



OPINION

GUEST EDITORIAL

Cooperation Key

To Improved Farm Income

BY KATHY E. GILL
Executive Director,
Pa. Association of
Farmer Cooperatives
What's a dairy
farmer to do?

Federal price support levels have dropped steadily throughout the '80s, from \$13.10 on January 1, 1983 to \$10.60 on January 1, 1988. And most economists are forecasting a drop to \$10.10 on January 1, 1989.

Six years and a 23 percent drop in federal milk prices, despite a paid diversion program and a whole-herd buyout. The writing is on the wall: the federal price support program is heading steadily back to its origin -- a vehicle for price support... not a price-setting mechanism but a floor, the proverbial "safety net."

Northeastern regional factors -- higher land values, attractive off-farm employment opportunities, declining unemployment rates -- are not factored in the federal price.

Higher prices, then, must come from the market, not the government. And the only way all Northeastern dairy farmers can realize higher prices and improved net farm income is by working together. That means joining and supporting cooperatives like the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA), the Middle Atlantic Milk Marketing Agency (MACMA) or a more traditional dairy cooperative.

The alternative is to let Washington-set prices trigger dog-eat-dog competition as producers scramble for the small fluid market share with individual handler premiums.

An issue of control

There is a lot of rhetoric in farm circles about farmers being price-takers, not price-makers. It's time to substitute action for words. Cooperatives are the only way farmers can control their prices and achieve higher farm income. Why? It takes unified, collective action to exercise the right to establish the price of milk.

Organizations like RCMA and MACMA have been able to unify dairy farmer economic interests. Because milk used for fluid consumption has the highest value and is the most difficult to import from other markets, that is where the premium is being fought.

The Class I premium is the difference between the farmer-established price and the federal order price. Remember, these premiums are in addition to the prices paid by traditional cooperatives or

other handlers. It's the icing on the cake, so to speak. So if a few handlers succeed in convincing their farmer suppliers to turn their backs on cooperation, who is exercising market control?

Something this powerful, with this much potential for improving farm income, must be illegal, right? Although there are folks who would have you believe RCMA is illegal, they are wrong.

A question of legality

Congress recognized that farmers could never set the price they received for their products if they were prohibited from joint marketing. That's because there are a lot more farmers selling milk than there are handlers buying it. So Congress provided protection for farmers who want to exercise control over their pricing.

There is a restriction: farmers cannot unduly enhance prices. That's why RCMA's current Federal Order 2 Class I price of \$14.45 is determined using economic factors in the market. In fact, this price is three percent lower than the Federal Order 2 Class I price in January 1985.

Over the same period, consumer prices have increased. From 1985 to 1988, the consumer price index for food increased an average of 3.15 percent per year. But the price farmers received for milk has steadily declined. Clearly, dairy farmers are not guilty of undue price enhancement.

So what is a dairy farmer to do?

Federal programs are taking a back-seat to market forces. So farmers who want to control the price they receive for their product, rather than take whatever price someone is willing to offer -- have only one answer. Cooperate with fellow dairy farmers. Today. Tomorrow could well be too late.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

To Use Quality Seed

Many people are making plans for the 1988 growing season. In these plans, we should be preparing to use the very best quality seeds possible. Leftover seeds may be satisfactory if properly stored. If they are certified or top quality seed to start with, it would be a good idea to run a germination test to be certain they'll grow. This can be done with the old, but still effective, "Rag Doll" method (wrapping seeds in a rolled-up moist rag or burlap, or by placing seeds in a dish on wet paper towels, cover with plastic, and keep in a warm place for at least 10 days). If these seeds do not grow under these tests, don't rely on them for your crop.

Certified seed may cost a little more in the beginning, but usually is worth the difference.

To Broadcast Legumes

Alfalfa and red clover growers who are planning to broadcast the seed into a stand of winter wheat or barley should be preparing their seed now. Research and experience have both proven that early March seeding will give the best results. It's the time of year when the ground freezes and thaws frequently, creating a "honeycomb" condition to the top soil. This is an excellent way to give the seeds a light covering of top soil. If the broadcast seeding is made in late March, this condition may not prevail.

The seeds should be of top quality and be inoculated with legume bacteria before seeding.

To Be Aware of Alkaline Water for Pesticides

If your water is alkaline, especially if the pH is 8 or greater, you may have trouble getting good results from the pesticide spray material you are using on cropland. Water supplies in many areas have sufficient natural alkalinity to cause a "breakdown" of certain pesticides.

This means pest control may be somewhat less than desirable, or even non-existent because the ingredient will be rendered inactive before it even reaches the plant or pest. If the spray is allowed to stand several hours before spraying, as much as 50 percent or more of the active ingredient may be decomposed.

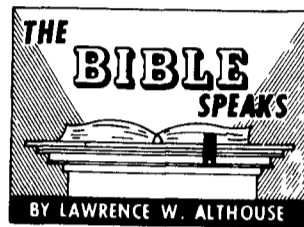
Our pesticide specialist tells us that a pH in the range of 4 to 6 is recommended for most pesticide sprays. You can adjust spray solutions to this range by buffering agents. In general, the insecticides

are affected more severely by alkaline water than fungicides or herbicides.

To Prepare For Dormant Sprays

Many types of trees are infested with various kinds of scale insects. These pests attach themselves to the bark and twigs and shrubs and suck strength from the plant. One of the best treatments is to apply a dormant spray oil before the buds start to open. The date of the spray will vary with the weather. However, on many fruit trees and shrubbery this will be late February and early March. The spray should be applied before the buds open. In addition, a spray during May or June while the insect is in the crawler stage is strongly suggested; materials for this spray can be Sevin or Malathion. Scale insects should be controlled -- the way is to use a dormant spray.

