

National Ag Secretary Here For 1995 Farm Bill Forum

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program should be launched to call attention to threatened soils.

Larry Kehl, a Berks County dairy farmer, said that the number of dairy farms in Berks has declined at an alarming rate with the number one problem, the price of milk.

"Since 1980 the price of milk has been about \$12.50 per hundred," Kehl said. "According to the forecasts, this price will remain through the year 2,000. Unfortunately, farmers will not be able to make a living if taxes, insurance costs, repairs, and other costs increase each year while they receive the same income of 20 years ago. Farming is the only bus-

iness where you sell wholesale and buy retail.

"The family farm in Berks County is in great danger of vanishing. Hog and chicken farmers now contract with bigger companies. We do not want to see the family dairy farm go in that direction."

With tongue in cheek, Kehl suggested that the present federal administration could consider rolling back the budget of the milk marketing administration to the 1980 level to make them live on the same kind of budget as farmers must do.

Edward Hartman, a dairy and beef farmer from the Reading area, said excessive regulations were of

great concern.

Excessive regulations for clean water, wetlands, minor-use pesticides, farm labor, capitol gains, taxation, endangered species protection and encroachments on private property rights all are important to farmers in Berks County.

"Regulations contribute to the threatened survival of present farms, and new farmers are almost nonexistent," Hartman said. "This condition presents a challenging condition for the future of production agriculture. There is much talk of downsizing, including government help for agriculture. Farmers are willing to see cuts in agriculture as long as these cuts are shared by everyone else in the country.

We don't wish to be singled out as scapegoats for the nation's budget problems.

"We are in a global economy, and I don't expect to see the pressures on farmers to be reduced anytime soon. Farmers were concerned about water, land, and conservation long before it became a national issue. Farmers would do more for conservation than they are now doing if their expenses did not always consume all of their income.

"Capital gains and estate taxes make it very difficult to pass a farm on to the next generation. Both are burdensome because inflation and appreciation is based on develop-

ment pressures and have no relation to the farm's productivity.

"There is much talk about endangered species such as snakes, rats, owls and more. If we can't get relief on some of these farm problems, another species will be added to the list. It will be the family farmer," Hartman said.

Bill Wehry, along with his father, own and operate a 250 sow farrow to finish hog operation near Klingerstown. Wehry centered his comments on the idea that excessive regulations are hampering the success of current farm programs. In many instances farmers need to balance federal, state, and local

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