

# Farmers Needed To Grow Flax

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**PITMAN (Schuylkill Co.)** —  
 "Farmers considering an alternative cash crop to traditional grains are encouraged to consider raising fiber flax," Johannes Zinzendorf said.

The company that he represents, Flax America is looking for farmers who are willing to plant 5-acre test plots of flax this growing season. The company will provide free seed of two varieties and the specialized harvesting machine that is required.

Fiber flax is processed to make linen, an increasingly popular clothing fabric.

According to Zinzendorf, Pennsylvania was a large flax producing state before the Civil War. Then the state processed more than four million pounds of finished flax annually. As southern cotton prices continued to drop because the cotton gin cut labor costs, flax was no longer competitive and Pennsylvania farmers turned to raising grains.

Flax American wants to change that. They believe that Pennsylvania can once again become a major

flax-producing area. Flax American located in Rowayton, Connecticut is a subsidiary of a French Company. It also has successful flax projects in Maine, Connecticut, and Texas.

Currently the flax is shipped to France for processing, but a U.S. flax mill is being built to process the fiber into thread for national and international markets.

Zinzendorf said that flax is sown with a grain drill and requires no more work than growing wheat. It's planted around Good Friday.

"It grows so thickly that it chokes out weeds. It's insect and weed free when planted with a grain drill," Zinzendorf said.

Three months after planting, it is pulled with a flax pulling machine that the company provides free of charge. The flax machine pulls the flax out of the ground, ripples off the seed pods similar to a threshing machine. The flax falls back on the ground where it lays for one month during the retting process, when the natural glue binding the fiber to the stalk is weakened to allow the flax fiber to be more easily separated from the plant. The flax is

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This is the traditional hand processing of flax that the religious order still practices. However, the farmers who grow flax for Flax America use a completely mechanized process. Photo courtesy of Living History of West Hurley, N.Y.

## Shedding Light On Farm Electrical Safety

COLUMBIA, Mo. — If you live on a farm or ranch, chances are you rely on electricity for many of your daily chores. From the lights in your barns to the motors that run ventilation fans, crop dryers and feed-handling equipment, you depend on electricity to get the job done.

But are you getting the job done as efficiently and as safely as possible?

Farm electrical systems require as much—if not more—attention as those in homes and businesses. Because of exposure to the elements, equipment that is acceptable for use in the home is unsafe in many farm applications. Moreover, even proper wiring and equipment tends to deteriorate more quickly under the conditions found at many sites on the farmstead.

An annual review of a farmstead electrical system will indicate whether improvements should be made or, in extreme cases, whether the entire system should be replaced.

The first step is to confirm compliance with the National Electrical Code (NEC) to assure proper wiring. The NEC also requires a ground-fault circuit-interrupter (GFCI) on many farmstead circuits, and farmers where required. GFCIs help protect people from lethal shock.

Also, make certain there is proper grounding throughout the system and check for loose connections, missing panel covers, overloaded equipment, brittle wiring, dust and moisture.

The following checklist can be used to review electrical systems and determine whether improvements are required. Any items answered "no" are possible problem areas.

- Was the system installed by a licensed electrician?
- Is electric equipment dry and free of corrosion?
- Are all conductors, fuses and circuit breakers the proper size and approved type?
- Are lights in farm buildings enclosed by globes or guards?
- Do motors have correctly sized overcurrent protection and are they rated for farm duty?
- Are all motors totally enclosed?
- Does each motor circuit have overload protection?
- Is there only one electrical supply service entrance for each building and is it located in a clean, dry area?
- Are all electrical cables (conduit) surface mounted along major structural members?
- Are all outlets, switches and other devices surface mounted for easy inspection and maintenance?
- Do ventilation fan and motor circuits have disconnects located within sight of the motor?

More detailed information about electrical system on farmsteads is available in the Agricultural Wiring Handbook, an 88-page guide produced by the National Food and Energy Council. The handbook was updated in 1993 to conform with the latest NEC standards.

To obtain a copy, contact the NFEC at 314-875-7155 or write 409 Vandiver Drive, Suite 4-2-2, Columbia, MO, 65202. The cost is \$7.50 per copy, including postage and handling.

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"It's a big tractor with small tractor maneuverability. My 110-hp 7600 seems just as maneuverable as the 90-hp 4040 I used to use.

"It's got the power, too. While running a heavy 4-bottom roll-over plow, I tried to lug down my 7600. But it just kept plowing.

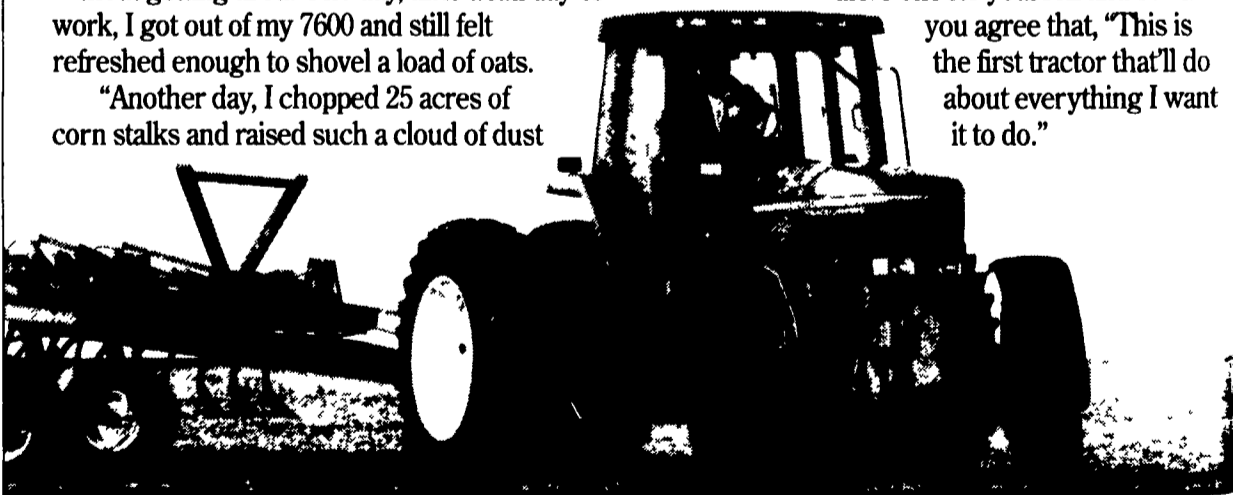
"And I can operate this tractor more hours without getting tired. One day, after a full day of work, I got out of my 7600 and still felt refreshed enough to shovel a load of oats.

"Another day, I chopped 25 acres of corn stalks and raised such a cloud of dust

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Forrest Wessner, Jr. tried out a 7000 Series Tractor before buying one for his farm. Test drive one for yourself and see if

you agree that, "This is the first tractor that'll do about everything I want it to do."



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