

## Optimism and Success Discovered in Agribusiness Survey

DOYLESTOWN — Corn Belt farmers, farm editors, bankers and an auctioneer participated in the spring semester Agricultural Policy class at Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture, Doylestown.

Agribusiness students responded to recent media reports on the Midwest farm situation by developing five basic questions about the farm economy. They then interviewed 20 agriculturists in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Wisconsin by telephone.

The class, many from metropolitan backgrounds, discovered optimism and success as well as personal and economic problems among the responses.

A St. Charles, Missouri farmer credited his location near river terminals for more favorable grain prices. He reported a high number of farm closeout auctions in north-central Missouri.

An Alamakee County, Iowa auctioneer reported depressed land values and low auction prices for machinery and livestock in the tri-state region of Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin.

Several central Illinois farmers were optimistic, crediting good financial records, efficient

management practices and strong marketing abilities for keeping their operations out of difficulty. Dairy farmers in Iowa and Wisconsin told of milk prices below their costs of production.

A hog and wheat producer in Kansas credited diversification and good production levels for his success.

Many of the participants voiced the opinion that past government policies and farmers' financial management practices contributed to the current situation. Some farmers misjudged the risk associated with long-term loans, while financial advisors were overly optimistic about prospects for sustained income to reduce debts.

Declining land and equipment values resulted in high ratios of debts to assets. Numerous farmers conceded they did not understand cash-flow management; there were also some who appeared reluctant to adopt better financial management practices.

Two farmers found it difficult to admit they would not be farming in 1986.

One woman blamed neither government nor bankers, acknowledging she and her

husband were responsible for most of their financial problems.

Farmers and a banker viewed reduced government involvement in agriculture as the best course of action.

An Iowa dairy and hog farmer was angered by short-sighted political actions that contributed to long-term economic problems. He suggested that lobbyists often confuse, rather than inform, lawmakers.

Most farmers would like to see a long-term farm program for commercial farms that is different than the subsistence support needed by low-volume farms with high production costs.

A student from the New York metropolitan area concluded that counseling and training should be provided for families forced to quit farming. She proposed workshops on career alternatives and assistance in starting service-type businesses.

Based on the information gathered through the telephone survey, the students made the following recommendations:

farmers should utilize the Cooperative Extension Service and agribusiness firms to assist in financial records, management decision-making, and planning marketing strategies.

Professionals should be hired to aid in setting up and maintaining financial records which provide net profit and cash-flow information and analysis data for decision making.

Farmers must become informed participants in the development of farm policy by being active in their farm and commodity organizations and political parties.

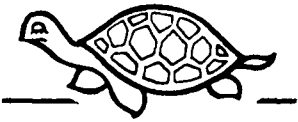
Farm families forced to leave farming should be provided

counseling, training and assistance to start service-type businesses needed in their area, or to relocate.

The federal government should support research to expand the use of agricultural products and to develop international markets.

Reflecting upon the students' report, Dr. John H. Avery, Chairman of Agribusiness at the College, said, "Our students become emotionally involved in the farm situation. They obtained new perspectives on farming and a realization on the communication process required to develop policies and programs."

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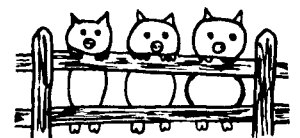
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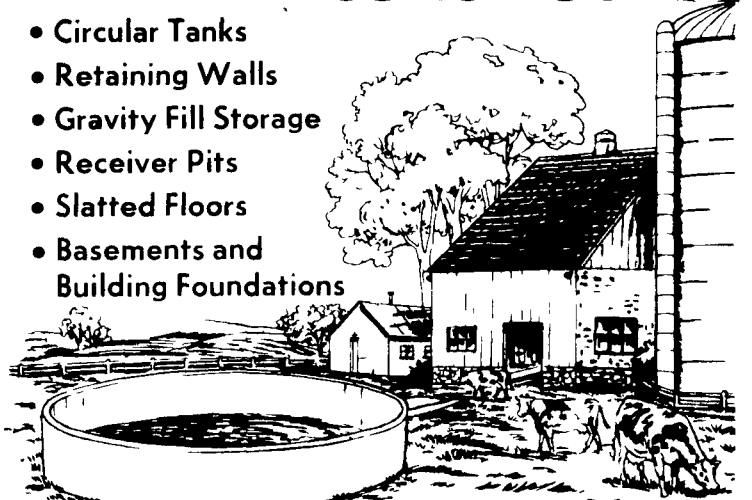
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