



MILK CHECK

THOMAS JURCHAK
Dairy Specialist
Lackawanna County

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Lackawanna Co. Extension Agent

SCRANTON (Lackawanna Co.) — With continued production increases, milk and dairy product prices continued their slipping and sliding that started in August.

By the middle of October cheese prices were down 8 cents on blocks and, since then, down another 4 cents to \$1.26 per block. But that's still 14 cents above the support price.

That's a total of 12 cents in price drops in 13 weeks so the predictions of a gradual decline were about right.

The increases in milk production have also continued at the 3 to 5 percent rate in the upper Midwest and New York.

Only Pennsylvania dropped back to 1 percent in September.

The affect of the cold, wet weather on harvesting corn for silage or grain may slow down production increases, but grain prices could be low enough to offset the poorer quality.

Right now, cheese processing capacity is being pushed to the limit and only butter—powder plants may have room for more milk.

Powder prices were helping last month, but that market is weakening also to the point where other regions are selling in powder markets normally served by the Midwest.

If price declines continue, you may see powder going into Commodity Credit Corporation storage by the end of the year. Even butter markets have fallen to the point where CCC purchased 3.7 million pounds the first week of November. That was the largest weekly purchase in three months.

Milk Prices

Following the drop in dairy product prices and production increase comes a drop in the Minnesota-Wisconsin Price Series.

After falling 31 cents in August and September, another 23 cents was added in October for a total of 54 cents in three months.

That makes the M-W \$12.05 for October and the first time this year that it fell below year-ago levels.

Further declines are expected for this year, but predictions of a drop to less than \$11 per hundredweight next spring are beginning to soften.

Considering the drop of 12 cents so far in cheese prices, the M-W should be down to \$11.79 from its peak of \$12.59 in July. So there's no doubt about further declines in the next two months particularly since butter and powder prices are adding to the drag.

The only thing that could help is a drop in milk production-increases due to poorer quality forage or lower prices. Or both.

Blend prices in all three federal orders (F.O.) in Pennsylvania are also below last month.

It was 22 cents lower in F.O.2 and F.O.4, and 17 cents in F.O.36. However, the blend prices are still above a year ago by 20 to 40 cents and probably won't drop below last year until next year.

Refund Alert

It's time to add up your milk check stubs to figure how much you shipped to handlers this year.

You've been paying more than 13 cents per-hundredweight all year,

Flower Growers Tour Lancaster

BIRD-IN-HAND (Lancaster Co.) — For the first time, the South Jersey Flower Growers Association made their annual Fall Greenhouse Tour outside the state of New Jersey.

The bus load of growers traveled to Lancaster County, where they toured Ken's Garden's; Witmer's Greenhouses; Geo. K. Groff, Inc.; Hellberg's Greenhouses; and Laysers's Flowers.

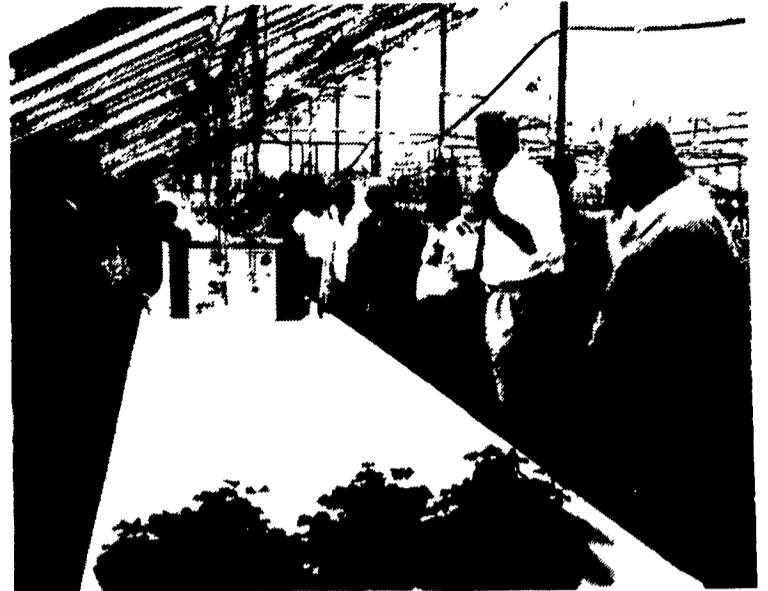
The day began at Laysers's Flowers with Donald Laysers and son, Steve. Laysers's has three locations totalling 13 acres, along with a retail store. Of special interest were the ebb and flow benches. For the Christmas season, Laysers's have 300,000 poinsettias ready to blossom.

Jim Dostal, manager of Hellberg's Greenhouses, welcomed the group to his acre range. The members toured the greenhouses, which at this time are growing poinsettias and geranium stock plants for spring cutting production. Hellberg's is testing a custom-made PVC bench liner used for the control of run-off. Dick Carroll of Loudon Plastics discussed its uses and applications in the greenhouse nursery market.

The group then met the staff of Geo. K. Groff, Inc. a greenhouse and nursery supplier in Bird-in-Hand.

The facility is comprised of about 30,000 square feet of warehouse, along with 15,000 square feet of outside storage. Owners Fred Hellberg and son, Tim, gave a brief history and tour.

Witmer's Greenhouses was the



Dick Carroll, Loudon Plastic, explains a new PVC bench covering.

next stop, where they were welcomed by Jay, Ray, and Stan Witmer. Witmer's began in 1898 with one greenhouse, which has grown to today's two locations, totalling more than 200,000 square feet. Witmer's are mainly a wholesale operation focused on spring production crops. A retail center caters to local clients.

The bus then proceeded through the Amish Country to Intercourse to Ken's Gardens. The group met Ken Lapp and son, Kerry. Ken's specializes in perennials and herbs. Ken spoke to the group about the change from wholesale/retail to all retail. There was increasing demand for more retail due to growth of housing from the western Philadelphia suburbs.

The bus trip was organized by the group vice president, Tim Powell of Powell's Greenhouses and Charlene Costaris, Atlantic County extension service. Costaris has worked to bring growers together since the late 1980s after the extension service began working closer with growers. The group has grown to more than 50 members and has recently hired an executive secretary, Kathie Coady, a former grower from the area. Coady will be formulating and developing plans for the association, which includes a newsletter and meetings. Coady can be reached at 223 Church Road, Medford, NJ 08055.

Nation's Ag Census Begins

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The 1992 Census of Agriculture begins with the mailing of report forms to the nation's more than two million farmers and ranchers, the Census Bureau announced recently.

Farmers and ranchers are being asked to report on their operations during 1992 and return their forms by February 1, 1993.

To reduce the effort it takes to answer the census, the report forms ask basic subjects such as land use and ownership, crop acreages and quantities harvested, livestock and poultry inventories, value of crops and livestock sold, and operator characteristics. Twenty percent of farms will be asked additional questions on production expenses, machinery inventories, market value of land and buildings, and income from farm-related sources.

Assistance in completing your census form is available locally from USDA offices of the Cooperative Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Administration.

Those not operating a farm or ranch who receive a census form are urged to return it to avoid additional mailings. Farmers and ranchers who do not receive a report form should write to the Bureau of the Census, 1201 East 10th Street, Jefferson, IN 47133-0001.

The law requiring farmers and ranchers to report in the census also protects the privacy of their reports.

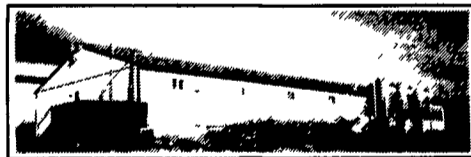
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