is one of the agents creating software for the microcomputers. "I feel really positive about this," she says. People in the counties are very interested in the program because of its two-fold benefits. "We can work more efficiently and also use computers as an educational tool."

Nancy Wagner, a family resource management agent in the Southwest Regional Office in New Kensington is one of the 10 agents around the state who became a regional computer support agent.

"The situations I've encountered so far have been positive," she says. "It seems that, at this point, what we need are even more computers."

Wagner takes her Macintosh computer on the road three or four days a week to nine southwest

counties, answering staff questions and preparing the offices for the future use of the computers as resource tools to aid the public.

When the network goes on line with a toll-free telephone line linkup in March 1985, the benefits will be immediate.

"Extension agents are viewed as sources of unbiased, progressive information," Mincemoyer says, "and if they want to maintain that status, they need access to com-

puter technology." Agents will use the network for instantaneous electronic mail and even as a bypass to the telephone, since the computer linkup can be conversational.

Besides using the network as an internal linkup, the users may also be able to obtain immediate weather and market reports by the means of an information retrieval system. "An agent can be hooked to Chicago to access current

pricings," he says.

By the time the project is completed in June 1985, over 200 Macintosh and 35 Apple IIe computers will have been purchased and installed. More than 600 staff will receive hands-on computer training. A communications network will be operating. And the Pennsylvania Extension Service will have enhanced its status as a national leader in education.

Frozen dessert regulations revised

HARRISBURG — As part of its commitment to consumer safety and industry awareness, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has revised its regulations governing the production and sale of frozen desserts in the commonwealth, according to state Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell.

"The frozen dessert industry has grown tremendously since the Pennsylvania Frozen Desserts Law was enacted in 1965. These amendments to the existing law were necessary to maintain the high quality that our products have become known for," Hallowell said.

"These new regulations put Pennsylvania frozen dessert manufacturers back in uniformity with other states and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration," the Secretary said. "This will aid our industry, which ranks second in the nation, by eliminating the inefficiencies, needless expenses and confusion caused by the differences in frozen dessert products sold under identical names."

"By the same token, these regulations assure consumers of safe, wholesome, high quality frozen desserts. And through minimizing confusion for consumers, they will help promote fair competition within the industry," he said.

The regulations spell out conformity standards for relatively new products such as mellorine, an ice cream-like product made with vegetable fat; frozen yogurt; frozen dietary dairy desserts; dietary frozen dessert or low-fat frozen desserts; frozen pudding; and Parevine, a frozen dessert resembling ice cream but containing no ingredient derived from milk or meat.

The amendments also conform with changes in the regulations of the Food and Drug Administration and surrounding states. These standards address products such as goats' milk ice cream, lactose reduced ice milk; goats' milk ice milk and non-fruit

sherbet.

The regulations also contain revisions to production, sanitation and testing standards to simplify requirements and increase the efficiency of the state's consumer protection program.

"The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, through its Bureau of Foods and Chemistry, is working closely with the industry to ensure that the consumer continues to receive only the best frozen desserts," said Hallowell.

Copies of the revised regulation can be obtained by writing to the Bureau of Foods and Chemistry, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408.

Order 4 milk \$15.50

ALEXANDRIA, VA. / Middle Atlantic Order Market Administrator Joseph D. Shine today announced a Class I milk price of \$15.50 per hundredweight for January 1985. This price is up 8 cents from December and is 16 cents above last January's Class I price.

Mr. Shine announced a Class II milk price of \$12.80 per hundredweight for November and a butterfat differential of 18.2 cents for the month. The Class II price increased 8 cents from the

previous month, while the butterfat differential was unchanged.

The January Class I price and the November Class II price are based on the November 1984 Minnesota-Wisconsin manufacturing milk price of \$12.72 per hundredweight at a 3.5 percent butterfat content.

The USDA reported that the wholesale price of Grade A butter at Chicago for November was \$1.5812 per pound and the nonfat dry milk price was \$.9127 per pound, f.o.b. plants in the Chicago area.



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