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been ill-served by its traditional agriculture base and we should be done with it.

As we move forward on the 1995 Farm Bill, you as farmers need to be in contact with your congressmen and senators about the impact of the current budget proposals and the effects it will have on agriculture. We are constantly reminded by legislators that everything in Washington these days will be "budget-driven." The budget committee establishes various government functions. Once the baseline is established, committees such as the Ag. committee, can shift funds but cannot exceed the cap they were given.

When you sort through all the complexities of the budget numbers for agriculture, it is clear we are facing major budget reductions. Between the House and Senate versions of the 1995 Farm Bill, the budget for agriculture is projected to be slashed by between \$8 and \$9 billion over the next five years. Depending on how the calculations are done, some expect the total reduction to be nearly \$10 billion. *These cuts are real and will affect the family farmers' bottom lines.*

There is thought of elimination of the support price, which is our safety net for our dairy farmers. It's true, we have not hit the \$10.10 per hundred weight support price for the past couple years, but we haven't felt the effects of GATT yet. There are some representatives saying that if they eliminate the support price, they would in return eliminate the assessments

that dairy farmers are paying. The assessments on the support price program were not in place in the beginning, they were put there for budget reduction. There are also thoughts of elimination of (DEIP) Dairy Export Incentive Program.

Another theme is, no bill will be passed without the endorsement of the Agricultural Processing and Trade Industry. This means budget savings which could be attained with policy changes, that also increase market prices such as higher loans or acreage adjustments, will not be part of this bill.

Yet another theme for agriculture seems to be "simplicity." No proposal will be accepted that is perceived to add complexity, rules or regulations to agricultural programs. One proposal, which may be viewed as the simplest way to apply cuts in agriculture, is to increase unpaid flex acres from the current 15 percent to 35 percent in order to meet baseline budget numbers. Increasing the unpaid flex acres merely reduces farm income without regard to fairness. If farmers are again being required to endure program cuts to help balance the budget, cuts must be fairly applied. We must be more creative than this proposal. A program that treats all farmers fairly, in the budget cuts, should be the goal.

The Pennsylvania Farmers Union has been tracking the situation as it has unfolded during the budget process, which, for all intents and purposes, is now complete. The amount of the cuts agriculture is being required to endure is far greater than any other program funded by the federal govern-

## Dairy Network Partnership Begins

KUTZTOWN (Berks Co.)—At first glance, it appears an unlikely partnership. After all, what do a milk marketing cooperative, a research company, a conservation program, and an alternative farming association have in common?

Plenty, especially when the groups involved share a common goal.

That's the case with Atlantic Dairy Cooperative, the Rodale Institute, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). The four organizations, with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, have joined together under the Dairy Network Partnership.

The goal? To improve water

quality in southeast Pennsylvania by reducing nonpoint source (NPS) pollution stemming from dairy farms. The project itself represents a partnership with milk producers, cooperatives, and processors "to identify and implement farming practices that are environmentally sound and economically viable." Simply put, the project plans to identify ways for dairy farmers to further reduce NPS pollution on the farm while minimizing the financial burden of such changes.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Identify and prioritize appropriate farming practices that will improve water quality on dairy farms in southeast Pennsylvania.
- Identify current barriers to and incentives for dairy farmers to adopt those practices.
- Develop additional incentives to help increase the adoption of those practices.
- Establish a network among the key players in the dairy industry in southeast Pennsylvania.

The project partners hope to complete these objectives over the next two years. Key activities will include a conference for industry leaders and dairy producers to be held July 20 and 21. On farm demonstrations, to highlight current farming practices, will be scheduled this fall and during the summer and fall of 1996.

In discussing the Dairy Network Partnership, it is important to recognize that the majority of dairy farmers do a good job in terms of conservation and environmental practices, both for the

dairy farmer involved and the consumer who seeks accountability for the food they buy and how it is produced.

Partnership members also recognize that most changes in farming practices come with some cost, be it financial, physical, or labor-oriented. In this regard, the project will be looking at potential incentives and rewards that could be offered to dairy farmers who adopt NPS pollution practices.

During the next few months, project leader Kim Kroll and project associate Chari Towne will be researching such incentives. They will consider technical, educational, regulatory, and economic incentives—what can be used and who can provide them.

Throughout the project, dairy farmers will be called upon to help promote the project's goals. Many Atlantic members, for example, already use environmentally sound farming practices or "best management practices." Such members will be asked to share their experiences through educational meetings or on-farm demonstrations and to show what works and how to include such practices on the farm.

The crux of the Dairy Network is the partnership of the groups involved. Yes, business objectives and philosophies may differ, but that does not mean the partners cannot share common goals and interests. Promotion of environmentally sound farming practices is a responsibility of all agriculture-based businesses. The Dairy Network Partnership provides this vehicle.

Robert Junk  
President  
Pennsylvania  
Farmers Union

Here are the key representatives: Congressman Tim Holden, (202) 225-5546; Senator Arlen Specter, (202) 224-4254; Senator Rick Santorum, (202) 224-6324.

Please take a couple of minutes and call them. It will be a good investment of time and money for you and your farm.

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