

# What Do 1,200 Pennsylvanians Think About Local Produce?

**ANDY ANDREWS**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) —  
According to a recent survey, the facts are clear: many people know about the importance of buying fresh-grown, local fruits and vegetables to sustaining Pennsylvania's agricultural economy.

But while many agreed that a system should be put in place to ensure the availability of locally grown produce, less than a third recognized the "Pennsylvania Proven Produce" logo and only about a quarter of those interviewed even recognized the logo published by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

That's the message taken home by more than 35 who signed up for the special marketing short course at the 1995 Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference on Thursday at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center.

Dr. Joan Thomson, associate professor in Penn State's Department of Ag and Extension Education, provided the results of a

survey which recently interviewed 1,200 Pennsylvanians at 23 supermarkets and farmers' markets in the southeastern Pennsylvania region. Counties under the survey included Lancaster, Dauphin, Chester, Lebanon, Lehigh, Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery, and Northampton.

Surveys were conducted at different hours, including day and night. The survey was conducted with the help of Penn State and Rodale Institute.

Not surprisingly, the survey mirrored typical findings, according to Thomson: the "average" buyer is a female (70 percent of those interviewed), white, about 25-40 years of age, with some college education.

Many of the respondents were "willing to give you the information if you wanted to find out something," said Thomson.

According to the researcher, what was evident was the consistency of the response: most considered product freshness, appearance, price, quality, flavor, ripe-

ness, and other factors very important.

Sixty percent of those responding prefer to shop at supermarkets because of time and convenience of location. Although more men shopped at the roadside or farmers' markets than supermarkets (40 percent were male at the farmers' markets), shoppers preferred the farmers' markets because they believed there was more personal attention and believed they were eating a fresher product.

Other questions were asked of the respondents. One "significant" response, according to Thomson: people enjoyed living next to farms and "don't want any more development."

"They believe that 'I have my plot, I don't want anybody to come out to surround me,'" she said.

Many respondents didn't realize that about 92 percent of the fresh fruits and vegetables sold on grocery shelves in Pennsylvania comes from out of state.

Out of 1,214 respondents, about 10 percent of those responding felt

a "strong" opinion that they prefer locally grown produce. About 25 percent felt a "moderate" preference for locally grown produce.

More than half, 51.8 percent, believed that it didn't matter how the produce was grown. That included whether pesticides were used or not.

One of the most disturbing findings was that less than three out of 10 of the respondents recognized the "Pennsylvania Proven Produce" logo that is available to growers. And only about a quarter

of those responding recognized the state department of agriculture logo, "Pennsylvania Pride."

What this points to is the importance of growers working together to promote products, according to Thomson. "You need to be part of a collective," she said.

For more information about the survey, contact Thomson at Penn State, Department of Ag and Extension Education, 323 Ag Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802-2601, (814) 863-3824.

## Lebanon County Sets Dairy Day

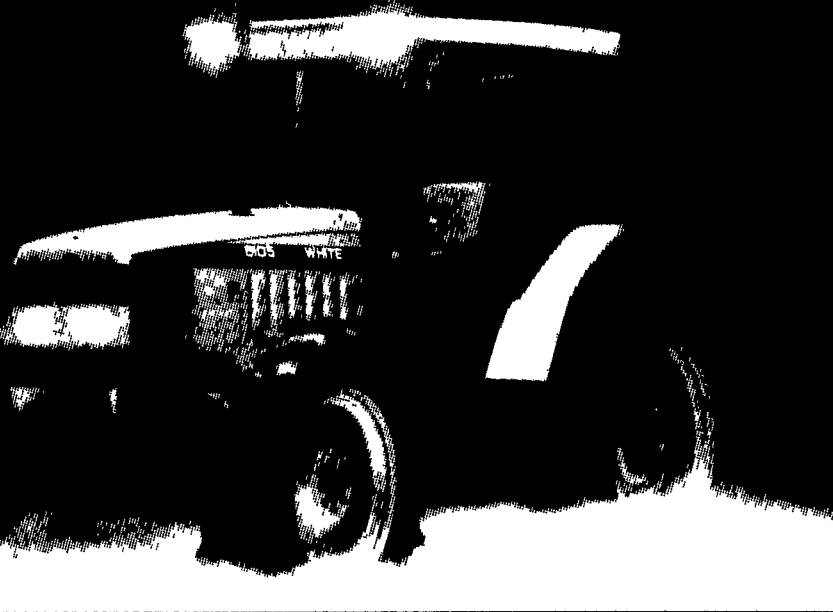
LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Since the 1994 Dairy Day was canceled because of a snowstorm, Lebanon County Extension hopes the 1995 meeting will be an uneventful day for weather. A stimulating agenda has been planned for participants.

The Lebanon County Dairy

Day is scheduled for Wednesday, March 1, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Prescott Fire Hall on Prescott Road, 1/2 mile south of Route 422.

Contact the Extension Office, 2120 Cornwall Road, Suite 1, Lebanon, PA 17042 prior to Wednesday, Feb. 22, for exhibitor information. Exhibitor fee is \$40.

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