



OPINION

Not All Pessimism

With all the pessimism in Washington that comes out of a world wide outlook at agriculture, we found at least one speaker this week that was willing to look at a positive aspect of agriculture.

James Donald, chairperson for the World Agricultural Outlook Board, reported that livestock and poultry farmers were experiencing the second highest recorded yearly cash receipts. And with feed costs to remain at lower levels in 1987, these segments of agriculture can also be expected to have a good return for their products in 1987. Even for crop farmers, low inflation and steady to low production costs along with government payments will help to bolster net farm income in the coming year. In fact a five to 10 percent increase in cash income can be expected. That's good news.

Especially when consumers will still see a good food supply at only a small increase in cost.

"World consumption of food is increasing, and we should see a slight increase in the U.S. share of the world market," Donald said. "Not too long ago we were also able to report that consumption of milk had increased to where the excesses were being depleted."

One farmer who asked not to be identified dropped a little note in his subscription renewal to Lancaster Farming. "I know you get a lot of negative information in there," he said. "But some of us out here are still making money at farming."

Thank you. We appreciate that. It's good to hear some rebuttal to all the pessimism we heard in Washington.

FARM FORUM OUR READERS WRITE

Editor's Note: Leaders of three Pennsylvania farm organizations joined with the state Secretary of Agriculture today to voice their support for the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency, Inc., in the following letter.

Dear Editor:

For more than two years, dairymen have been saying "We need less government involvement and more money in our milk checks." Since June, Pennsylvania's three general farm organizations have been talking about how to do just that.

Over-order pricing is the best way to put more money in dairymen's pockets. This is not a new concept. It's been going on in markets to the west and south of us for many years. But it won't happen just by our talking about it. Over-order pricing will happen only when enough dairymen join together to make it happen. For that, we need an organization which is legal under the Capper-Volstead Act, and allows farmers to join together to bargain for a price for our commodities.

RCMA, the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency, Inc. can do that for dairymen. RCMA is set up to work in all nine northeastern states. It allows for membership by groups of farmers through their co-op memberships, and by individual farmers through individual memberships. All dairymen are given equal representation in decisions of policy and operation.

RCMA presently has membership representing more than 85 percent of all dairymen in the Northeastern region. Over 40 cooperatives and many independent producers have already signed up for RCMA, from Pennsylvania north through New England. But before RCMA can function and seek over-order

prices, 90 to 95 percent of the milk in the nine northeastern states must be signed up in support of its efforts. That means we have to enlist the support and sign up most of the independent producers in Pennsylvania.

With 95 percent of the milk in the northeast committed to over-order premiums for class one milk, RCMA can go to all milk handlers and seek these prices for fluid milk only. All handlers will be treated equally and all participating producers will share equally in any over-order premium that is collected.

RCMA is supported by all of the major cooperatives in the northeast, all of the farm organizations in the northeast, and all the Departments of Agriculture in the nine state area.

Over-order pricing is not a state Department of Agriculture program, nor a Federal Order program. It is a farmer program, and will only happen if farmers make it happen.

The class one price for January will be established by the November M-W. This will be the highest price we see for the next six months. If we could retain that even without over-order premiums, dairymen would be better off. But none of this will happen without a united effort on the part of independent producers.

Dairymen should remember our market is a deficit market. Fifteen percent of our commercial needs are met by production from outside our production area. But our prices for class one milk are based on a butter-powder-cheese market. Why should we be willing to sit idly by and let that kind of formula determine the value of our class one milk? Why shouldn't the demand in the market determine the price of our fluid milk?

In 1985, there was a drop of \$1.64



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

To Exercise Breeding Animals

Many farm animals are kept in close quarters during the winter months. This is fine for animals being fattened for market, but may not be suitable for breeding animals. A flock of breeding ewes should have access to an exercise lot daily; there will be less trouble with paralysis in the ewe flock and stronger lambs born if ewes are exercised daily.

When the ground becomes frozen, or snow-covered, some shepherds will feed hay on the ground out in the exercise lot in order to force the ewes to exercise. Dairy cows need outside exercise to maintain good feet and legs, and

to provide opportunity for heat detection. Brood mares need the same daily exercise if they are to remain in the best of health.

To Obtain Farmer's Tax Guide

We don't like to talk about taxes but it's a way of life. Copies of the Farmer's Tax Guide, for use in preparing your 1986 returns, are now available at the Extension Office. The guide is extremely valuable when preparing your return. I realize that many farmers rely on an accountant or tax practitioner to file their return, so be sure to pick up a copy and give it to them. There are a number of changes in the tax regulations. It would be well to study them, so your records are accurate when you review your accounts with your preparer.

A few important tax dates for farmers. You may elect to pay your 1986 estimated income tax with Form 1040-ES by January 15, 1987. You can then file your 1986 federal income tax return, Form 1040, by April 15. If you do not pay with Form 1040-ES at this time, your return will be due March 2, 1987.

