

Sustainable Ag Association Forms

MILLHEIM (Centre Co.) — Following the lead of most of the states along the Atlantic seaboard, Pennsylvania now has a statewide association dedicated to the advancement of sustainable agriculture.

In June, the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) was officially incorporated as Pennsylvania's first such organization.

In February of this year, more than 500 people attended the state's first ever statewide conference on sustainable agriculture. In addition to sharing information and learning more about sustainable agricultural issues, the participants of "Farming for the Future" left conference organizers with a clear mandate: establish a sustainable agriculture association in Pennsylvania.

With a lot of hard work and many meetings since February, the mandate has been met and the goals of the conference have come

to fruition in the form of PASA. The formation of PASA represents the first time Pennsylvania has had its own farmer-oriented agriculture organization devoted to sustainable and organic agriculture.

Since the conference, PASA has opened an office in Millheim, Centre County; selected a board of directors; hired an executive director; and initiated 10 on-farm demonstration projects.

In March, a volunteer advisory committee of more than 70 farmers, consumers, environmentalists, researchers, and agency people from all over the state met to discuss the priorities outlined during the conference. They also organized committees to set out various programs, named the organization, and selected the initial board of directors.

The newly elected PASA officers are Preston Boop, Briarpatch Organic Farms, Mifflinburg, president; Cass Peterson, Flickerville

Mountain Farm, Warfordsburg, vice president; Christine Beddard, Lady Moon Farm, Selinsgrove, secretary; and Paul Shaw, Walnut Acres, Inc., Penns Creek, treasurer.

Incorporated as nonprofit and tax exempt, PASA has been established to develop, support, and promote sustainable food and farming systems, now and for future generations, that are economically viable, environmentally sound, scientifically based, and community oriented. PASA's general mission will be to:

- Provide general education and outreach to those interested in sustainable and organic agriculture in Pennsylvania;
- Establish a statewide network of individuals and organizations involved with and interested in sustainable agriculture;
- Initiate on-farm demonstration programs to highlight profitable and sustainable agricultural practices and farming systems that are reliable, practical, and farmer driven;
- Provide technical information to farmers, processors, and marketers;
- Encourage marketing strategies for organic and sustainable crops, livestock, and food products;
- Promote sound farm policy and research which affects Pennsylvania farmers.

In order to carry out this mission, PASA recently hired its first executive director, Timothy Bowser of Millheim. In addition to coordinating the start-up of the Association, Bowser is managing a collaborative on-farm demonstration program between PASA and the American Farmland Trust (AFT). This program works with

farmers to initiate demonstrations of sustainable techniques and systems on their farms. The results will be published by AFT next winter in their sustainable agriculture series. Funding for this project as well as seed monies for PASA has been provided by AFT.

According to Bowser, discussions about the feasibility of forming an alternative ag association in Pennsylvania have been taking place for several years.

"I think the Farming for the Future Conference put to rest any doubts about whether a critical mass of interest existed," Bowser

said. "We have a very inclusive organization. A real diversity of producers and consumers from all over Pennsylvania have gotten involved. I think PASA has a very strong representation from the git go."

PASA's inaugural year will culminate with the second "Farming for the Future" Conference, to be held February 5 and 6, 1993 on the Penn State University Park Campus.

For more information about PASA or to request a membership brochure, contact PASA, P.O. Box 316, Millheim, PA 16854.

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The Westfalia automatic cluster remover gives the dairy farmer consistent milk-out.



PASA executive officers, left to right, Paul Shaw, treasurer; Preston Boop, president; Christine Beddard, secretary; Cass Peterson, vice president; and Timothy Bowser, executive director.

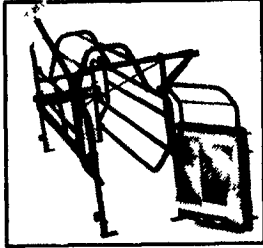
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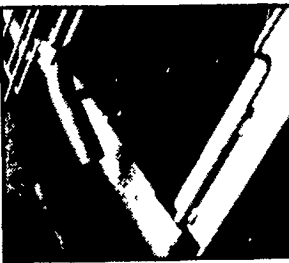
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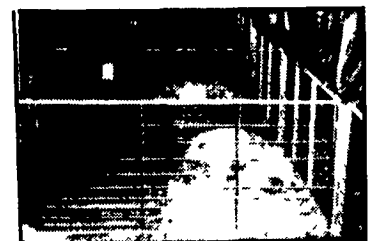
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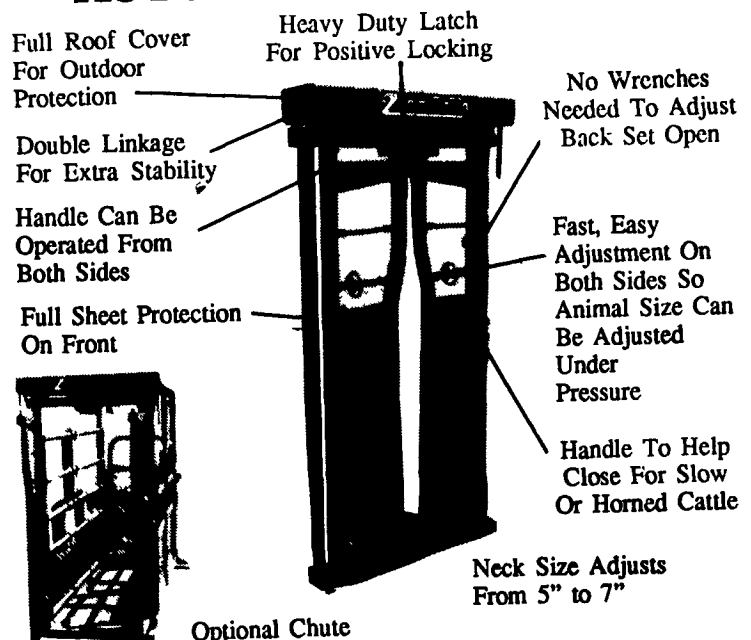
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