

## Delaware studies increase in number of small farms

NEWARK, DE — Many people think of agriculture today in terms of large industrial farms. Yet the U.S. Bureau of the Census reports that, even as the total number of farms dropped slightly from 1978 to 1982, the number of small farms (under 50 acres) increased by 17 percent.

Recent national studies by agricultural economists have stimulated interest in learning why farmers continue to favor these small operations despite the competitive disadvantages and the frequent need to depend on off-farm income.

Two economists at the University of Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station have written a 41-page publication titled "Small Farms in Delaware: Case Studies of Six Operations." The authors, Dr. R. Dean Shippy and Dr. Steven E. Hastings, were interested in three fundamental questions which could not be answered by statistics alone:

- \* What is a small farm?
- \* Why does anyone operate a small farm?
- \* What factors contribute to the success of a small farm operation?

In their publication Shippy and Hastings first examine the distribution of small farms in Delaware by acreage and sales categories. Then they use data from the 1982 Census of Agriculture to detail the characteristics of small farms in Delaware. Finally, they present six case studies to illustrate typical enterprises, practices and problems of small farmers in Delaware.

The economists found that

Delaware agriculture follows the national trend. Since 1959 the number of farms in the state has declined from 5,208 to 3,338, while average farm size has increased from 146 acres to 196 acres. However, the number of small farms has increased. In 1982, 548 Delaware farms had less than \$2,500 in sales. Farms with less than \$50,000 in sales made up 56 percent of the state's total farms but accounted for only 5 percent of the state's farm sales.

Relatively few details had previously been gathered on the organization and operation of small farms in Delaware, according to the authors. To fill the gap, they interviewed six operators of farms with \$50,000 or less in agricultural product sales.

Cooperative extension agents in all three Delaware counties selected a group of progressive small-farm operators. The authors randomly chose two from each county for the study.

Operators were interviewed on farm resources and enterprises, marketing practices, income sources and analysis, use of educational programs, current

problems/future plans, and success factors. Each case study cited in the publication opens with a brief biography of the operator and closes with a summary of the operation.

The six farmers interviewed for the study used diverse approaches to establishing, operating and changing their farm enterprises over time. Although their operations ranged in size from 20 to 95 acres and in sales from \$2,000 to \$50,000, all six needed off-farm income to support their families and farms. Yet all six expressed great satisfaction with their lifestyles and environments.

Shippy and Hastings hope the information in their publication will provide insight into the operation and viability of small farms in Delaware.

To obtain A.E. Pamphlet 86, "Small Farms in Delaware: Case Studies of Six Operations," contact the Department of agricultural and food economics, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19717-1303 (451-2511) or the county extension office in Newark (451-2506), Georgetown (856-7303) or Dover (736-1448).



**GIGANTIC SELECTION**  
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## Now Is The Time

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treatment with Eradicane at planting time.

However, in other fields such as small grains, when the growth of Johnsongrass reaches 2-1/2 to 3 feet...in the boot stage...the plants may be sprayed with Roundup for good control. These plants are very heavy seed producers; a few plants allowed to go to seed this fall will mean hundreds of plants next summer. Johnsongrass is fast growing and will crowd out most farm crops. We urge landowners to make every effort to eliminate all Johnsongrass from their farm.

To Get A Good Cure Of The Tobacco Crop The heavy crop of tobacco

moving to and hanging in the curing sheds will need extra attention to obtain a satisfactory cure this fall. County Extension agent Arnold G. Lueck, lists some things to do: Put fewer plants on each lath in the field. Allow more space between lathes in the shed for better air movement. Provide all the ventilation possible on good drying days. Consider closing some vents and doors during nights when air is damp. Force air around by use of fans if available.

Aim to have an excellent quality leaf to sell this winter. A good crop followed by a bad cure can be avoided.

### Farm Calendar



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Pensburg Valley Bank, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For information call Adams County Extension office, 334-6271.

Pennsylvania Holstein State Championship Show, Crawford County Fairgrounds, Meadville.

Princess Anne Local, Inter-State Milk Producers District 4 annual meeting 7 p.m., English Family Restaurant, Westover, Md.

Friday, September 6  
York Inter-State Fair, York; continues through Sept. 14.  
Maryland Food Heritage Days, Rash Field; continues tomorrow.

Saturday, September 7  
Pa. Dairy Goat Association, 1985 Keystone Conference and Sale, Sheraton Inn, Milesburg.

Monday, September 9  
Bellwood Antis Twp. Fair, Bellwood; continues through Sept. 12.

Claysburg Area Farm Show, Claysburg; continues through Sept. 12.

Green Twp. Fair, Commodore; continues through Sept. 14.

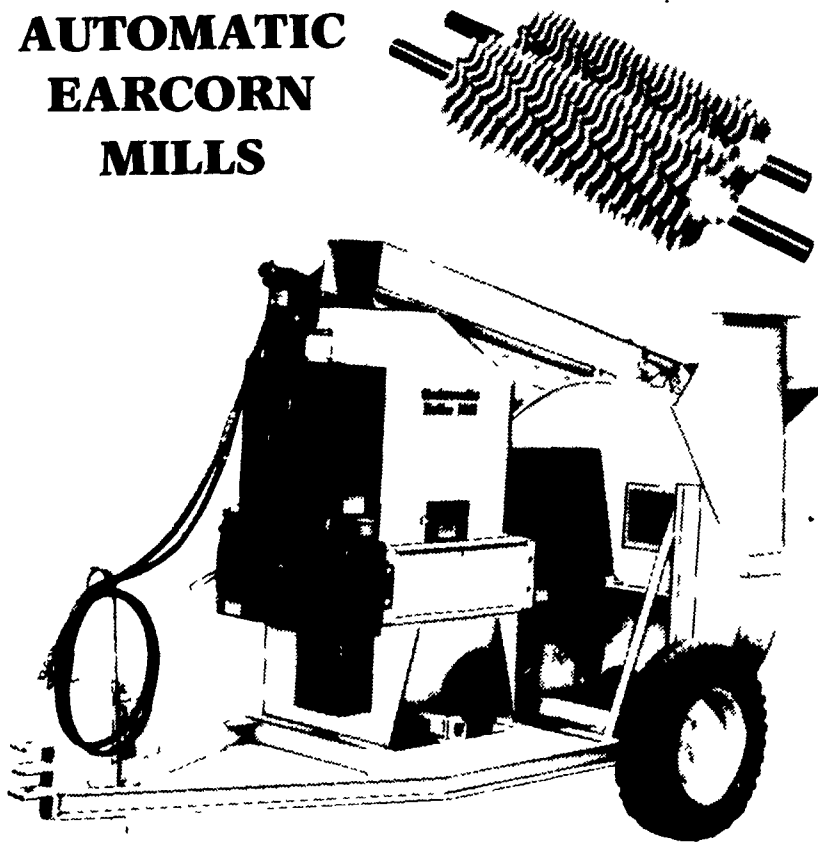
Saturday, September 14  
Researcher's Field Day, Rodale Reserach Center, Kutztown, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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