

Va., Tenn. Farmers To Address Conference

MILLHEIM (Centre Co.) — Virginia grazer/farmer Joel Salatin and Lorna McMahon, a crop farmer from west Tennessee, will be among the farmers to address the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's (PASA) annual *Farming for the Future* Conference to be held Feb. 4-5 at the Nittany Lion Inn in State College.

Salatin, who raises "pastured poultry" and grass-fed beef on his Blue Ridge mountain farm, will discuss his use of grazing in what he terms "Plants and Animals in Environmental Symbiosis." Salatin raises thousands of broilers every year in portable outdoor pens and markets them directly to consumers from his farm. His beef is also marketed directly, thus insuring higher profit per animal. There is generally a waiting list for all of his products.

Salatin and his family are noted for their cost-cutting and biologically sound farming methods. His farm is unique in that there are few buildings and relatively few pieces of equipment. A combination of grazing and composting has provided fertility for the land and solved manure management issues. The daily movement of cattle and poultry avoids excess nutrient buildup and breaks up disease cycles.

In many other ways, the Salatins have managed to work with nature in ways that are beneficial to the environment as well as the farm family. Through innovative marketing, the sustainability of the family on the farm is insured. Lorna McMahon is a fifth gen-

eration farmer in the Mississippi Delta lands of west Tennessee. She took over the 2,300-acre farm in 1987 and immediately converted 230 acres to organic crop production. The remainder of the land is leased out to other farmers. She produces a variety of field crops, including corn, wheat, soybeans, and cotton, as well as approximately 14 acres of high value vegetables and pecans and 40 acres of cover crops. Much of her 230 acres is certified organic, and she receives premium prices for cotton (about twice the going rate), soybeans (used by tofu makers), and corn (sold to organic beef producers).

McMahon will address the PASA conference on the issue of "Making the Transition to Farming Organically" and on "Improving the Farm and Community Natural Resource Base." Stressing diversity and alternative marketing as cornerstones to farm profitability, McMahon will offer her own experiences as a testament to how organic farming is helping her utilize her farm resources.

A large number of Pennsylvania farmers will also address the conference and a number of farmer-to-farmer workshops are planned as well. Of particular interest to those considering the transition to more sustainable methods will be sessions led by Ron Gargas on "Considerations for Economic Viability in the Transition Years" and Dale Good on "Integrated Dairy Systems." Both Gargas and Good are Pennsylvania farmers.

A panel on "How to Start and

Sustain a Farm" will be led by Jim Crawford, Ward Sinclair, and Garry and Linda VanDeWeert. Crawford and Sinclair are both organic vegetable producers in southern Pennsylvania and the VanDeWeerts operate a dairy farm on the Pennsylvania, New York line near Athens. Garry and Linda started out five years ago with \$100 in cash and have used intensive grazing as a way to improve profitability. Sinclair is a former newspaper reporter who operates a truck farm selling largely through farmers' markets in the Washington, D.C. area.

Crawford uses various marketing methods, including coop sales for his organic vegetables. All of these farmers have a wealth of recent experience to present and will not hesitate to tell you what has and has not worked for them and why.

Farmer-to-farmer exchange sessions are planned in the areas of grazing; compost production and utilization; pest management strategies in vegetable production; and tillage, cover crops, and rotations.

In addition to the farmer exchanges and workshops, Pennsyl-

vania farmers will make presentations on insect management in fruit trees, alternative marketing of livestock and livestock products, fitting cover crops into field crop rotations, and supporting producer-only markets. University and agency representatives will also address topics such as soil health, sustainable vegetable growing, sustainable fruit production, grazing, marketing, greenhouses, the environment and much more.

For more information and registration forms, contact PASA, P.O. Box 316, Millheim, PA 16854, (814) 349-9856.

Hereford Breeders Experience Record-Breaking Bull Sales

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Hereford bull sales set a record of \$2,260, for the average price paid in 1993, a public auction sales across the nation. This is the highest sale average documented in the 113-year history of record-keeping by the American Hereford Association.

The 1993 bull demand follows the pattern of the last five years, as national sale averages have exceeded \$2,000. Following is a listing of national bull sale averages by year from 1989 through 1992: 1989 - \$2,108; 1990 - \$2,053; 1991 - \$2,210; 1992 - \$2,194.

National bull sale averages for the Hereford breed in 1993 were compiled from 182 public auction sale reports from coast to coast. Of these auction reports, 129 were breeder production sales and 53

were consignment sales. The sale of 7,871 1/4 bulls amassed a gross of \$17,791,351, to average \$2,260.

Sales of Hereford females were brisk in 1993 as 3,855 lots sold at auction for \$5,886,427, to average \$1,527. This average compares well with the averages of the previous four years: 1989 - \$1,394; 1990 - \$1,442; 1991 - \$1,669; and 1992 - \$1,608.

The combined average of bulls and females was \$2,019. This average was established on the sale of 11,726 1/4 head of registered Herefords at 1993 auction sales for a gross of \$23,677,778.

The top Hereford bull sales in 1993 were recognized in two different sale categories, production and consignment. Within each category, sales were broken down according to the number of bulls sold.

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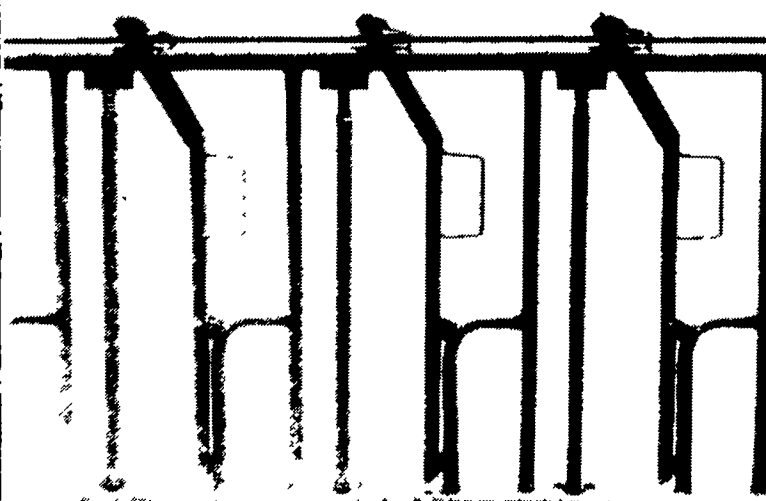
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