

# Penn State Faculty Participates In Rural Development Symposium

**UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre)** — The United States differs from many European countries in its approach to planning and developing its rural areas. For the most part, U.S. rural policy has centered agriculture. However, for many European nations, rural policy has encompassed a broader array of social and economic concerns.

This was the major conclusion reached by participants at the "Symposium on Comparative National Perceptions and Political Significance of Rural Areas" held at the Aspen Foundation's Wye Plantation on the Chesapeake Bay. The international assembly was sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the Aspen Institute, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Penn State University.

Three Penn State faculty members participated in the program which included experts from France, West Germany, Japan, Denmark, Great Britain and the United States. Theodore R. Alter,

associate professor of agricultural economics, served as organizer and co-chairperson for the event. Stephen Smith, associate professor of agricultural economics, and Drew Hyman, professor of public policy and community systems, were invited participants.

"The purpose of the conference was to focus on each nation's perspectives on rural development and how these perspectives are reflected in political processes and public policies," stated Alter. "Implications for U.S. rural development and public policy were significant topics in the discussions, giving the U.S. participants an opportunity to view the current status of their rural areas in the light of other countries' developments."

"European nations have tended to deal with rural development in a broader, more holistic context than has been the case in the United States. The U.S. rural policy has for the most part been agricultural policy," Hyman observed.

"In Europe, rural policy encompasses not only agriculture, forestry, mining and fisheries but also other uses of rural areas including landscaping, environmental protection, recreation, housing, health and the entire rural infrastructure. Planning for these latter concerns is scattered throughout U.S. policy and is generally an offshoot of urban policy."

"Rural America and the natural resources from which we have traditionally derived our livelihoods are threatened by profound changes in the structure of agriculture, demography and development," said Alter. "In many areas of this country the decline in the number of farmers has resulted in an emerging economic structure with a reliance on more than the agricultural sector."

According to Smith, this pattern has significant consequences for economic development. "In this country we've focused our efforts on the industrialization of rural areas. At the same time we know

that non-manufacturing employment is the wave of the future," he said. "We need to think about what we need for high-quality rural communities and the investments necessary to make it happen."

On a note closer to home Alter said, "We were pleased to confirm that we at Penn State are asking the right questions and developing substantive programs in rural development." Smith agreed, stating, "We have a solid core of faculty members who are focusing

on rural development." Hyman added, "A major strength is our interdisciplinary faculty with its emphasis on applied and policy research. The symposium highlighted the fact that rural development requires a synthesis of perspectives."

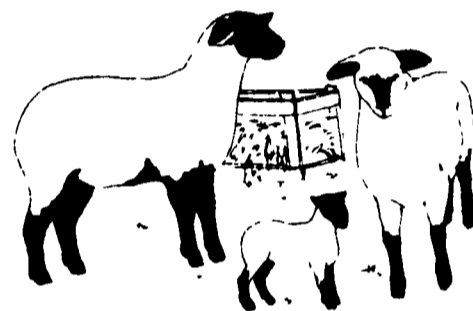
Alter and Richard Long, assistant director of the Agriculture and Rural Economy Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, are preparing to publish the proceedings of the symposium.

## Chester County Plans Crops Day

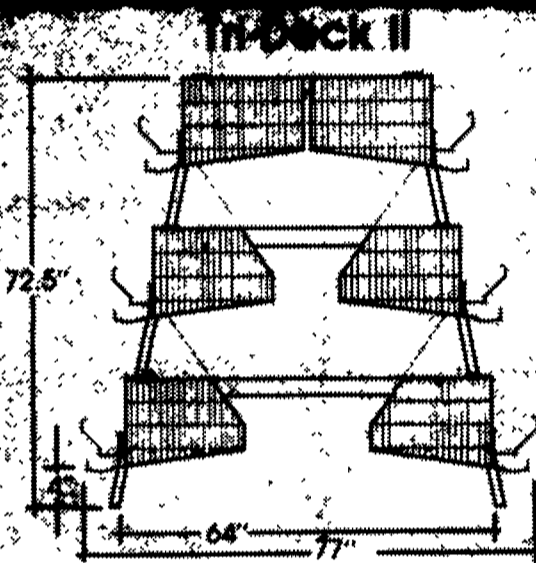
**W. CHESTER** — The Chester County Cooperative Extension will hold Chester County Crops Day on Thursday, March 16, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the East Brandywine Fire Hall in Guthrieville. The Crops Day program includes an opportunity for pesticide license update credits.

Speakers for the Crops Day meeting include John Yocum and Lynn Hoffman of Penn State's Agronomy Department and Alan Strock and Dave Swartz, Chester County Cooperative Extension Agents. Commercial exhibitors will display the latest technology available to agronomic crop farmers in the area.

There is a registration fee of \$5 which includes lunch. For registration information, contact the Chester County Cooperative Extension at 215-696-3500.



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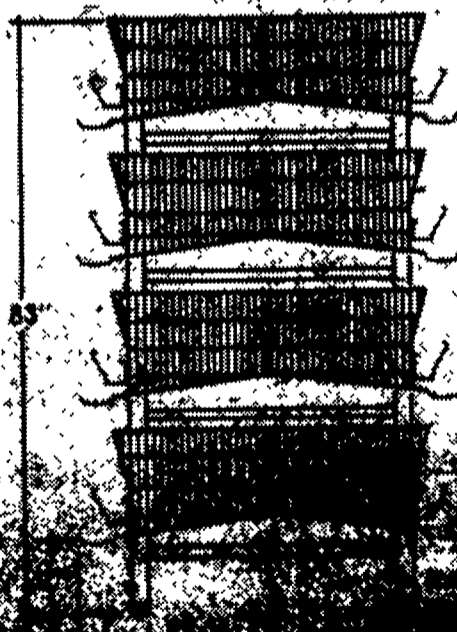


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