

Tobacco Auction

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cigarette tobacco marketed averaged \$1.15 a pound, and the remaining Pennsylvania-type tobacco averaged 52 cents.

Now that the auction system is off the ground, it's inevitable that others will want a piece of the action. According to PTA's former manager, Eric Probst, that's exactly what's taking place.

Recently Probst announced that at least two, and possibly a third, tobacco auction house will be selling this year's crop. The original company, Pennsylvania

Tobacco Auction, Inc., will continue to operate at its present location, Martin Auctioneers, in Intercourse. A second facility, Paradise Tobacco Sales, is currently under construction on Meadow Lane in Paradise. Garden Spot Tobacco Auction is a third company that began construction of an auction barn on Thursday, located at the intersection of Reidenbach Road and Route 322 in Hinkletown.

PTA will also be buying tobacco in Quarryville if a zoning variance can be obtained to convert a chickenhouse into an auction barn.

Probst said that the new companies are the result of a split between the original eight PTA investors.

He also announced the formation of an organization he called the Tobacco Trading Unit. "We've formed a tobacco trading group that will have representation from each warehouse," he said. The unit's job will be to standardize the business of auctioning tobacco by setting the terms of payment, delivery and buying schedules and commission rates. The unit would schedule sales so that no two houses were operating on the same days, he said.

"We expected some kind of expansion and I'm happy with the

way things went," said Probst, pointing out that, in order to attract more "buyer power," greater sales volume would be necessary.

"The increased square footage will allow more volume to be handled when the farmers and the crop are ready," Probst continued. "It's good for the farmer."

Probst, who no longer works for PTA, and expects to serve as spokesman for the Tobacco Trading Unit, said that all tobacco auction facilities will be equipped with skylights for the coming

buying season. "Buyers feel more at ease buying in natural light," he said, pointing out that color and quality can be more accurately determined under natural light conditions.

"It should be an interesting market this year," he said. "Overall, the crop looks tremendous, and the curing weather has been good."

Probst said that tobacco auction owners plan to schedule meetings throughout the county to explain the new buying system to farmers. As of presstime no meeting dates had been set.

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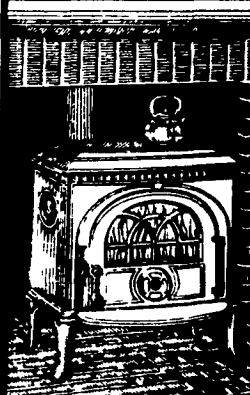
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