To Practice Holiday Safety

This is not a new idea but one that bears repeating. With the holiday season approaching, there are many extra decorations and events that can present fire hazards. We urge every parent to

discuss the need of safety measures that will prevent serious fires and possible human injury.

Too many people are careless with evergreen decorations and Christmas trees. Candles, fireplaces and overloading our electrical lines are all possible fire hazards when not carefully handled. We urge everyone to make an effort to be careful with holiday decorations, and certainly don't take chances. If an item is a fire hazard, you should remove it.

To Properly Store Firewood

We are more energy conscious then we've ever been...and that is certainly a good trend. Many homes are equipped with a fireplace or wood stove. This means the use of more firewood. Proper storage is important.

When storing your firewood, keep it outside since many insects may hibernate in the wood piles. If you keep it inside, they'll think it's spring and wake up to become a pest in your home. If this happens, use an ant and roach aerosol for control. It's a lot easier just to keep the firewood in a cold garage or some outside shelter. The important thing is to keep it as dry as possible, even if it means covering it with a plastic tarp. Keep in mind that wet firewood takes a lot of heat just to dry it out.

The Cooperative Extension Service is an affirmative action equal opportunity educational institution

Farm Calendar

Saturday, December 6
Southeast Regional 4-H Leaders Forum, Montgomery County 4-H Center.

Monday, December 8
Tax Week at Penn State, J.O. Keller Conference Center, Penn State University main campus; continues through Dec. 11.
Chester County Cooperative Extension annual meeting, Southeast Farm Credit office, Avondale, 7:15 p.m.
Dairy Farms of Distinction meeting.
Fourth Annual Cooperative Directors School, Pa. Association of Farmer Co-ops,

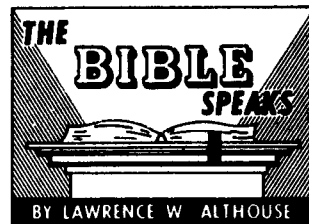
per hundredweight in the class one price while market demands stayed relatively stable. If dairymen hope to change this, they will have to do it by controlling the milk supply, just like dairymen in 35 other markets do today.

More information on RCMA is available by calling the following numbers: 717-278-1259, 717-833-5776, 814-364-1349, 215-693-5601, 717-739-4187, 717-524-7625, 814-326-4308, or any PDA regional office.

Sincerely,
Keith Eckel,
President Pennsylvania Farmers Association
Charles Wismer,
Master Pennsylvania State Grange
David S. Stetler,
President Pennsylvania Farmers Union
Richard E. Grubb,
Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture

Penn State University; call 814-863-0655.

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Background Scripture: Acts 2; 4: 32:35.

Devotional Reading: Acts 5:33-42.

It might seem inappropriate to you, but when I read the passages from Acts 2 and 4 about the earliest days of the Church, I found myself remember a popular seasonal song that Perry Como used to sing, "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas."

I'll admit that these passages are rarely, if ever, associated with Christmas. But, if you look at them carefully, I think you'll find that there's quite a bit of the Christmas spirit reflected in them.

BEGINNING AGAIN

When Simon Peter completed his Pentecost sermon, his listeners were "cut to the heart" and wanted to know "Brethren, what shall we do?" Simon Peter's reply was no less direct than the question: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (2:38a). His listeners had realized, through Peter's preaching, that they needed to, in effect, make a new beginning in their lives, to be "born again" in the words of John's Gospel, and Peter was telling them how to do it.

Doesn't that sound a lot like Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation, when we celebrate, not only the Word becoming Flesh in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, but the Good News that our own lives can be reborn through him? Christmas is a time when, looking at the mess we've made of our lives and our world, we are assured that we can really begin again.

Peter also says to his congregation, "...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38b). And that sounds a lot like Christmas, too. On the first Christmas, God gave his children the best gift he could possibly give us: His Son. And when Jesus finished his ministry on earth, his disciples found that God's Christmas gift to the world was even more valuable than they had realized: Jesus was physically gone from them, but now he would be present in them in a way that would prove even better.

Best of all, this gift was to be, not just for the chosen few, but for everyone who would receive it: "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off..." (2:39). Christmas is a time when many of us realize, all too briefly, that our family circles are not wide enough. Christmas has a way of helping us expand our vision from the confinements of our own lives and homes in an awareness that God's children are everywhere on this planet — and maybe beyond.

AS ANY HAD NEEDED

But the part that more than any other sounds a lot like Christmas to me is the description of what happens afterwards: "And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need..." (2:44,45). Once a year, for a few brief hours or days, just because it's Christmas, we rise above the levels that limit our daily lives and do extraordinary things: we contact forgotten friends, we give gifts (even, sometimes, to people from whom we don't expect to receive something in return), we feed the needy, we forgive and forget, and reach out in good will far beyond our parochial backyards. For a brief moment, we act in ways that prove that it is possible for us to be the Church that God in Christ intended us to be.

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