

What's ahead for '85

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well. "I'm not overly optimistic about agriculture, and one of the reasons is that we continue to produce more than we can sell," says the economist.

Moore points out that, "although dairy farmers have reacted well to the diversion program, resulting in a three-percent decrease in production, supply and demand are still not in balance." The economist states that much depends on farmer response when the diversion program comes to an end in March. And one statistic that he finds disturbing is the record number of replacement heifers available, as revealed by the July 1, livestock inventory.

This potential supply of new "milk machines", combined with the fact that many eastern suppliers have been calling for extra milk, may only serve to compound the overproduction problem.

One bright spot on the dairy scene, says Moore, is the four to five-percent increase in demand that has reduced government purchases by nearly 50 percent and triggered slight increases in the price of milk this fall. The economist expects this upward trend to continue into the spring.

But Moore sees no such increase in demand for grains, with few export prospects other than the Soviet Union. The economist cites the strong U.S. dollar, along with a general expansion of grain production throughout the world, as reasons for the poor demand for U.S. grain.

"Even Saudi Arabia is growing subsidized wheat," says Moore, pointing out that many of the traditional grain importing countries not only grow their own grain now, but export as well.

Though the grain market may appear uncertain on a nationwide basis, Penn State agronomist, Elwood Hatley, feels that Pennsylvania's large numbers of livestock will stabilize the Keystone State's grain economy. "Even during the PIK program, corn acreage in Pennsylvania dropped very little," says Hatley, adding that corn is the backbone of the state's feeding program.

Hatley feels that there is potential for more corn acreage next year at the expense of soybeans, although he expects soybean acreage to remain close to this year's 200,000-acre figure.

"We'll have less pork and beef for 1985, and that's good news," says Moore, noting that cow/calf operators have cut the herd by one percent, with a similar trend occurring in the swine industry as well.

Moore expects the poultry industry to continue to expand sharply, with broiler production rising as much as seven to eight percent in the coming year. "There's no question that prices will be on the defensive," he says.

As with most economists, Moore feels that the 1985 Farm Bill may have a profound affect on agriculture. "If loan values and target prices on grain are taken away, for example, then livestock will become more profitable."

Like economist Louis Moore, the Grange's legislative director, Brenda Burd, thinks that next year's Farm Bill will do much to shape the future of agriculture.

Burd said that the Grange is supporting regional price controls for the dairy industry in order to make the program more responsive to specific areas of the country. Such prices should also be tied to supply and demand.

On other legislative fronts, the Grange will also be pressing for a feed assessment tax to be levied on buyers and matched by the state. The resulting fund could finance animal disease research and indemnity programs.

Other Grange legislative priorities will include the Bottle

Bill, prompt payment for commodities, animal health research, legislation protecting producers from harassment by animal welfare groups, and legislation limiting foreign investment. Burd also predicts a push for a comprehensive water bill aimed at keeping the water supply clean for farmers and rural residents.

Lancaster County Extension director, Jay Irwin, also feels that clean water will be a central issue during the coming year.

"Farmers aren't just looking to the bay," says Irwin, "they're also concerned about stopping erosion on their own farms."

Nevertheless, the Chesapeake bay will continue to be a major issue for Pa. farms lying within the bay's vast watershed. And Lancaster County's role in the cleanup effort will be crucial, says Irwin, noting that, with a manure production of 27 tons per cultivated acre, the county is far above the state-wide average of 4.3 tons per acre.

"I don't think that a cutback in animal units will be the answer," says Irwin, pointing out that farmers with fixed costs are forced to add cows when the milk check decreases. The extension director feels that technology will provide other outlets for the excess manure.

Irwin foresees no big decline in beef and pork consumption despite the anti-red meat sentiment expressed by the health food sector. He does feel, however, that the pressure to promote their products will intensify as each segment of the livestock industry strives for a larger percentage of the consumer's dollar.

All in all, Irwin is optimistic about the state's agriculture for 1985, particularly in his own Lancaster County. He cites the county's proximity to markets, excellent soil, a strong work ethic and the ability of farmers to rebound following the 1983 drought and this year's avian influenza epidemic, as reasons for his optimism.

"We came through the worst outbreak of avian flu in history, and by the end of the year, I'd say we'll be 95 to 98 percent recovered," Irwin says with pride, adding that the current state of the county's poultry industry is a tribute to its farmers.

Jay Irwin admits, though, that all bets are off, concerning the 1985 outlook, if the weather fails to cooperate.

As well as being the single most important variable in agriculture, Mother Nature continues to be the least predictable, admits Penn State meteorologist, Paul Knight.

