

Tobacco Farmers Fear Tax May Cut Need For Product

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Pennsylvania's tobacco farmers are working long and hard hours in the field, tobacco plants are slowly flowering due to this year's prolonged drought, and the success of the tobacco harvest (in the fields and in the state house) is still in question. Basically, there's no joy these days in the smokeless tobacco fields of Pennsylvania.

That's because Governor Casey has proposed a 30 percent tax on smokeless tobacco. The fear among tobacco farmers is that this tax means fewer sales, and fewer sales means loss of jobs, revenue, and livelihood.

"When you say smokeless tobacco, you say Pennsylvania, and it's unbelievable that the governor is trying to balance the budget on the backs of hard-working smokeless tobacco growers," said Claude Martin of Lancaster Leaf.

This tax proposal, part of Governor Casey's latest initiative to resolve Pennsylvania's \$3 billion budget deficit, is presently being debated in the state legislature.

The fact is this tax would only generate less than 1/2 of 1 percent of the revenue needed to resolve the deficit. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's smokeless tobacco farmers say they've been unjustly singled out by the governor to solve a problem that lawmakers have created.

"I've always been willing to pay my fair share, but my fair share seems to be never ending," said William Snavely of Lancaster, a fifth generation tobacco farmer.

"My family has worked the land and raised smokeless tobacco since the 1800s. This tax not only threatens our family tradition, but it endangers my livelihood as

well," said tobacco farmer Dave Johnston, while taking a break from his field.

"The human element is the most important element of this tax proposal," said Johnston. "Raising the tax endangers a way of life that Pennsylvania smokeless tobacco farmers have known for generations."

Pennsylvania's smokeless tobacco industry is built upon the family tradition and hard work of its tobacco farmers. It's tough, mostly hand work, from the preparation of the seedbeds to the morning of auction. It takes more than 250 man-hours to grow and harvest a single acre of tobacco leaf. And modern technologies have done little to change the family farmers' cultivation of the crop since the 17th century.

Tobacco is one of the few crops that gives Pennsylvania's family farmers something to do year-

round. Tiny tobacco seeds are planted in the late fall, with only one in four actually growing into a strong plant. In the springtime, tiny 5-6 inch tobacco plants are pulled by hand to be transplanted. With about 8,000 tobacco plants growing on an acre, transplanting takes the family farmer a considerable amount of time. But it's nothing compared with the time and work involved in harvesting, curling, and storing the crop. During the fall, mature stalks are cut by hand, stripped and stored in the family barn.

The benefits of hard-working Pennsylvania family tobacco farmers continue to be witnessed at the state's treasury. The tobacco industry employs more than 85,000 Pennsylvanians and bears a grossly disproportionate share of the state's tax burden. In 1990,

federal and state government collected \$2.2 billion in tobacco-related revenue. Much of this burden, \$510.8 million, was paid out in excise and sales tax alone.

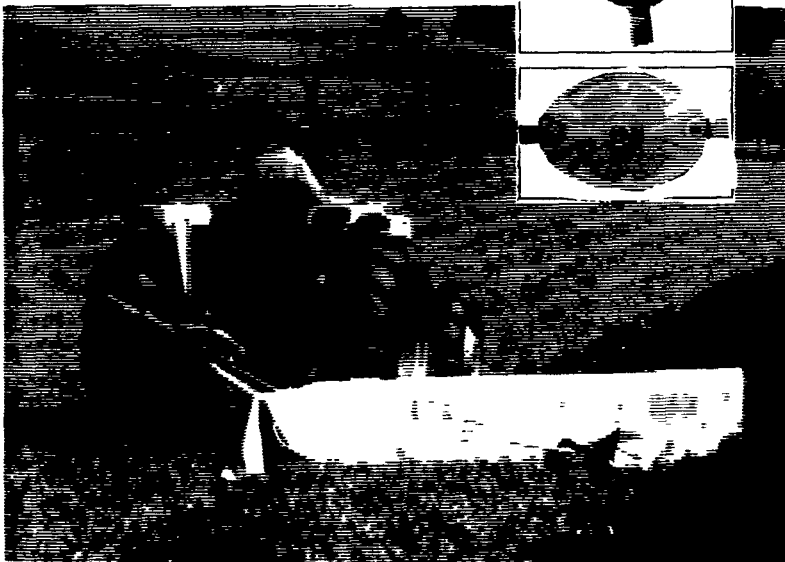
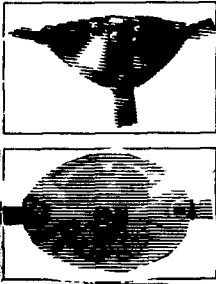
"There's nothing quite like providing for your family by waking up at 5:30 a.m. every morning, putting in fourteen hour days, and finally seeing a bountiful crop of tobacco that you've cultivated and nurtured from a tiny seed," said Johnston.

If Governor Casey's smokeless tobacco tax passes, those days could become faint memories. Johnston simply states: "I am a good husband and father, I give to the community, I pay my taxes. I do all the things that a hard-working American is supposed to do. And Governor Casey wants to put me out of business, I don't understand it."

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Cash Receives Advising Award

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Dr. Erskine H. Cash, professor of animal science in Penn State's College of Agriculture, received the 1991 College of Agriculture Alumni Society's Excellence in Academic Advising Award.

The award recognizes advisers with outstanding skills in academic advising, individual student goal setting, career planning, and personal counseling. Advisers in the College of Agriculture are nominated by alumni, faculty, students, and administrators.

As past coordinator of advising for the dairy and animal science baccalaureate degree program, Cash's responsibilities included recruiting prospective students, orienting new students to the prog-

ram, assisting other student advisers, and maintaining a file of summer and full-time employment opportunities.

"I can think of no other professor more deserving of this recognition than Dr. Cash," said Kenneth Winebark, associate extension agent in Lebanon County, in a letter supporting Cash's nomination. "His guidance, friendship, and generosity have had a tremendous impact on my life and the lives of many others."

Other nominees for this year's excellence in advising award were Dr. Robert O. Herrmann, professor of agricultural economics; James W. Hilton, associate professor of agricultural engineering and education; and Michael D. Orzolek, professor of vegetable crops.



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