

Farm Bureau Addresses Property Tax Dilemma

Callicoon, N.Y. — Farmers attending the annual convention of the New York Farm Bureau strengthened their stance on several concerns important to agriculture and rural New York, including ways to deal with property taxes that have jumped 48 percent since 1987.

Attended by 450 farmers from all across the state, the state convention was held at the Villa Roma Resort Hotel in Callicoon.

Newly-elected NYFB President John Lincoln, an Ontario County dairy farmer, said that delegates at the Farm Bureau convention approved a host of policies aimed at making state government more business friendly. "Farm Bureau wants to see our state government economized — and that means making it smaller, more efficient, and more responsible."

For New York farmers, the property tax is the number one burden. The delegates approved new policy that calls for "a state-wide cap on all equalized real property tax rates."

They said, "Any future revenue needs above current rates must be

generated from income or sales tax." Keeping with their stance from past years, they called for cost containment of state mandated programs, like Medicaid, in order to provide tax relief for the overburdened taxpayer. They also reaffirmed their support for the concept of an agricultural circuit breaker program as a means of reducing the heavy school tax burden weighing on New York farms.

Last year, Farm Bureau and the other business groups in the state successfully worked for the elimination of the 13 percent surcharge on workers' comp providers, as one way of reducing hefty premiums. Recognizing that the current workers' compensation system serves neither employers or employees in an efficient manner, this year's delegates said, "the entire system must be re-evaluated to provide timely benefits to injured employees at a cost which is affordable to the employer." Among other reaffirmations in this area, they called for prohibiting third party lawsuits (Dole vs. Dow), and prohibiting raids, on the State Insurance Fund.

Regarding the protection of private property rights, Farm Bureau delegates approved expanding its numerous policies on this critical issue by supporting a position that supports "the development of a formal impact statement on private property rights for any new legislation, regulatory action, or local ordinance." They also recommended "an increase in penalties

for entering onto private property without consent and doing damage to crops and fences with a vehicle or by other means." Once again, Farm Bureau recommends the enactment of a law "which protects the property rights of an individual against all actions of either the legislature or an agency of government which compromises the use of the property with-

out proper compensation to the owner."

The organization also reaffirmed their support for voluntary, incentive-based programs to address agricultural nonpoint source pollution. The State Environmental Protection Fund is an important source of funding for water quality programs.

Jr. Jersey Offers Awards, Scholarships

MERCER (Mercer Co.) — The Pennsylvania Junior Jersey Cattle Association is accepting applications for several awards and scholarships.

The deadline for submitting all applications for this round of awards is Jan. 20. All entries should be sent to Debbie Moose, Youth Coordinator, 902 Mercer-

Pulaski Road, Mercer, Pa., 16137, or (412) 662-3924.

The awards include recognition for outstanding production records, scrapbooks, and other achievements. Winners are to be announced at the upcoming Pennsylvania Jersey Association annual meeting, set to be held in April, in Wellsboro.

As in other years, there will be two divisions in the achievement and scrapbook contests. Junior division ages are 9 to 13, as of Jan. 1, 1994; senior division ages are 14 to 19, as of Jan. 1, 1994.

There are also two scholarships awarded at the state level for junior members. Applications for these and more information is available by contacting Moose.

PASA To Hold Greener Future Conference

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — More than 100 speakers will discuss a multitude of topics on Farming for a Greener Future at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, to be held Feb. 3-4 at the Nittany Lion Inn.

Tom Frantzen, an innovative crop and hog producer and past president of the Practical Farmers of Iowa, will be the keynote speaker. Also featured will be Doug Parker, New Zealand dairy grazing consultant; Will Brinton, compost expert of Woods End Ag Institute in Maine; Chip and Susan Planck, organic vegetable producers from Virginia; Gail Feenstra, nutrition educator from University of California; and Dan Skow, veterinarian and soil health expert from Minnesota.

