

# Future Seedsmen Will Need To Know, Be Certified

**VERNON ACHENBACH, JR.**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**LANCASTER** (Lancaster Co.) — The future for the seedsmen in the Northeast is going to be a lot different, according to a representative of Agway Inc. who addressed the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Seedsmen's Association, held Thursday at the Eden Resort and Convention Center in Lancaster.

There's going to be less margin, more competition, more demand for knowledge and technical assistance, and a need for more efficiency, said Greg Wickham, with Agway Inc.

Wickham has been with Agway for a number of years, with a background more in crops, "rather than being a true seedsman," he said.

Currently, Wickham is involved in redesigning the internal management at Agway, to support some changes in the company's customer services. He said his perspective of trends in the business may be of value to seedsmen.

Wickham was the featured speaker during the day-long meeting of seed dealers and related businessmen.

From his analysis of the agricul-

tural industry and how the seed industry fits in, Wickham said it must be considered that the Northeast is primarily a dairy region and that the shift in dairy farming is changing the demands of the seed industry.

Because the number of dairy farms has been decreasing, while the size of the farms has been increasing, seedsmen will probably be selling less seed overall, but more importantly, the customer is going to be wanting more direct sales and to take advantage of bulk purchases.

Further, because of the increasing complexity of dairy farming and the related crop farming, there's going to be an increased need for seed sales representatives to be very well informed.

The trend toward using less fertilizer, less pesticides and more conservation tillage, more concern from individual farms about specific needs, and the farmer wanting to have his questions answered, is going to put more of a demand on the sales representative to have the knowledge required to help a producer make decisions.

The general trend that is expected is for less of a demand for

seed. According to Wickham, in 1991, Agway sold \$208 million in seed and the projection is for \$198 million in 1995 and \$188 million by 2000.

The impact to the traditional seed-dealer is going to be negative, he said. While vegetable and garden seed demand and seed demand from part-time farmers should stay consistent and perhaps grow slightly, he said there are several factors which indicate that many local seed dealers will probably be squeezed out because of better support from larger suppliers.

In attempting to analyze the future seed market, Wickham said it is necessary to define the customer base.

The part-time farmer is defined as anyone who is not employed full time in farming. The part-time farmer is not Agway's primary seed customer.

Wickham said full-time farmers are categorized into three customer groups — the traditional; the businessman concerned with cost; and the businessman concerned with production.

For the traditional full-time farmer, the group that is declining in number, farming is a lifestyle, he

said.

They are also defined as those for whom maintaining a steady production is satisfactory, those who support cooperatives, and those who follow the proven practices. They are not risk-takers.

The businessman-farmer concerned with cost is defined as the producer who seeks to profit primarily from reducing input costs. For these people, according to Wickham, an average yield is acceptable as long as the cost is justified. They are more likely to put the seed order out for bid, and more likely to request free information.

The businessman-farmer concerned primarily with production, sets yield as a goal. These people are slightly more dominant in the industry than the cost-motivated producer, according to Wickham.

He said this type of producer is frequently involved with projects considered to be on the leading edge, they are more willing to pay more for a product if an improvement in the production and quality of a crop can be shown.

Wickham said these producers are loyal, but that loyalty is based on value. These people also evalu-

ate success based on profit potential. They are interested in performance.

According to Wickham, in defining the customer, the company can better identify and meet his needs.

Wickham said that it should be considered that some operations have split-personalities when it comes to making purchases.

He said that on a farm, the person in charge of the animal part of the business may be concerned with production and yield and make purchases that way, while at the same time on the same farm, the person purchasing seed may better fit the cost-conscious customer and opt for something that sells for less, but will not set any production records.

In adapting to change to fit into the future, Wickham said that Agway is going to be concentrating on being more of a seed dealer with a highly training and qualified staff. The company has its own in-house training program and the staff must also pass the national Certified Crop Advisor test and keep up with the continuing education.

The company is setting its goal on being able to meet the needs of the customers and to provide the technical and informational support in addition to seed varieties.

According to Wickham, a survey of customers revealed that they value a business's seed variety and performance, honesty and integrity of sales and service people, a dependable supply, product knowledge, technical advice, professionalism, and price.

He said that the last survey was done in 1990 and compares to a survey done in 1986. Never, he said has price been the top consideration, according to the surveys.

## Huntingdon Holstein Club Makes Plans

HUNTINGDON (Huntingdon Co.) — The Huntingdon County Holstein Club met recently to discuss plans for 1994.

Details of some events were not finalized and are to be announced.

President Jim Grove, of Petersburg, reported that the election of three new directors for the club is to be held at the annual meeting.

The Huntingdon County Holstein club annual meeting will be held at Warriors Mark Fire Hall. The evening event is to start with a dairy bar social.

In other news, the club has opted to sell five-pound blocks of cheddar cheese to raise funds. The cheese has been delivered and can be purchased for \$12 per block. Anyone who wants cheese should contact Grove.

