



OPINION

Where's The County Agent?

At the end of the 1800s, the U.S. government realized that technology was available to increase farm production. Ag experiment stations and land grant colleges were formed. As attempts were made to bring farmers the latest in scientific information, campus based professors realized that an "extension" of themselves had to come in a new group of folks. So the "County Agent" became a fellow locally based in nearly each county of the country. He had a direct phone line to campus and was given training by the experiment station professors. This person traveled over muddy roads and established contacts on many local farms.

About the 1920s and 30s youth clubs evolved whereby the county agent relayed information through the children of farm families. In many counties a female counterpart called the "Home Economics Agent" brought nutrition and food preparation information to farm families. In the 1930s and 40s agents became very involved in helping farm organizations evolve such as 4-H Clubs, Homemakers Clubs, rural electric associations, livestock producer associations, dairy herd improvement associations, etc.

In the 1950s agricultural production made gigantic gains through technology largely evolving from World War II. Fertilizers and pesticides brought new wealth to the agricultural community. The county agent became extra busy trying to keep up with the latest technology while maintaining contact with 4-H clubs and farm organizations. Long, extended hours not uncommon in the life of an agent became an expected characteristic of the job. For many agents, the job became his or her lifestyle.

By the early 1980s low commodity prices, high interest rates, large capital investments and weather drove many farmers out of business. Most states lost about 30% to 50% of their farms. In 1985, the U.S. government, mostly the president and Congress, began to question the need for county agents since so many farms were lost. Serious consideration was given to eliminating federal support. Federal funds at the time provided about 30% of each state's Extension Service. Eliminating these funds would have severely crippled the whole system.

To survive, land grant university leaders offered the services of county agents for other important needs of the country. The expansive network of an informational office in nearly every county in the nation was a strong selling point. It was agreed by the people in Washington, D.C., that Extension would be a good vehicle for addressing the family management problems of single parent and dual career families. Other educational needs not being addressed at the time such as teen-age pregnancies, older rural populations and loss of rural businesses were placed on the agenda of Extension agents. Only by offering to do more for the needs of non-farm people was the system that served mostly farm families able to continue.

With this transition has come a lot of confusion by the agricultural community. No longer are county agents able to frequently attend farm organization meetings like 4-H, DHIA, breed associations, dairy promotion, etc. Attempts are made to help those groups run relatively independent of the local Extension office. The county agent has to find time to address new needs and help other groups get started. Environmental issues and rural unemployment have also added to the list of needed programs. The new needs are important ones and county agents are developing new partnerships with other organizations.

We're still trying our best to serve the needs of farm families. Non-farm families are also discovering how good a resource of information the county agent is. I would plead with all of our farm families for understanding and support as the needs of your non-farm fellow citizens have been added to our agenda.

Ag Talk, Phil Rzewnicki,
Agricultural Agent, Blair and
Huntingdon Counties

Farm Calendar

Saturday, October 2
Pa. Capitol Futurity, Farm Show
Complex, Harrisburg, 12:30
p.m.

Sunday, October 3
National 4-H Week
Junior Breeding Cattle Show,
Farm Show Complex, Harris-
burg, 8 a.m.
Solanco Young Farmers annual

family picnic, Brenneman
Farm.

Schuylkill Co. Farm-City Day.

Monday, October 4
National 4-H Week

Hollidaysburg Community Fair,

Hollidaysburg, thru Oct. 7.

Manheim Community Farm

Show, Manheim, thru Oct. 8.

First annual Fore FFA Golf Tour-

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**NOW IS
THE TIME**
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Pick Up

Farm Show Entries

The 1994 Pennsylvania State Farm Show Premium Lists have arrived in the county cooperative extension offices.

The premium lists contains details on all the classes at the Farm Show, rules and regulations, entry deadlines, and entry forms. The 1994 Farm Show will be held in Harrisburg from January 8-13.

Remember, some classes have a November 4 entry deadline. Pick up your free copy of the premium list and make plans to attend and participate in the 1994 Pennsylvania State Farm Show.

To Save Money

There is a lot of concern in the agricultural community on how to increase farm profits and improve family living.

Increasing farm profits is a very complex problem involving many issues. However, one way to improve family living is through a planned savings program. Every family, regardless of income, should have a regular savings plan.

This money should be invested in a very conservative investment-like bank savings accounts or certificates of deposit (CDs). Once you have several month's income in the bank, you may want to consider more risky investments such as mutual funds or stocks. By saving on a regular basis, you are developing interest income which may be added back to the principle or spent for family activities.

If you want to establish a regular savings program, you may need to establish a budget. By developing better spending practices, you are

Farm Forum

Dear Editor:

Several area newspapers have carried a letter to the editor from Lloyd Gustin, a dairy farmer from Lymanville.