The Cooperative Extension service is an affirmative action, equal opportunity educational institution.



HOW EVEN IS "GETTING EVEN"?
February 21, 1988

Background Scripture:
Matthew 18.

Devotional Reading:
1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

Just before Christmas, I saw an article in the Dallas Morning News about a new gadget that was being "marketed for adults." This gadget would be installed in your auto and, whenever another driver committed any kind of offense against you -- taking your parking place, cutting in line ahead of you, taking up more than just one lane -- you could press a button on the gadget and get the satisfaction of hearing simulated sounds of cannon fire and explosions indicating that you had "zapped" your opponent. "Don't get mad," said the advertisement, "get even!"

According to the article, the company manufacturing this gadget was recording record sales. I hope that the gadget proved to be a marketing disaster. Can you imagine the effect upon children, seeing Daddy or Mommy responding to a minor irritation with a simulated "zap"? Is the step from a simulated "zap" to a real one all that far? How much more instruction in "getting even" do our children need?

LOVE'S LIMIT

The desire to "get even" is one of our greatest human temptations. Is it something we learn, or are we born with it? I think that mostly it is something we are taught. We very early learn that we are expected to "get even." That teaching of retaliation may come from our peers, our society, our world. The movies and television -- espe-

cially "children's cartoons" -- often teach "getting even" as a way of life and essential to one's "honor."

Once again we can see just how radically different are Jesus' teachings on this subject. Nowhere do we find Jesus ever suggesting that we need to "get even" with someone. Instead, what he teaches is diametrically opposed to "getting even." So, when Peter asks him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?", Jesus surprises him by saying, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18-21,22).

Actually, when we think we are "getting even," we are simply perpetuating the original wrong. Thus, when we retaliate against others, we only think we are "getting even." That is because these matters are judged, not by our own standards, but by God's. It is assumed that when we retaliate against someone else, we have "evened the score." In reality, however, God sees our act of retaliation as the creation of a new debt and in his sight there is no "getting even."

WHO'S AHEAD?

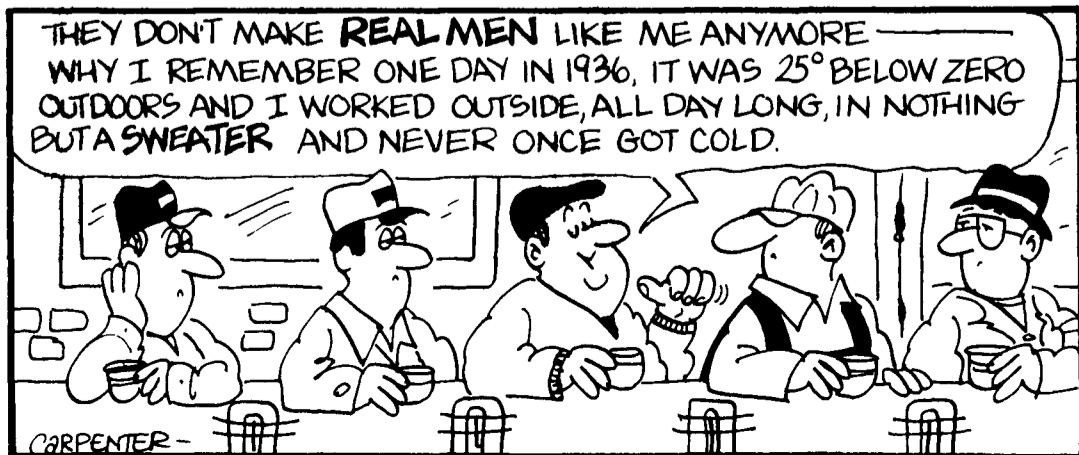
There is some powerful evidence of this in the world today. Consider the Arab vs. Israeli conflict and animosity. Both the Arab and the Israeli regard themselves as the injured party who needs to "get even." Both trace the present conflict to an act or acts by the other party. Who is right? Both are right or no one is right. An Israeli shoots an Arab because another Arab stabbed an Israeli. The Arab attacker, in turn, claims that an Israeli bulldozed his family dwelling. The Israel with the bulldozer justifies his action with the remembrance of an attack by Arabs on his family farm. And so on and so on! Where did it all begin and where does it stop? So long as we are driven to "get even," it will never stop.

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Farm Calendar

Saturday, February 20
Lancaster FFA Meat Judging, Stauffers, 9:30 a.m.
Adams Co. Fruit Growers Annual Mtg., Bendersville Community Hall
Cumberland Valley Coop Annual Mtg., Shippensburg Senior High School Shippensburg.
Cecil Community College Horse Program, Cecil Co., Md.
Monday, February 22
Soil Fertility School, York 4-H

Center, small meeting room, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; through Feb. 23. John Rowehl, 757-9657.
Appreciation Dinner for Members of York Farm Credit Service, Dover Fire Hall, noon. Also being held at Eureka Fire Co., 7:30 p.m. Leah Woodward, 792-3652.
Tuesday, February 23
Pennsylvania Holstein Convention
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Lancaster Farming
Established 1955
Published Every Saturday
At Record-Express Office Building
22 E. Main Street
Litz, PA 17543
— by —
Lancaster Farming, Inc.
A Steinman Enterprise
Robert G. Campbell General Manager
Everett R. Newswanger Managing Editor
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