The club also approved plans to sponsor a bus tour of some Franklin County dairy farms in March. The tour is to focus on animal housing and manure handling systems. Penn State Cooperative Extension personnel are to make arrangements.

There is also planned an April 30 county Holstein sale to be held at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds. Jim McMath Jr. is organizing and coordinating the sale.

The next meeting of the club is to be held during the annual banquet.

## Pa. Forage, Grassland Council

(Continued from Page A18)

Earl said he isn't sure what the future of the dairy business is for him or his family. There's still a great deal of consideration and expected change within the immediate family before he makes a permanent decision.

He and Marilyn have four children — a daughter Krista who's a medical secretary; and son Kraig who's an electrician; a 14-year-old son Keith; and a 9-year-old son Kevin.

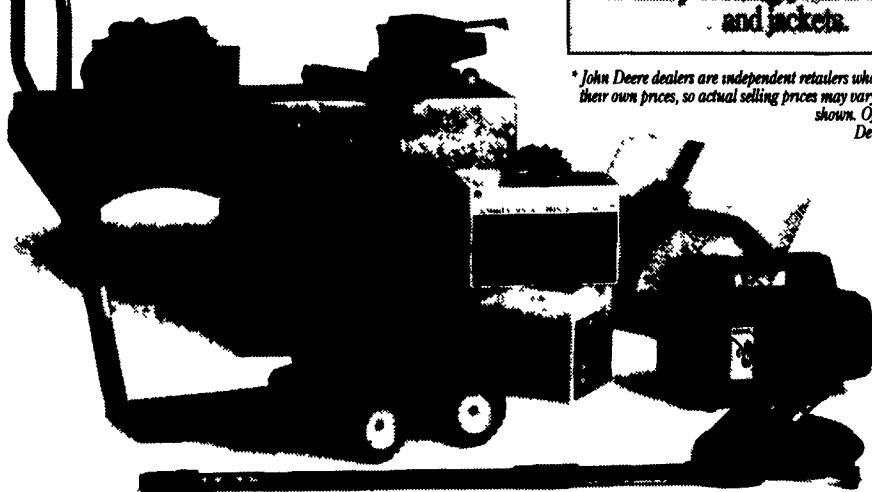
The career goals the children may influence the future of the dairy operation, just as the farm changed into a dairy in the first place.

But the soybean business is going to stay for awhile, he said. After 28 years of milking cows, he was losing interest, and now with the soybean business, "I really enjoy getting up in the morning and going to work."

## Stop by for seasonal specials and holiday gift ideas

Start with a powerful gift. Keep your battery current for fast starts with John Deere's 10/2/55-Amp Battery Charger. Includes fully automatic 12-volt setting or 6-volt manual. Just **\$84.79\*** (TY5152)

Make gift giving a clean sweep. The whole family will want to pitch in for this hand-carry electric power washer (model 10XH). Its 1,000-psi cleaning power and 2-gpm capacity make it perfect for a variety of tough cleaning jobs. **\$481.50\*** (TY8312)



Step-up to the perfect gift with this three-position, adjustable tractor-step kit. It's just like the ones on John Deere 60 Series Tractors and fits John Deere 30 to 55 Series Row-Crop Tractors. **\$235.00\*** (RE54131)

Don't forget the toys. Farmers of all generations enjoy genuine John Deere farm toys. Check our special selection of present and past models — for play or display.

See us for gift ideas, large and small. Wrenches to add-on, seat cushions to sharp-looking John Deere caps and jackets.

\* John Deere dealers are independent retailers who determine their own prices, so actual selling prices may vary from the prices shown. Offer good through December 31, 1993

BER-LAKE INC.  
Belleville, PA  
717-935-2335

SCHEFFEL  
EQUIPMENT CO.  
Red Goose Rd.  
Somerset, PA  
814-445-6500

TOBIAS  
EQUIPMENT CO., INC.  
Harrisburg, PA  
717-382-3132

MILLER'S  
EQUIPMENT  
RD #1 Rt. 66  
Mount City, PA

GEORGE V. SEIPLE  
& SON  
Easton, PA  
215-258-7146

WALTEMYER'S  
SALES & SERVICE  
Red Lion, PA  
717-244-4168

PIKEVILLE  
EQUIPMENT INC.  
Oley, PA  
215-967-6277

SMITH'S  
IMPLEMENTS, INC  
Mercersburg, PA  
717-328-2244

WINELAND  
EQUIPMENT, INC.  
Martinsburg, PA  
814-793-2109

OLE TAVERN  
SALES CORP.  
Elmer, NJ  
609-358-2880

S.P.E., INC.  
Rd. 1, Box 157  
Towanda, PA  
717-265-4440

M.S. YEARSLEY  
& SONS  
West Chester, PA  
215-696-2990

JOHN DEERE



Tillage Savings Time!

See your dealer  
now for special  
savings on great  
John Deere  
tillage equipment.