In his letter, Mr. Gustin illustrates that area dairy farmers are receiving less for their milk than they received 12 years ago. He also questions present salaries paid to farm leaders, and asks how these salaries relate to salaries of 12 years ago. Mr. Gustin also challenges public disclosure of such salaries.

While some people may interpret a different meaning to his letter; what I sense is the same frustration that can be found on 90-percent of the dairy farms in this area.

More importantly, these same dairymen feel there is little concern being shown towards their predicament, and they wonder why everyone else has price increases, but not the dairymen.

Normally, I feel the salaries

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increasing the money you will have to spend later. Also, the earlier you start saving money, the less money you will need to save to accomplish your goals.

For example, by saving \$50 per month in 40 years you will have \$76,300. If you wait 15 years before starting your savings, you will need to invest \$128 per month to have \$76,300 based on a 5 percent interest rate. Thus, the earlier you start saving, the sooner you are able to take advantage of compounding.

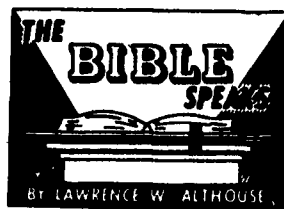
This is a big reason to start children on a regular savings plan. Take charge of your finances and make sure you save a certain amount of your income and invest it in a conservative savings plan. This will help you develop family equity separate from your business equity.

Remember, you may spend interest income every year but you may only spend principle once!

To Plant

Cover Crops

Cover crops are a very important farm management practice.



PROMISES, PROMISES
October 3, 1993

Background Scripture:

Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-18.

Devotional Reading:

Genesis 11:31,32; 12:1-10; 14:17-20.

How much is a promise worth today? Not very much.

Promises made by advertisers are known to be intentionally deceptive. Promises made by politicians are not taken very seriously any more. But then neither are treaties between nations, agreements between employers and employees, and even vows between husbands and wives.

Is not this distrust of promises, this erosion of trust the basis of much of our social uneasiness today? We do not trust the government, nor the institutions of our society, and we do not trust each other. As Erik Erikson has suggested, we must learn to trust something or someone early in our lives or live in cynicism for the rest of our days.

Religions are not so much rejected today as not trusted, and trust in God's promises is the essence of religious faith and spirituality. What we call faith is really trust. When Jesus commended people for their faith, he was commending them for trusting in him.

TRUST ME

So, the ancient record of God's promise to Abram and the latter's trusting response to that promise is very relevant for us. In Genesis 12 and 15 God gives his promise as the basis of the faith he seeks from his people: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you...and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (12:2,3). God foretells what he will do for Abram and his progeny and in response he asks Abram to trust him: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you" (12:1). In our own time, this also is the basis of our relationship with God: He gives us a promise and He asks us to trust

Cover crops reduce soil erosion, improve soil tilth, increase soil water holding capacity, and reduce nutrient leaching.

Many farmers need to empty their manure storage units during the fall season. This means crop nutrients are applied to cropland at a time of year when they are not needed by a growing crop.

Therefore, these nutrients are vulnerable to being lost to the environment because of soil erosion and leaching. If you are applying manure to cropland this fall, plan on planting a small grain cover crop like rye. The rye will take up the available nitrogen and hold it in the plant preventing its loss to groundwater. If the rye is harvested, the nutrients will be utilized as high quality feed. If the rye is killed or plowed down in the spring, the nutrients will become available to the following crop.

Rye may be planted as late as November, but the earlier it is planted the more nutrients it will take up and the more yield it will produce in the spring.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Few wishes come true by themselves."

Him to fulfill that promise.

Abram's first response is not unlike the kind of response we might make today: "O Lord God, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless" (15:2). Abram hears the promise and he wants to trust in it, but how can he believe if he has no offspring? So it is sometimes with us: we want to believe God's promise, but, in the light of how things are in our lives, we don't see how he can keep that promise.

Abram voiced his doubt and God was not angered because of it, but neither does he give Abram proof. He merely expands on that promise: "Look toward the heaven, and number the stars... So shall your descendents be" (15:5). Now Abram's choice as to whether he will trust that promise or not. The answer: "And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (15:6).

RECKONED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Abram decided to trust the promise — even though he didn't know how God would fulfill it. When the writer says "he reckoned it to him as righteousness," he is saying that God accepted Abram's trust as the basis of their relationship. It would depend, not upon the sacrifices that Abram offered, nor even the deeds he did for God. His trust alone was the keystone of God's love and mercy.

In New Testament times, the Apostle Paul seized on this example to build his concept of justification by faith (Rom. 4:3,9,22; Gal. 3:6). None of us can ever earn the love and mercy of God — our deeds will always fall short of what it would take - but we can accept that promise as a gift and trust in it for our salvation.

So the question is never whether we believe in God, but whether we trust him. Trusting in him makes all the difference.

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