"Monthly, seasonal and annual forecasts are not reliable at all," says Knight, who points out that much research is currently underway in the field of long-range forecasting.

Venturing an educated guess, Knight says that statistics favor a winter of above-normal temperatures. The scientist points out that this fall's monthly temperatures have alternated between cold and warm, with September colder than normal, October above normal and so on. He expects that this pattern may continue throughout the winter, with January ushering in frigid temperatures.

Trying to pin a meteorologist down to longer range predictions yields predictable results.

"It will be warm on the 4th of July, and cold next Christmas," chuckles Knight. "And it will rain on your next picnic."

Looking back at '84

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help poultry farmers hit with the Avian flu.

By October, the flu had finished its devastating course and the avian quarantine was lifted at last.

But while the avian flu was winding down, pseudorabies in the hog industry was on the rise. Two new infected herds were discovered in January, and eight herds were quarantined and awaiting depopulation. As the disease raged, swine producers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars under the eradication program.

Unlike the poultrymen, the pork producers received no state or federal indemnity.

In November, concern mounted over the possibility that farmers were going underground in an effort to avoid possible financial loss from depopulation.

Later in November, PDA's Bureau of Animal Industry placed a moratorium on forced depopulation until May 1, 1985. During that interval, livestock representatives will draft a report on a new way to deal with PRV.

Meanwhile, another disease was marching into the state. Rabies has been on the rise in the state with the number of reported cases doubling during 1983 and continuing to increase in 1984. By March, there were already 44 cases reported.

While the livestock producers were battling diseases, the dairymen were busily working to reduce the milk surplus through increased promotion and decreased production.

Sign-ups for the milk diversion program started in January, with many farmers showing initial interest, but fewer than expected committed themselves to reducing

production throughout the 15-month program.

In May, the USDA approved a voluntary Pa. Milk Marketing Program, under which producers could receive credit against the mandatory 15-cent federal assessment on milk. As much as 10 cents of that assessment could be earmarked for milk promotion. By June, over 1,000 dairymen had volunteered for the program.

The Pa. Dairy Promotion Advisory Board went to work to promote milk consumption. They contracted with a Pittsburgh advertising firm to create an extensive promotion campaign.

Agriculture's need to strike a balance between supply and demand was also reflected in the poultry industry's decision in September to draft a marketing order. A nationwide survey indicated that most producers favor some kind marketing order but have differing opinions about the content of such an order.

Gov. Thornburgh was also doing his part to promote Pennsylvania agriculture. In his budget he allocated \$100,000 for a new Ag Development Commission to promote agriculture.

The Pa. state legislators were busy deciding on a number of agricultural bills. At a joint meeting of the Senate and House Rural Affairs Committee in March, Pennsylvania's vanishing farmland lead the discussion topics. The state loses 16,500 acres of agricultural land annually.

Discussion on the Pennsylvania Bottle Bill came to the forefront in September, when beverage industry and agriculture representatives aired opposite opinions on the bill.

Also in September, the Department of Environmental Resources asked farmers to voluntarily help with the Chesapeake Bay clean-up

by instituting Best Management Practices. Two million dollars in state and federal funds have been allocated to subsidize farmers who institute BMP's.

And of course, the year saw the usual round of annual agricultural events including Farm Show, Ag Progress Days, meetings, banquets and plenty of dairy and livestock shows and sales.

Now is the Time

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unlimited federal estate tax marital deduction. Any amount of property can now be transferred tax-free to a spouse at death. However, this option should be considered carefully. Medium and large estates may pay more tax if the entire estate is passed to the surviving spouse.

Consult your attorney about making necessary changes.

To Prepare For Slippery Conditions

Slippery roads, walks and steps will be a common hazard in the next few months. Many people use salt too freely in cutting the ice; it may get the job done but also may injure nearby turf or shrubbery. I'd suggest the use of sand or sawdust. These materials will make the surface safe without possible injury to vegetation. In areas without any vegetation, salt will give good results. Along our main highways there is some evidence that the constant use of salt is inflicting injury to nearby trees and shrubs. Don't let this happen to your favorite tree, shrub, or the turf lining your walks.

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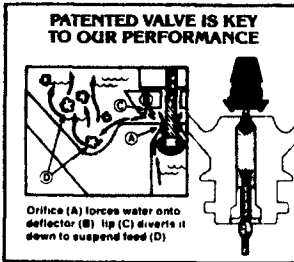
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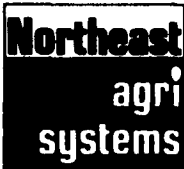
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