

## Planning for the future

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resources and a network of well respected land-grant colleges and veterinary schools.

The main weaknesses include the short growing season and winter cold, the variability of the soils and the small size of the average farm.

Project Toward 2005, Bailey explained, is organized into three task forces, which are designed to evaluate trends in the various commodities and recommend alternatives where problems are developing. The group also is closely tied to the land-grand colleges throughout the region, making sure the educational institutions are fully in touch with the changes that may be required in the short or long term.

The program, he noted, will develop "action agendas," for government, academia and the industry, in order to keep all segments fully informed about its projections.

"With the cooperation of the states, the region will be able to chart a course that will enhance the future of the agriculture, food and forestry sectors within the Northeast," Bailey concluded. "By examining the pertinent issues today we will be able to define and attain a more viable future for these three very important economic sectors."

As always, Lou Moore, Penn State Professor of Ag Economics, provided his usual upbeat review of the agricultural situation for the capacity crowd Wednesday afternoon.

Noting that Pennsylvania has overtaken New York as the leading agricultural state in the Northeast, he stressed that the relative strength of the state is actually a reflection of the decline of the rest of the region in food production.

The state has some real assets, he said, in its proximity to markets, its diversified product mix, its strong support system of agricultural industries, its independence of exports and its conservative farmers, who expanded slowly during the heady days of the 1970s.

For the first time, he noted, Pennsylvania was not a grain-deficit state in 1984, producing 578,248 tons of grain more than required. And though the region has other areas where not all the product need is met by local producers, "a deficit does not create potential," Moore said.

To prosper in the years ahead, Moore said, the state cannot expect barriers to competition and must be prepared to compete on a national basis. Its relative prosperity now, he noted, might disappear when the rest of the country recovers from the current ag slump.

And producers must be sure not to jump at alternatives . . . since virtually all major commodity and product groups are recording a surplus.

Nevertheless, he said, there are some definite bright spots, like the poultry industry, which, despite its recent problems, may well pass the beef industry as the largest producer of meat in the country.

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