

Land Conference:

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time Sisters in Erie said stewardship determines obligations. "We owe a debt to the next generation. We are building a new society in the shell of the old. It must be a balance between realistic and practical."

Robert Rodale

The nationally known publisher of Rodale Press, Inc., reasoned, "One thing I learned, people become immune to bad news, but they do not become immune to solutions."

Rodale, who isn't afraid to dream big and isn't discouraged by impossibilities, said that Lancaster County farms should be set aside as a living park where farmers continue their daily duties. A degree of protection would come if the area were accessible only by walking, bicycling or arriving in a horse drawn carriage.

The farmland must be saved, Rodale said. "The problem calls for dreams and a challenge to be inventive. Make Lancaster priceless."

Audience response

Discussion was wide-ranging during conference breaks as conferees wrestled with viable solutions and rejected others promoted by

the conference speakers. Said Victor Ziegler who owns farms in Lebanon, Myerstown and York, "It's great to dream. But we must be willing to put up the finances to offset the losses of persons being hurt by restrictions." Ziegler who practices conservation methods and has also sold off building lots from untillable farmland believes, "We should farm the rich fertile land and live on the rocks and hills."

Erma Weaver, former organic vegetable farm grower, said, "Meetings such as this one are important. If the ideas aren't discussed by educators who get paid to sit and think, it's not going to happen anywhere. Policy would never get changed." She added that her husband is disillusioned with coming to meetings similar to these because they're too idealistic. She said, "The bottom line is that farmers need to earn more for their products. If they earn enough, the land will stay in farming."

Another conferee, Omer Brubaker, a small parttime farmer with a job in the Agriculture Stabilization Conservative Service, added, "People complain of rising food costs, but when you consider that only three cents goes toward the cost of the wheat in bread, then

we know we need major price hikes for food. It's a crime we can pay any cost for recreation, but we don't want to pay labor for food. Consumers are willing to pay for materials they can see such as plastic bags, but they aren't willing to pay the farmer enough to cover his costs."

Workshops

Eight workshops were held during Friday afternoon sessions. Some such as the one led by Cliff and Lois Kenagy, Oregon vegetable farmers, who play a major role in their state farmland preservation movement, shared their story in hopes that others could glean ideas and insight to apply to their area.

They said Oregon farmers ran into difficulty as they dealt with encroachment. "Farming was being pushed out; we needed to go further for equipment and supplies." Neighbors in nearby housing developments complained when water from the Kenagy's irrigation system went on the other side of the fence.

The Kenagys organized a support group and appealed to the county for farmland protection. They fought for and won legislation that agricultural land tax should not be based on resale but on farm use value, that planning should happen by the citizens, that state wide planning goals are

necessary, that agricultural lands should be preserved and maintained for farm use consistent with existing and future needs for agricultural products, forest and open spaces.

The Kenagys believe that with

proper planning "There's a space for all, but the community decides where." She said, "You'll need to do things differently in Lancaster because it's a different area, but it's possible to find a Lancaster County way."

Congressman Goodling

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and dwindling standards of living for farm families.

Dover grain and livestock producer Mike Hoffman drew audience applause as he summarized concerns of local farmers. He cited tremendous increases in grain prices in a 30-day period, noting that it has hurt those who purchase feed, and not helped local grain growers because they have little left to sell after back-to-back years of drought. In addition, grain producers may expect to lose the last half of their deficiency payments, due to the increased market prices.

"It's not gospel, it's not law, it's not even out of the Ag Committees," Goodling warned as he reviewed key points of the Drought Assistance Act of 1988, offered in similar legislative packages in both the House and Senate. The Congressman added that he anticipated the legislation coming up for voting under "closed rule," which would allow no amendments.

Major points of the Drought Assistance Act of 1988 include:

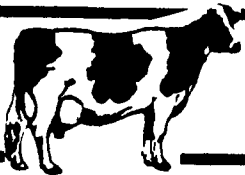
- establishment of new emergency feed assistance programs; extending producer eligibility to those who substantial loss of feed production and producers not normally growing their own feed;

- provide disaster payment to producers with losses of 35 percent of the 1988 crop due to drought; crop insurance participants could receive insurance benefits and disaster payments, not to exceed normal crop yield income.

- directs the Secretary of Agriculture to forego the 50-cent milk support price cut scheduled for January 1, 1989;

- allows producers to retain advance deficiency payments on any unit of production failed or unplanted due to the drought, unless disaster payment had been received on that unit;

- directs the Secretary to make available operating loans for 1989 production, and exercise forbearance provisions in relation to FmHA loans.



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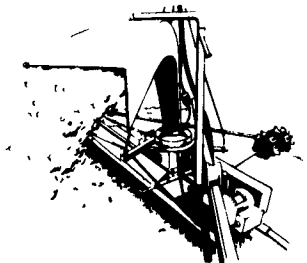
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