

# Trust Calls For Ag Plan Merger

WASHINGTON, D.C. — American Farmland Trust (AFT) strongly supported the consolidation of existing on-farm conservation plans into a single comprehensive plan under the authority of a total resource management agency called the Agricultural and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In testimony to members of a House Agriculture Subcommittee on H.R. 1440, AFT, a national farmland conservation group based in Washington, called the bill's concept of a single plan a critical

step in fully integrating resource conservation into agricultural policy. Fifteen federal programs now requiring farm plans involve conservation and the environment.

"The era of piecemeal conservation plans that address a single issue or meet the goal of only one agency must end," AFT Federal Policy Director Timothy W. Warman told members of a House Agriculture Subcommittee considering H.R. 1440. "American farmers can no longer afford the inefficiency and reduced effectiveness that result from the mixed

signals of conflicting plans."

Warman said a restructured Soil Conservation Service should be given responsibility for the single resource-based plan and be renamed the Agricultural and Natural Resource Conservation Service to reflect its total resource management role. The new structure, he said, would help move the country's agriculture system toward what AFT has termed a "Green Evolution" based on resource stewardship and marketplace economics.

# MILK CHECK

## THOMAS JURCHAK

Dairy Specialist  
Lackawanna County

**THOMAS JURCHAK**  
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.

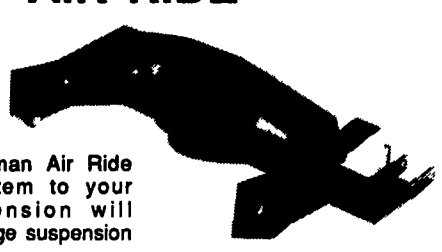
You've been paying more than 13 cents per-hundredweight all year, sending in excess of \$180 million in nine months to your Uncle Sam because of the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

USDA told Uncle Sam that you would be producing more milk this year in spite of lower prices. It was agreed that, if you didn't produce more than the previous year, you could have your money back — that's .1365 times all the milk you produced in 1992 compared to 1991.

I'm not saying it's for everyone, but if you're very close by the end of November you may want to feed a little more to the calves, stay under your 1991 production and collect your refund. Check it out while there's time to adjust.

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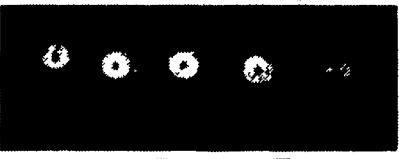
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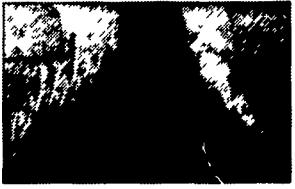
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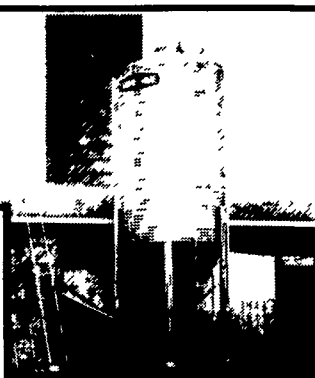
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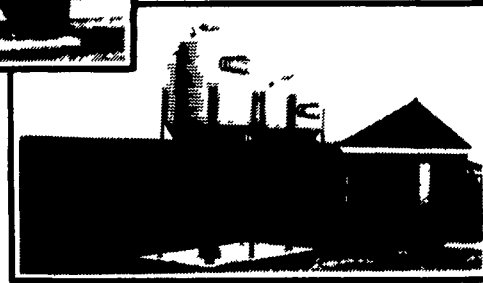
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