

Ag Secretary Grubb talks about boosting ag sales...

BY JAMES H. EVERHART
HARRISBURG — Appointed in June and confirmed over some opposition in October, Dr. Richard E. Grubb is starting to make his mark on Pennsylvania agriculture.

Following the lead of his boss, Governor Dick Thornburgh, Grubb has talked in recent weeks about the need to expand the opportunities for farmers to sell food products, by attracting new food-processing industries to Pennsylvania.

He agreed to talk about these plans in an interview with Lancaster Farming. Following are the highlights of that interview:
Lancaster Farming: Both you and the governor have talked about incentives to increase the markets available to farmers in Pennsylvania. Can you tell us a little more about these plans?

Let me start in the whole area of economic development and marketing. We do have programs in the department in these areas so we're not talking about starting new programs. We're talking about working with our existing programs. There are several aspects of economic development.

Within Pennsylvania we are looking at trying to increase the information assistance that we give to food processing industries, and related agri businesses in getting them to locate here in Pennsylvania.

For example, we have a lot of data bases which indicate where the product is being produced, where site locations are available, and information about the Commonwealth from a business standpoint. A lot of this is with the Department of Commerce.

So we are really talking about

sitting down with the Department of Commerce and coordinating and working more closely with them in trying to attract food industries into the Commonwealth.

It will basically be through data support, counseling, and trying to sell Pennsylvania based upon what we have here—farm production, business climate, getting additional agricultural industries to locate here which would again give to our farmers and our producers ready markets.

The population is adjacent to Pennsylvania, we start at Washington and go right up the eastern seaboard to Boston. Our markets are here. We should be competitive in terms of transportation.

The second aspect has to do with increasing our emphasis in export. We do have an export division. We're working with Pennsylvania-

based producers and food processing industries in encouraging marketing. To have agricultural expertise overseas working out of those offices.

Here at home it would mean taking the data that we have here in the department and trying to make that available in all 67 counties. We know our agricultural information and marketing system which we are a part of here. We know what countries are looking for what food products, using computerization, electronic data transfer.

So it's out there where the producers and food processors, and cooperatives have immediate local access. We would be talking about the whole concept of export trade companies in Pennsylvania and getting them more involved.

Also working with export-import banks in terms of setting up credits

for foreign organizations.

We do generic marketing now through our local program where Keystone Pride—we're growing better. We have over 200 Pennsylvania-based farms who promote and sell under our local program.

I think we have over 2,000 retail outlets who are handling Pennsylvania products. I think we need to do some consumer market research. Where can we get the most for our dollar? Working with our commodity groups in terms of cooperative efforts in helping to promote individual commodities, large milk marketing program, which is a total producer funded.

Here again, it's increased emphasis on what is already underway within the department.

LF: Has the marketing identified any specific commodities or

(Turn to Page A21)

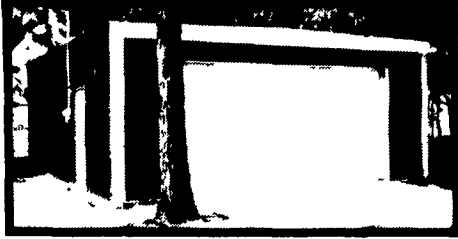


Dr. Richard Grubb, Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture, during his interview with Lancaster Farming editor James Everhart.

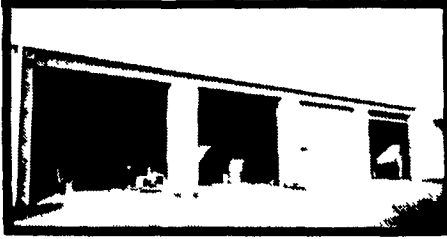
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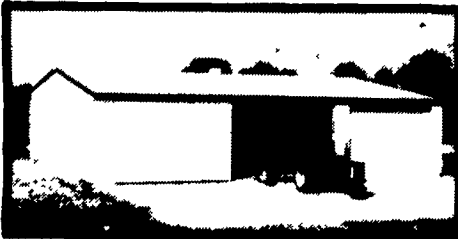
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