

## Will American Family Farm Disappear?

CHICAGO, Ill. — American family farmers stand at the most critical time in history and must begin planning for the future or face extinction, warns John Deere Life Insurance Co.

"The number of family farms in this country has fallen below two million for the first time since the Civil War, and with the new Republican Congress taking a close look at farm subsidies, farmers must put their financial houses in order or we'll be talking about farmers in the past tense," said Larry Nelson, JDL's vice president of marketing.

Nelson said family farmers are masters at "rolling with the punches" but said they can take nothing for granted.

"A generation ago, passing on the family farm often meant nothing more than drafting a simple will," he said. "Farm profit margins were higher, land values were lower, tax rates were comparatively insignificant, and family succession was more predictable. The high-tax, low profit, always volatile environment of today creates unique problems which threaten the survival of the family farm."

Nelson said several major rea-

sons why the number of family farms is dropping have to do with communications within the family.

"Many farmers still find it difficult to discuss passing on the farm to the next generation," he said. "Recent studies have shown that about two-thirds of all farmers do not have a valid succession plan in place. When a farmer dies, the federal estate tax bill often runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Without a succession plan, heirs can be forced to sell off land or equipment just to pay the tax bill. Even with enough cash, the farm also may still face a break-up by heirs not living on the property who want their share in cash. How a farmer deals with these and other issues, depends on knowing what you want, talking it out openly with your family, and finding the specialists that can make your wishes happen."

Nelson adds that many children of farmers decide to go into other occupations because the family does not talk about the future, or because the farmer thinks he can't pass on the farm without saddling the successor with a lot of debt.

"That's one of the saddest myths," said Nelson. "A properly

funded succession plan can make it possible to pass a farm to the next generation with very little debt. There should never be a situation in which a family loses the farm because of poor planning."

He said the new Republican Congress will be passing a new

farm bill next year, and likely cuts in farm subsidies will mean more fluctuation in crop prices which will affect incomes and land values.

"This makes planning now all the more crucial," Nelson said. "However, if a family selects its advisors carefully and allows enough time to

get it done right, a succession plan can meet everyone's needs in a fair manner and keep the farm intact and in the family."

For a free copy of a farm succession brochure, write to the John Deere Centre, 300 E. State Street, Jacksonville, IL 62650-2030.

## Department Nets Grant At U. Of Nitra

NEWARK, Del. — A decade-long collaboration between the University of Delaware and the University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia, has led to a USIA grant that will assist Slovakia in its transition from a centralized economy to a market-driven one.

Dr. Joachim Elterich, professor in the department of food and resource economics and director of university operations research program, received a two-year, \$300,000 U.S. Information Agency grant to bring Western business management education and extension to the University of Agriculture in Nitra.

The grant proposal, developed

with Dr. Catherine Halbrendt and Richard Bacon, also from the department, and graduate students Darina Batkova, Fe Zinnia Albay and Julia Farkasova, includes courses in business management, international trade and marketing, contracting, community development, macroeconomic impacts and communications. Eight educators from the University of Delaware College of Agricultural Sciences, Delaware State University and the private sector will teach intensive courses in eight, three-week modules in the spring of 1995.

This January, a group of Slova-

kian educators will visit the University of Delaware to be exposed to Western-style curriculum, culture and agricultural industry. They will also attend the Allied Social Sciences Conference in Washington, D.C.

As director of the project, Elterich will work in Slovakia throughout the term of the grant creating an extension-style agricultural management center. Through the University of Nitra, the center will provide practical knowledge and problem-solving services for medium and small-scale businesses, as well as outreach to other parts of the country.

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## Penn State Soil Judging Team Places Second

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The Penn State Student Soil Judging Team recently placed a close second behind Cornell University in the 1994 Northeast Collegiate Soil Judging Contest, hosted by the University of Rhode Island. The team now qualifies for the National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest to be held in Missouri.

Members of the winning team are Michael Brown, Alex Dado,

Amy Loch and Tracy Szathmary. Tracy Szathmary and Alex Dado placed ninth and 10th as individuals.

The regional and national competitions, which are hosted by different universities each year, provide students with a unique opportunity to see soils from different areas of the country, classify them and make interpretations for different land uses.

Students prepare for the contest by taking Soils 100, a one-credit, field-oriented class taught by graduate students Christine Manns and Keith Goyne, who also coach the soil judging team. Students learn to describe and classify soils in the field and to recognize properties that affect uses, such as waste disposal and water movement.

# PRECISE

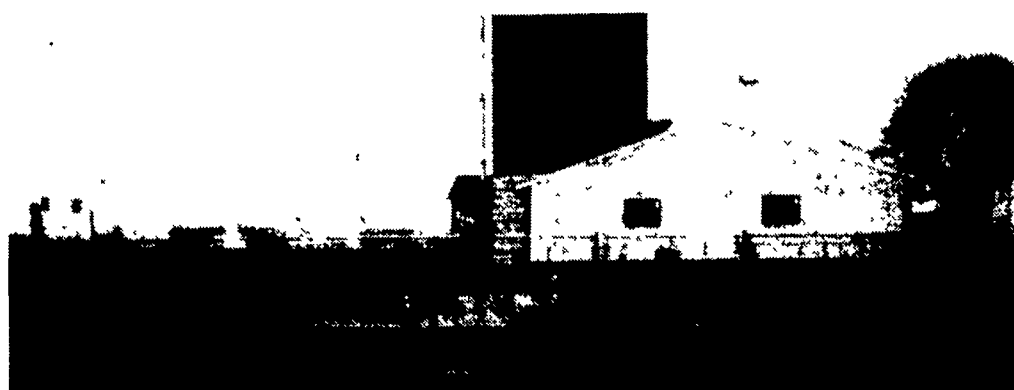
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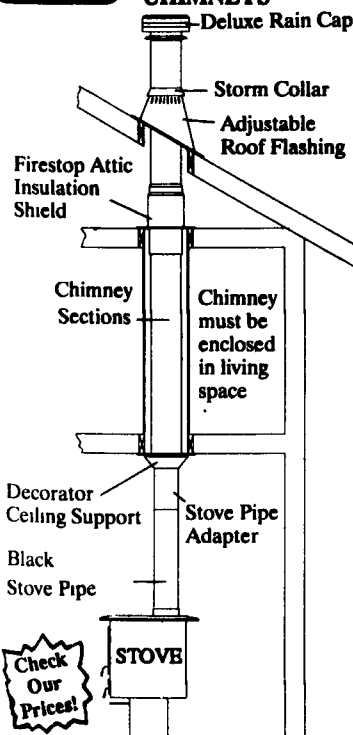
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