

Thornburgh budget includes key farm measures

HARRISBURG - Gov. Dick Thornburgh's 1985-86 budget proposal supports the revitalization of the state's farm and rural community, according to state Agriculture Secretary Fenrose Hollowell.

"Pennsylvania is working again, and our agricultural industries should continue in the economic forefront," he said. The Department's budget provides an increase of 5.8 percent in general government operations, which will allow us to expand services to the agricultural community. The budget also provides funding for expansion of direct farm marketing into major consumer markets."

Included in the Department's 5.8 percent increase are three productivity improvement initiatives which are receiving one-time funding to support long-term cost savings and efficiency benefits:

- \$140,000 to provide for computerization to improve analysis of agricultural product samples and use of robotics to replace manual operations in the Foods and Chemistry laboratory.

- \$38,000 to provide for computerization of submissions, tests and test results at the Summerdale Laboratory to eliminate errors and expedite processing.

- \$40,000 to allow the purchase of electronic scales for use in test

weighing packaged products offered for sale in food and retail stores.

Major initiatives in the governor's budget request for the Department include \$100,000 for an Agricultural Development Commission and \$200,000 for Farm Market Promotion.

The governor requested funding last year for the Agricultural Development Commission, as an incentive to establish a program to attract and expand agricultural businesses and promote sales of Pennsylvania food and agricultural products, the Secretary said. Although legislation to create the Commission failed to win approval in the General Assembly, we are confident that such a program would promote further growth for farmers and agricultural businesses alike.

Hollowell noted that the other states have begun new programs to promote their agricultural industries, and that an Agricultural Development Commission would help Pennsylvania compete in the marketplace through private-public initiatives.

The proposed Department budget also includes a \$200,000 to expand the Farm Market Promotion program to inner-city areas, he said. Pennsylvania farmers have already used more than \$1 million in loans from the

Farm Market Loan Program to expand direct marketing ventures. These new funds will help generate a major investment in community and farmer-owned markets, creating job opportunities and increasing the availability of Pennsylvania foods to inner city residents.

Several cities have been exploring the feasibility of these farm/community markets, and funding for this program will act as a catalyst in drawing other public funds and private investment, he said.

Funding for ongoing Department programs is maintained or expanded in the governor's budget request, with the exception of major items included in 1984-85 on a one-time basis to assist the poultry industry in recovering from the economic crisis of avian influenza.

For the second year, the Pennsylvania Fair Fund is supported by revenues from the General Fund, providing \$2.5 million in reimbursements to the state's fairs, supporting agricultural research

and marketing programs.

The governor's budget request also maintains levels of funding for agricultural research, agricultural promotions, and operations of agriculture related events held at the Farm Show Complex. Funding through the State Farm Products Show Fund will increase slightly.

Additional funding is requested in the state's capital budget to improve the heating system in the Farm Show Complex large arena, and to replace the lighting system

in the arena with a brighter, more energy-efficient system. Construction funds are also being sought for a storage-shop building adjacent to the Agriculture Building for equipment, supplies and exhibit shop.

Hollowell said an additional \$13 million is targeted to environmental programs, including \$1.1 million in state funds to assist in the effort to reduce erosion and save the Chesapeake Bay.

Berks gypsy moth spraying halted

It appears the Gypsy Moth problem in Berks County is under control for the time being. The Bureau of Forestry has notified the County Coordinator that none of the 63 blocks submitted for spraying in May of 1985 can qualify. The number of viable egg masses cannot meet the minimum requirements.

Last October the Berks County proposal of 3,874 acres in 63 spray blocks was forwarded to the Bureau of Forestry. They have inspected all these blocks in ten

different townships and two boroughs and find they do not meet the spray guidelines.

In May 1984 almost 11,000 acres in 157 spray blocks were approved and sprayed in Berks County.

Service Forester, Jeffrey Stuffle, said the situation in Berks is typical of what is being found in other areas of Eastern Pennsylvania. He notes that only about 3,500 acres will be sprayed in the entire area east of the Susquehanna River.

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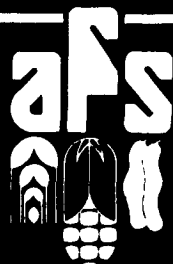
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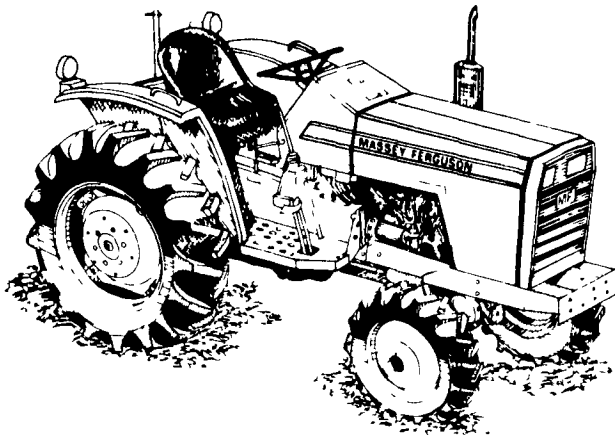
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