

Agri-Finance Seminar Addresses Dimensions That Affect Agriculture

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Participants at the CoreStates Hamilton Bank Agri-Education Seminar on Thursday examined ideas for wrestling with profit and lifestyle in the ever-changing world of agriculture.

The seminar focused on the different dimensions of agriculture.

The Washington dimension was addressed by John Blanchfield, associate director for the American Bankers Association Agricultural Bankers Division, who told about changes in government farm policy that will affect agriculture soon. There will be a reorganization of USDA with a consolidation of Farm and Home Administration and the ASCS.

There is a proposal to enable every farmer to purchase crop

insurance for \$50. This is to counteract the present tendency for some farmers not to purchase crop insurance because federal disaster programs kick in when areas suffer natural disasters. If the crop insurance proposal passes, Congress will no longer approve disaster assistance.

Blanchfield said that while farmers do not like that the majority of USDA budget has little to do with actual agriculture and everything to do with housing, WIC, and welfare programs, this enables farmers to have enough mass to be a major player in the government budget.

There are too few politicians with agricultural ties to enable them to understand the unique circumstances of the farmer, he said.



Speakers at the 13th CoreStates Hamilton Bank Agri-Education Seminar include, seated from left, Lou Moore, Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Jennifer Grimes, and Joseph Del Tito. Standing from left, David Kohl, G. Terry Sharrer, John Blanchfield, William Perry, Darvin Boyd, and Larry Webber.



During breaks, the seminar offers an opportunity for speakers and agriculture industry representatives to exchange ideas and ask questions. From left are John Henkel, Lou Moore, and John Hess.

Most of the agriculture policy matters are being handled by people without ag background who are legislating billions of dollars.

While farmers are inclined to become disgusted with government's agricultural decisions, Blanchfield warned that the last thing the farming community needs is to be on the other side of the fence of the consumer.

"You need to avoid that going alone attitude because your product must go to consumers," he said.

Although farming exports are down now, Blanchfield predicts that the first decade of the next century will be the golden age of exports for farmers. Much of the exports will be what is called value-added enterprise. An example of this is exporting cornflakes but not more corn.

Blanchfield said that although farmers often complain of government interference in farm policies, there are the positive aspects with cost-sharing projects, land-grant colleges, and extension services.

David Kohl, professor of agricultural finance at Virginia Tech, spoke about the changing financial and management dimensions. Farmers to be successful in the 21st century will need to become more interdependent on each other and with environmental consultants and biotechnology.

While interest rates have been low, they are rising and farmers should keep in mind that even a one percent increase in interest

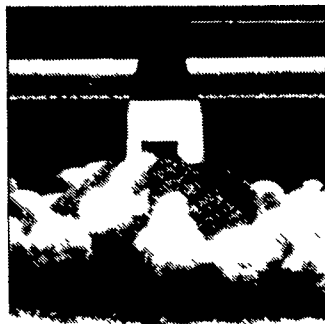
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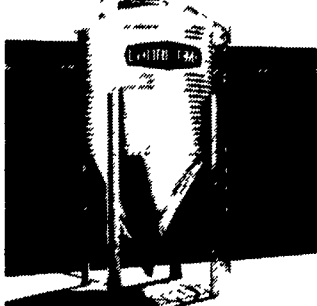
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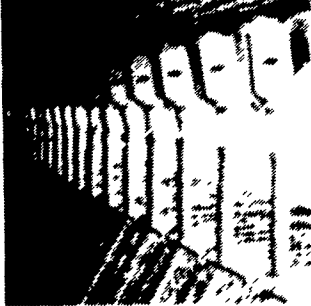
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