

Pay attention to market, experts say

COLLEGE PARK, MD — Anyone who produces food or fiber is not finished marketing their product until it ends up in the trash bin or somebody's cesspool, says John R. Martin.

Martin, a Washington County hog farmer and orchardist, says Maryland farmers need to work harder to sell their product and educate the consumer.

As the Maryland Pork Producers' official pig promoter, he echoes what economists at the University of Maryland say about the future of agriculture in the state.

Farmers need to look at new ways to diversify and sell their products as the Maryland countryside slowly gives way to suburbia, the economists says. They may have to change production levels or use new marketing techniques to maintain agriculture's stable financial condition in the state.

Small changes are the key, says Jarvis Cain, an Extension Service marketing specialist at the university. He says no one, single change will save Maryland farmers from future financial problems.

"It's going to be bits and pieces," Cain says. "That's how Maryland agriculture is going to continue to prosper."

Selling produce directly to the consumer is one way farmers can diversify their markets, Cain says. This direct marketing concept has been proposed for many years, but he adds that it takes a "special kind of personality" to sell a product this way.

But if farmers are to survive through direct marketing, knowledge of the product and its effect on consumers must be mixed with a good campaign and willingness to provide high quality, Cain and Martin say. Only a limited number of people in specific situations can make a reasonable living with direct

marketing, Cain says.

But marketing is not the only way to save Maryland agriculture from future financial woes, he adds. Other changes are needed.

Cain says possible declines in dairy and tobacco industry profits are the main reasons Maryland farmers need to diversify.

As the suburban work force seeks homes in rural areas, Maryland tobacco and dairy farmers could profit by changing to other crops or selling their land for development, economists says. Cain says some farmers could do well by selling fresh products to their new neighbors. But whatever way is chosen will take work, he adds.

"We already know enough about our products to get in trouble," Martin says. "Learn something about getting out of trouble through encouraging con-

sumption."

The pork producer says improving consumer awareness of the benefits of using fresh farm products is necessary to increase sales. This may require more special promotions such as the Dairy Council's "Fitness You Can Drink" campaign or changing products to meet consumer demands, he says.

Martin adds that most farmers don't know what is good for them in terms of marketing. With a little imagination and some basic public relations skills, the farmer can turn even the most common or popular crop into something special for the consumer.

Talking to the consumer can help, the pork promoter says. He and Cain agree that it's going to take new ideas and the revision of some old ones if Maryland farmers are to survive in changing times.

John Deere to buy Canadian firm

MOLINE, IL — Deere & Company and The Versatile Corporation of Vancouver, B.C., Canada, announced that they have reached a tentative agreement under which Deere & Company would acquire Versatile's agricultural equipment manufacturing operations and its marketing operations in North America. The agreement is subject to successful negotiation of a final agreement and approval of government bodies in the U.S. and Canada. Under this proposal Deere would also acquire Versatile's agricultural retail credit operations.

The manufacturing operations consist of a factory located in Winnipeg, Man., which makes large four-wheel-drive and bi-directional tractors, windrowers and pull-type combines. Also included is a factory located in Nobleford, Alberta, Canada, which produces a line of drills and cultivators designed for the

western prairie area of the two countries.

This acquisition would provide Deere with several new products it does not currently manufacture including bi-directional tractors, certain models of windrowers, and a model of a pull-type combine. It would increase the sales potential of the Winnipeg and Nobleford factories. It is expected that assembly of large four-wheel-drive tractors would be concentrated in the Winnipeg operation which would use a number of components manufactured in Deere's Waterloo, Iowa, operations.

Deere says it would expect to continue the distribution of the Versatile product line through the existing Versatile dealers as well as a differentiated line of products through Deere dealers.

Versatile, whose other lines include shipbuilding, energy, and cold storage warehousing, had sales of \$629.6 million (Canadian) in 1984. Deere's fiscal 1985 sales were \$4.1 billion (U.S.).

Seminar set on baking

MIDDLETOWN — Penn State University and Pennsylvania Bakers Association will be presenting a series of seminars on baking technology starting January 27th. The seminar will be held in the Continuing Education Building at PSU's Capitol Campus in Middletown from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

PSU's Food Science Department will be leading the sessions with seven professors coming from the Main Campus. The first seminar will be an overview of the next three seminars and will cover topics such as: functionality of ingredients, quality control, sanitation, and microbiology.

The seminars will be beneficial to anyone involved in baking in a bakery, deli, restaurant, or hotel. The cost of \$105 per seminar includes all text materials and lunch.

For more information contact Ron Melchoirre at Capitol Cam-

pus, Continuing Education, 717-948-6275.

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