

# Lanc. Co. Farmers Hold Annual Meeting

The Lancaster County Farmers' Association held their 35th annual meeting Monday evening at the Country Table Restaurant in Mt. Joy. Donald Ranck, President, called the meeting to order after dinner and reported that "The year 1986 will go down in history as a period of enormous uncertainty in agriculture. Low commodity prices continue to cloud our future and pressure our industry."

"One Lancaster County Farmers' Association member remarked recently: 'In 1986 I didn't make too much profit. In fact, in all my years of farming, I never could make TOO MUCH profit!'"

"Seriously, though, agriculture's basic problem is one of world-wide over supply of basic commodities. In times of over-supply, those who have the best marketing systems prosper. The Farmers' Association is working hard at developing marketing tools that we can use. Watch for new opportunities! Thirty-five years ago when the Farmers' Association first organized, the stage was set for serious over-supply. If you would like to learn from history, try reading a book by Schapsmeier & Schapsmeier entitled, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture: the Eisenhower Years, 1953-1961* to get an excellent insight into what went on behind the scenes, as well as in public, at that time of low commodity prices.

"In order to tell an accurate story about agriculture to the general public, your Board of Directors has expanded the 'Ag. in the Classroom' project this year, with excellent leadership from Jane Eshleman, and many volunteers who took time to visit their elementary schools taking

along animals, crops, retail products, literature, and a real zeal to tell it like it is.

"Park City Week, led by Ruby Bollinger, filling all eight malls of this 185-store complex, and brimming with activities for young and old alike, was a real winner again this year.

"Farm-City Weekend, organized by Ike Geib and Paul Hartz, was very popular and took the general public, both city dwellers as well as farm families, to a wide variety of farms.

"These public relations projects, as well as all of your legislative

efforts, your commodity committees, and your service committees-for insurance, Safemark, FMBAS, policy development, local affairs, membership, advisory councils, and a host of special womens' activities take an enormous amount of volunteer time from a few, and a smaller contribution from many others, to do an essential job of communication. Your help is valuable and most appreciated by your Board of Directors.

"This past year, Pennsylvania farmers donated more than 10,000 tons of hay and time and money.

too, to help assuage the effects of the drought in the Southeast, as well as in south-central Pennsylvania and parts of Maryland. This truly remarkable response shows widespread goodwill toward our neighbors.

"By being active members and taking responsibility for our own profession, we will surely survive, and likely prosper, without becoming distraught, without protesting violently, without blaming everybody else. Behind the dark clouds of low prices is a rainbow of marketing strategies if we look for them. May God bless

you and your family as you help yourselves and your neighbors with your time, your energy, your wisdom, and your other resources."

In the business meeting the following persons were elected to the local board of directors: District 2, Isacc Geib, Manheim; District 3, Marvin K. Witmer, Lititz; District 4, Walter Augsberger, Reinholds; District 5, Earl Newcomer, Washington Boro; District 8, Paul Hartz, Morgantown; District 10, Gordon Hoover, Gap; and District 11, James A. Hess, Quarryville.

## Southeast Milk Supplies Tighten

Milk supplies in the Southeast are 4 to 8 percent below customer needs, the combined result of recent high temperatures and a federal government program aimed at reducing the nation's milk surplus.

Dairymen Inc., the largest supplier of producer milk in the 16-state market, has been forced to ration available supplies to its customers and convert milk powder into products such as cottage cheese and buttermilk. Other milk suppliers in the Southeast are experiencing similar difficulties in obtaining sufficient milk.

"This is one of the tightest supply situations we've faced at this time of the year," said Dr. Al Ortego, economist and senior vice president for the Louisville-based cooperative. "We've resisted bringing milk in from the Upper Midwest, due to the extremely high prices they are demanding."

Supplies of milk began to tighten in the Southeast this summer as many dairy farmers began selling their herds in response to the Dairy Termination Program initiated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to temper a national milk surplus. Although the surplus seldom applies to the Southeast, many farmers in the Southeast still committed to slaughter their herds under the federal program.

The Southeast is losing about 12.5 percent of its milk production over the span of the 18-month program. Ortego noted that local dairy farmers participated in the reduction program at a rate higher than the national average.

"The buyout program has already realized a net drop in milk production of 3 to 5 percent from a year ago," said Ortego. "But on top of that, the unexpected high temperatures the first week of October resulted in production declines of up to 18 percent below

the prior month's level in some of the hardest hit areas."

Some of these declines were partially offset by varying weather conditions in other production areas which enabled dairymen to absorb much of these losses by moving milk within its marketing area.

Cooler temperatures are expected to partially restore production levels, although Ortego predicts the market will be in close balance throughout the fall season.

"Producer organizations in Minnesota and Wisconsin were demanding premiums of up to \$7 per hundredweight to provide supplemental milk for these markets, plus the cost of transportation which would be another \$2 to \$3, depending on the location," said Ortego. "We'd be looking at milk costing over \$20 per hundredweight delivered in areas as far away as, for example, Atlanta or New Orleans."

Producer prices have increased

somewhat in the Southeast this fall, partially offsetting increased assessments dairy farmers were charged both to help pay for the Dairy Termination Program and Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget reductions. Producer prices have not increased sufficiently, however, to encourage local dairy farmers to boost production to meet increasing demands of the southeastern markets, Ortego noted.

"This strong consumer demand for milk certainly indicates that the Southeast is a growing consumer market and that consumers are recognizing the real value of milk as compared to other beverages, both in terms of price and good nutrition," said Ortego.

Dairymen is a regional cooperative marketing milk from its 7,000 producer members both to independent dealers throughout the Southeast and through its own Flav-O-Rich and Farm Best facilities.

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