

Chinese Visit

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The Stauffer farm was chosen for the international visit because it demonstrates intensive animal production and how the Stauffers are using composting to dispose of animal waste. The Stauffer farm has also been used in government studies for water quality. The Chinese are interested in doing these same underground studies in their country because they are also faced with high density manure problems.

In 1980, the U.S. government drilled a well on the Stauffer farm to keep record of what is happening underground. Stauffer said that a publication will soon be released that reveals the governments findings on sediments, pollution, and underground activity.

Aaron and his son Clark joint farm 65 acres, which has been in the family since 1912. They raise 2,200 broilers and 1,000 plus pigs in addition to crop farming the land. Last year, Clark raised one-half acre of vegetables. The endeavor was so successful that this year, Clark raised 12 acres of vegetables, which he markets at a roadside stand and at a few local supermarkets.

The Stauffers do not use any commercial fertilizer. Their composting bins are used as a disposal for dead chickens. It takes about five weeks to fill one bin before it is topped with manure and allowed to go through a 7 to 10 day heat cycle that reaches 150 degrees. After the heat drops to about 100 degrees, the bin's contents are dumped into an adjacent bin where it completes another heat cycle. The composting is then complete and the compost is spread on the fields. No water is used in composting, which eliminates odors.

The Chinese were amazed to see that the chickens placed in the compost bin that morning had partially decomposed by late afternoon.

Clark said that even a sheep or hog can be decomposed in the compost bins used on the farm. Although he had been told that it was necessary to chop up larger carcasses, Clark said that he hasn't found that step necessary.

Previously chickens were composted in the ground on the Clark farm. But studies showed that the decomposing was happening too close to the ground water. For that reason, an above the ground compost was needed and has proven extremely effective.

"In the long run, compost bins are very cost efficient versus disposing of animals in other ways. In addition, you have the benefit of putting compost back on land," Clark said.

The Chinese were curious about the machinery, especially the Slurry Buggy used to haul liquid manure. They remarked that instead of silos, the Chinese dig trenches to store silage.

When the Chinese toured the Stauffers' fields, they tasted the tomatoes in order to compare the taste with those grown in China. Clark cut up two watermelons when he found the Chinese love them. The Chinese import watermelons from the U.S.

China has basically two types of farms: the intensified state-owned farm around the city and the one-acre rural farms. Although some of the state-owned farms have large chickens, the farms are not as nearly as automated as in this country. The Chinese admired the automation on local farms, but they were most interested in seeing methods of farming adaptable to the small

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Aaron Stauffer, second from right, dons a Chinese hat for the tour held on his Ephrata farm.



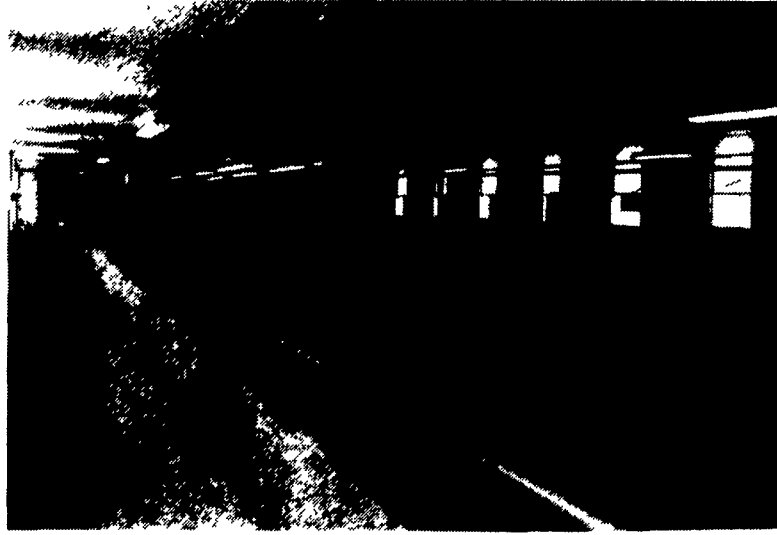
Clark Stauffer, right, lights some tobacco so that Chinese agricultural professionals who toured the farm could check the quality of the tobacco.

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