

Stetler leads PFU group at national convention

SPOKANE, WA — Agricultural producers from across the nation have gathered here recently to confront the rural crisis facing America.

Calling the 1985 Farm Bill inadequate and designed to reduce farm income, delegates to the 84th Annual National Farmers Union Convention met to write the Organization's policy statement for the next year.

David Stetler, President of Pennsylvania Farmers Union and leader of the Pennsylvania Delegation, said family farmers are facing some of the toughest farm policy legislation in recent history.

"Conditions confronting family farmers have steadily deteriorated," said Stetler. "Farmers are having a tough time all over. I can tell you the prices Pennsylvania farmers are receiving are so low (30-50% lower than in 1981 in some cases) that many can't survive their debt, much less service cost of production, management costs, and return on investment."

Farm unity has been evidenced as Farmers Union leaders spanning the country have been addressed by an impressive list of policy leaders, international producer representatives and rural life experts during the four-

day event.

Echoing the sentiments of AFL-CIO President, Lane Kirkland, who said in his Convention address on Monday that American laborers and farmers have been "left out of

efforts to revitalize the economy," Stetler pledged the help of his Organization in a continued statewide effort with rural businesses, consumer groups, and members of organized labor to

return equity to rural America. "The responsibility rests with all of us," said Stetler. "We must set aside our differences and work collectively to see that our goals in rural America are accomplished."

PDPP allocates \$35,000

HARRISBURG — Don't cancel that late summer or fall dairy promotion for lack of money.

Up to \$35,000 in matching funds has been voted by the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, it is announced by Advisory Board Chairman Don Duncan. And most local organizations qualify. But hurry, he adds. Applications are due April 15.

The board, comprised of 19 dairy farmers, oversees a \$2 million milk advertising and promotion program. It is supported by over 4,000 dairymen.

Only Pennsylvania committees and organizations are eligible for milk promotion dollars, the Berks County dairyman explains. And the new funds must be used during the July-December period.

The board already has allocated \$34,254 to 41 groups for January-June promotions. All are eligible for the current round of funding.

Previous allocations ranged from \$3,107 for the Huntingdon

County Dairy Promotion Program to \$100 for the Sullivan County Dairy Festival Committee.

There are dollar limits, says Duncan. Radio advertising is limited to \$600 per station, with the local committee picking up 25 percent of the cost. Also only the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program's professionally produced radio ads can be used.

Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program also will fund capital investments for milk shake machines and other dairy related equipment. PDPP will pay one fourth the cost, to a maximum of \$1,000.

Dairy princess pageants aren't eligible. "We already support the dairy princess program" Duncan explained.

For applications and further details write to Cindy Weimer, promotion coordinator, Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408. The deadline is April 15.

'Future' session

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handle manure," said Wolff, pointing to the generation of electricity through manure incineration as an exciting new possibility.

Wolff pointed out that two major Pennsylvania poultry integrators are looking into the possibility of burning poultry manure. But much research is needed to determine how much energy can actually be generated, as well as what is contained in incineration's two by-products, smoke emissions and ash.

Turning to a resource of quite a different nature, Penn State agricultural economist Jill Findeis said that a significant labor force exists among farmers seeking off-farm employment.

An eye-opening 70 percent of all farm income in the state is actually generated away from the farm, said Findeis. Although this figure includes income from dividends, interest and retirement programs, more than 50 percent is earned through wages and salaries.

What isn't known, according to Findeis, is how many of those farmers employed away from the farm are actually phasing out of farming, or using their off-farm incomes as a temporary safety net or a long-term income supplement.

While demand for off-farm employment continues to increase, rural employment opportunities have actually been decreasing within the past five years. "So we need to understand how our farmers are adapting to the changes taking place," said Findeis.

Compounding the problem is the fact that many older and less educated farmers are generally unwilling to work away from the farm, either by choice or because of their inability to get a job. "What skills do they have to enter

an increasingly competitive job market?" said the economist. "I'm very concerned about that," she noted, adding that training is needed for this segment of the agricultural community.

Findeis also expressed concern for dairymen in need of supplemental income. Due to the demands of dairying, these farmers are often unable to pursue outside employment, she said.

On the plus side, Pennsylvania farmers are not only close to their markets, but close to rural jobs, as well. "That is a very special feature of Pennsylvania, but we need to learn to be able to capitalize on that," said Findeis.

According to Penn State Extension ag economist Ted Alter, local governments and the non-farm sector can play an important role in maintaining the vitality of our rural communities by providing off-farm employment opportunities, as well as other essential services.

By encouraging development in rural areas, local governments will be helping to provide facilities, services and off-farm employment for local farmers. Upgraded roads and bridges are good examples of how development can impact positively on the local agricultural community, said Alter.

On the other hand, there is a down side to economic growth and development, the economist pointed out. Such development often leads to an increase in land values, property taxes and complaints from the farmer's new neighbors, all of which can be counterproductive to agriculture.

The challenge for government, then, is to develop land use policies, tax systems and roads and bridges that strike an acceptable balance between agriculture and the nonfarm sector, Alter concluded.

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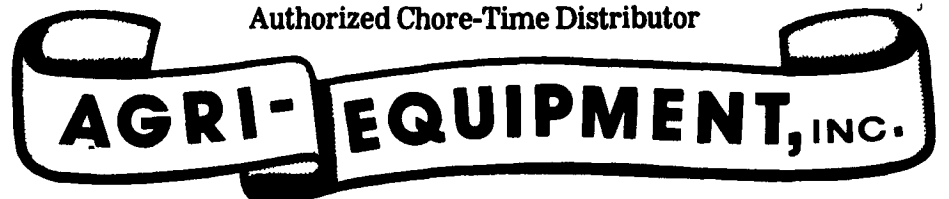
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