Workshops will focus on green agriculture, and all that it entails: farming with green — cover crops, grass-based farming, intensive grazing, and soil health — as well as farming for the

green — profitability, marketing, and sustainability. Sessions will range from the basic, for people who are just learning about sustainable techniques, to more advanced sessions for people with experience.

A series of workshops focused on dairy production will be a new emphasis this year. In addition to drawing on the knowledge of many Pennsylvania dairy producers and specialists, attendees will hear from Joe Meudt of the Wisconsin Rural Development Center who will discuss his own seasonal dairy operation as well as the Dairy Grazing Project he coordinates for the center. The project includes documenting the economics of grazing and seasonal dairying, as well as on-farm and university-based feeding research.

Doug Parker, a native New Zealand dairyman, and well-known grazing consultant, now at Shelburne Farms in Vermont, will be on hand to talk about New Zealand dairy grazing systems and their applicability to Pennsylvania. Parker will also discuss the economics of grass-based dairy farming.

The Plancks will lead a workshop on the innovative use of equipment, rotations, and management strategies deployed on their 50-acre organic vegetable operation. Brinton will participate in three workshops, discussing his research with farm-scale compost, mineralization, and disease control. A session on the connections between animal and soil health will be led by Skow, of International Ag Labs.

Sustainable agriculture is being looked at to provide an innovative foundation for learning and education in another new focus area this year. The evolving role of gardens, farms, and universities as tools for learning about sustainability and linkages to a variety of community institutions will be featured in sessions on education projects in Pennsylvania and California. These workshops offer the opportunity for farmers and non-farmers to learn from each other.

Other concurrent tracks in the program include soil health, grazing, field crops, marketing, vegetables, fruit, and education. In addition to production techniques, sessions will look at how to start farmers markets, community supported agriculture, backyard composting; the impacts of BGH, food banks and inner-city farm stands, and urban encroachment on farmlands.

This year the ever popular farmer-to-farmer exchange sessions will provide indepth farm-based education on grazing livestock and vegetable varieties for farmers markets.

Another exciting addition to this year's proceedings will be participation by a group of cooperative extension agents from Pennsylvania and other Northeastern states, who will be attending the conference to learn more about sustainable agriculture from its practitioners. As part of this training, a group of Pennsylvania extension personnel will also be participating in a day-long workshop with PASA member farmers to learn more about sustainable farming prior to the conference.

If you would like to request a registration brochure, call PASA at (814) 349 9856.

Pa. Dairymen's Association Meet

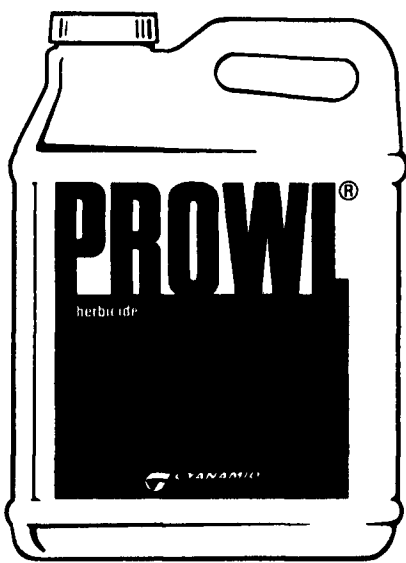
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Dairymen's association will hold its annual banquet on Monday evening, January 9, 1995 at the Harrisburg Sheraton-East. The Sheraton is located just off the Union Deposit exit of I-83. The Board of Directors would like to invite you to attend this traditional Farm Show week dinner. The milk punch reception will begin at 6:00 p.m. with dinner to follow at 6:30 p.m.

The evening will feature a main

speaker along with several very special awards. The traditional Charles E. Cowan award, the Extension service award and this year a newly created award: The Distinguished Dairy Women award. The Association will also be recognizing the state winning Dairy Bowl Team from Montour County.

Tickets may be reserved by contacting the office of the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association. Phone: (717) 938-4876 or write to: 396 Old York Road, New Cumberland, Pa. 17070. Ticket price is \$15.

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