

Chamber Committee Works To Unify Ag's Voice

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 REFTON (Lancaster Co.) —
Reassessment. Farm finances.
Animal welfare. Nutrient
management.

Those are the issues that farmers face every day in the '90s. Many are confused about the issues. What can they do?

Newly elected Lancaster Chamber of Commerce board member Ken Meck, a diversified livestock farmer in Refton, knows how important representation is to achieving results. Meck has been working for the past several years to "unify" the voice of agriculture in Lancaster County so farm organization leaders can "get together to discuss possible solutions rather than sending out dissenting messages," he said during a recent interview at his farm.

Meck, who maintains a 50,000-bird pullet house and finishes out 200 head of beef cattle and 1,200 head of hogs each year at his farm, said the agriculture committee at the chamber is planning an array of programs to help farmers understand the issues and work to solve them.

The chamber is working closely with the Lancaster County Farm Bureau to help promote a series of meetings in various county locations scheduled for January and February on the countywide reassessment, set to begin in July.

"One of the things we want to encourage is farmer participation in the reassessment meetings," said Meck. Many farmers will be affected in a big way with reassessment in the county and need to know what's involved. "We want to get in touch with these farmers so that they can understand what's coming."

Also, the chamber has worked to expand the annual agrifinance seminar, scheduled Jan. 26 at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster. The first seminar held last year, which provided "very positive feedback," said Meck, was limited to 40 farmers. This year, the seminar is limited to 50 farmers, who may be sponsored by their ag leader. Those interested should contact Roger Rohrer at 291-3707.

At the seminar, the topic is "Managing Success As a Family Farm," featuring Dr. Donald J. Jonovic, farm management expert. Founder of Cleveland's Family Business Management Services and president of Jamieson Press, Jonovic has authored six books about family business and business management.

Also featured at the seminar will be Dr. David Kohl, professor of ag economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He will be speaking about managing farm finances.

Meck, who grows 250 acres of crops for all three aspects of his business, has been recently elected to a three-year term at the chamber. Meck said the chamber's ag committee is looking for more diverse representation of farming in the county, including dairy, beef, poultry, hogs, and sheep. They have recently announced a position is open for somebody in production agriculture, specifically vegetable and fruit growers in the county.

In recent years, the chamber has also provided information at the annual Ag Expo, held in Lancaster Square, and has served as a sponsor at the annual Kreider's Farm Open House in the summer.

Meck indicated that the chamber's work extends into educating

farmers about the concerns that a lot of producers face in the county, state, and nationwide. One concern on the front burner is animal welfare.

The ag committee is working, according to Meck, to "see that the message gets out that farmers are concerned about the welfare of their animals and their livestock," he said. "If they aren't, economically, they aren't going to survive."

Another major concern is the prices for livestock, particularly hogs and beef. One concern is the lack of long-term commitment some processors are showing to the smaller farmer.

"I think the processor has to be a little more aggressive in trying to establish a rapport with not just the large operators, but also the small operators," he said. "I think at this time that processors are probably looking at the large complexes and making agreements with them and they really don't have too much set up for the small producer. They certainly aren't giving (the small producer) much economic stability."

Also, nutrient management, in terms of controlling feedlot runoff, has to be a concern for producers.

Meck praised the small producers for the "tradition" that is Lancaster County agriculture, but encouraged more representation in helping the chamber achieve one of its goals: communicate farming to nonfarming members of the community, and the concerns farmers face.



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"Personally, I think it's good to have farmers share their viewpoints with those that work with the farmers and the nonfarm public, because of the impact that agriculture has on their lives."

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agriculture.

"As development occurs, we need to plan the agricultural outcome for our children and grandchildren. It takes leadership. When the bulldozers arrive, it's too late.

"There is hope," Cole said. "There are farms outside urban areas that are surviving. It takes place because of leadership and planning and the role of importance of agriculture. It takes community and local government support to make it work."

Cole said one way farmers are making it is through direct marketing. "There are only two ways to make a profit—to lower the cost of production or raise the price of the product. More farms are going to increase the price of their product through direct marketing." Farmers must also fight to retain that right to direct market.

Cole also said the size of farming and the concentration of farming in the U.S. is changing.

"By 1995, 70 percent of our chicken will be produced by five farms. By 1995, 60 percent of the hogs will be processed by four to five companies.

"There are shifts in agriculture towards climate and to where water is. The dairy cows are leaving California and moving to Idaho. Because of irrigation in Idaho, potato and fruit growers experience few foliage diseases. And there's no manure management in Wyoming."

Cole attends seven or eight extension annual meetings each year and said it restores his faith in humanity because he sees a group of people who give of themselves for the betterment of humanity.



Speaking to more than 70 friends of and leaders in extension, Dr. Herbert Cole of Penn State talks about sustaining agriculture for the future through leadership.

Earlier in the evening during the business meeting, John Czerniakowski welcomed guests, Nancy Massa motioned for acceptance of the 1993 minutes, and Helen Kirk gave the treasurer's report.

County Extension Director Dave Filson distributed the annual report and highlighted its purpose and contents. Of extension, the volunteers, and leaders in general, Filson concluded that "a lot of people's lives have been changed because of our efforts."

Regional Director Dr. Harold



Elected for leadership on the Mifflin County Extension Committee are, from left, Joyce Uhland, treasurer; J. Loren Yoder, vice president; and Nancy Massa, secretary.

Ott thanked attending legislators and commissioners for their financial support.

J. Robert Stauffer conducted the election of directors and officers. Elected to serve on the board for five year terms were Beth

Knepp, Dr. Christopher Custer, J. Lester Yoder, and Terry Clemens.

The 1995 officers will be President Alan Laughlin, Vice President J. Loren Yoder, Secretary Nancy Massa, and Treasurer Joyce Uhland.

Portrait Of Dean Unveiled At University

NEWARK, Del. — A portrait of Dr. Donald F. Crossan, former dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, was unveiled Nov. 19 at the University of Delaware.

The portrait, which was painted by local artist Russell Finley, hangs in the lobby of Townsend Hall next to the portrait of former dean George Worriow.

The unveiling ceremony to honor Crossan's lifelong career at the college was held during the Agricultural Alumni Association's annual tailgate party. More than 100 people were in attendance at the ceremony.

"I like the idea that my portrait is hanging next to George Worriow's," Crossan said. George hired me, he was my mentor and he had a great

influence on my career as dean. He was dedicated to service for the farm sector. George set the stage and I followed in his footsteps."

Dr. John C. Nye, current dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, said that the portrait will serve as a reminder of how much Crossan achieved at the college — as a teacher, as an administrator, and as an advocate for agriculture in Delaware.

Crossan was dean from 1977 to 1991. Under his leadership, the college's classroom and laboratory space more than doubled with the completion of Worriow Hall and the Fischer Greenhouse Laboratory. He was instrumental in substantially increasing total student enrollment as well as the percentage of women on the faculty.