

# Reciprocal Exchange Takes Hog Farmer To China

EVERETT NEWSWANGER  
Managing Editor

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)—In a reciprocal exchange after a Lancaster hog farmer accommodated visitors from China to see his digester that turns manure into usable methane fuel, Harlan Keener had the chance to go to China as part of a USDA fact-finding tour.

"I was walking on air with excitement when Dr. Richard Fite called from Washington and asked if I still wanted to go to China," Keener said. "The answer was 'yes,' and that's how I got to go along."

At a luncheon Tuesday at the Stockyard Inn, sponsored by Pennfield Feeds, Keener and Fite reported on the recent trip and showed slides of people, places, and equipment they saw. Fite's work with USDA is to make recommendations on the government's brucellosis eradication program in the US. He found that the major problem with the disease was in wild pigs in the south and not much was being done with the program.

When Fite learned that the Chinese had developed an oral vaccine that might be usable in the US, he put in a request for an exchange mission to China to research the vaccine. The mission was approved, and when it became clear that an additional person could go along on the trip, Fite asked Keener to be that person because of his knowledge of pork production.

"I was surprised at the number of people in China," Keener said. "They have about the same square miles of land as we have in the US. But we have 250 million people. They have one billion, 400 million people. A city of one million people is a small city to them."

Keener said he was fascinated by the way the Chinese use manure and sewage as a source of energy. Since pork is a staple in China, (they have 360 million hogs compared to only 56 million hogs in the US) 90 percent of the hogs are housed at rural and urban residences. Each household combines the manure from about 10 pigs and the household's sewage in a small digester that allows about two cubic feet of methane gas to be siphoned off for cooking and to provide lighting for the home. Millions of homes have these digester

systems as part of their household economy.

As for the countryside, Keener said they saw beautiful scenery but noted that the rivers and streams were very polluted. And the air was often thick with smoke and smog that was hard on a person's eyes.

"We saw lots of people who, unlike what I saw in the Soviet Union in 1988, had plenty of food," Keener said. "They are friendly people, and we were treated very well. Wheat and rice are main crops, and in some areas camels, goats and sheep are plentiful."

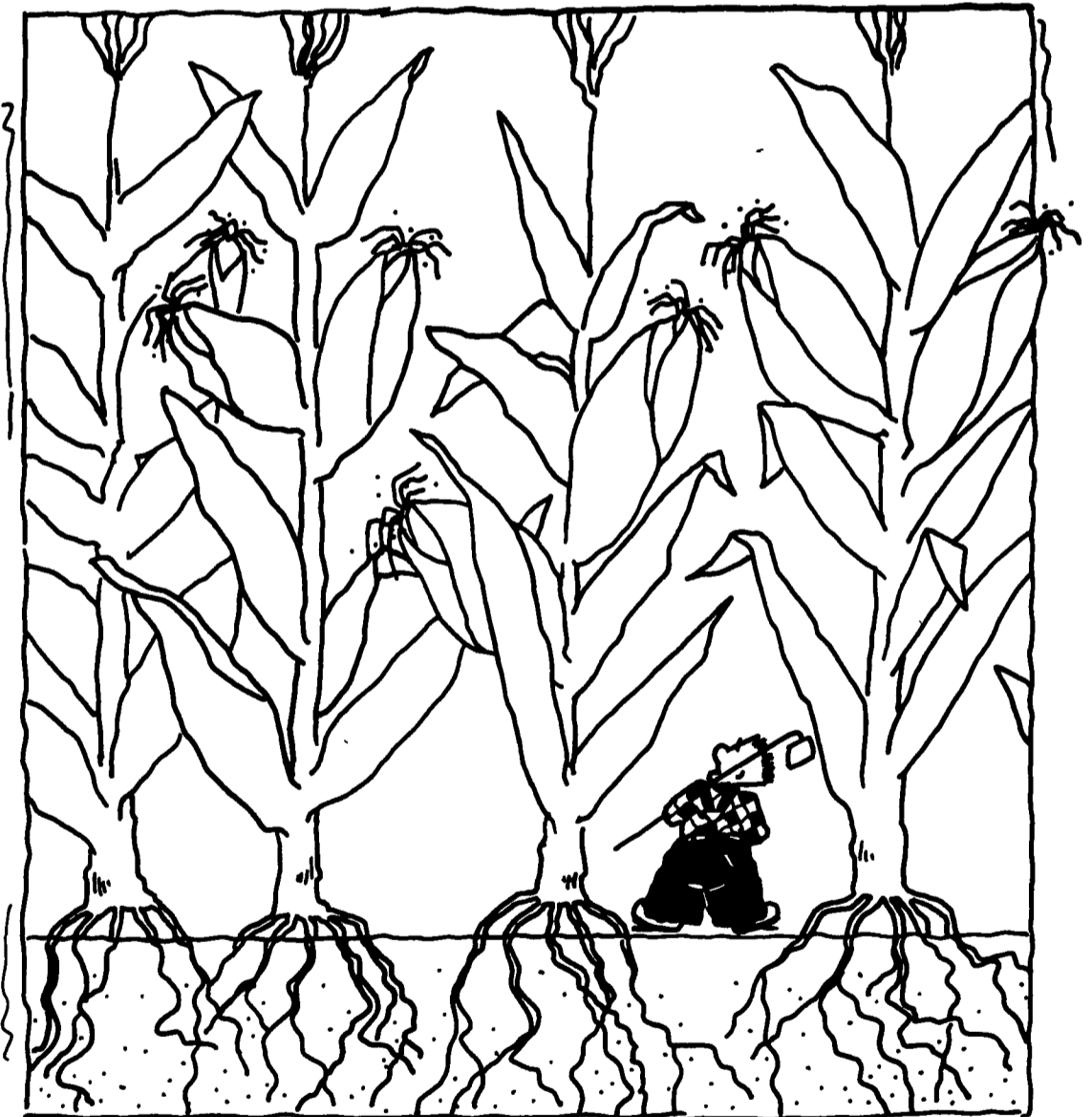
To summarize the findings of the trip, Fite said they did obtain information about the brocolusis vaccine produced by the Chinese. But since they were not able to bring samples along back to the US, they have not been able to do any diagnostic tests in the US.

"We need to obtain some of the vaccine and test it in our labs to find out if the claims made by the Chinese are true. If they are true, then the vaccine is better than anything we have in the US, and we will find application for it in our programs."



At a luncheon at the Stockyard Inn, sponsored by Pennfield Feeds, Tuesday, Harlan Keener, hog farmer and Dr. Richard Fite, USDA policy analyst, reported on their fact finding trip to China. In the photo are left to right, Keener; Fite; Donald Horn, president; Mike Horn, vice president, general manager, ag products and Ray Lehr, vice president, feed marketing.

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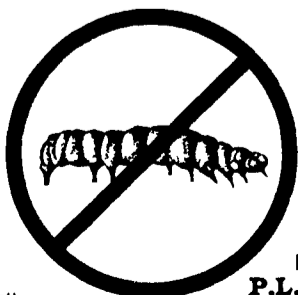
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