

Cooperative's Status Given At Annual Meeting

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Several hundred farms gathered December 7 and 8 for the 31st Agway annual meeting and Council meeting at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey. They heard their cooperative's new leader describe three important things he's learned, and actions he's taken to improve the business, after visiting hundreds of farms and Agway facilities and listening to suggestions from farmer members and employees during his first year in the top job.

Donald P. Cardarelli, Agway CEO and president since early 1995, said the cooperative is now more clearly focusing on its commitment to serve farmers with speed and flexibility. He reported Agway has improved performance of its basic ag and retail operations by managing these businesses closer to the customer. Agway also plans to take better advantage of its farm heritage, an asset that is valued by customers, he said. And Agway will continue to build alliances and partnerships that create growth opportunities, such as the new feed ingredients joint venture with Farmland Industries.

Cardarelli called 1995 a "bittersweet" year financially. Four major Agway businesses operated profitably in the fiscal year that ended June 30, he said. Agway's lease financing company, Telmark, operates in 24 states and is highly successful. Agway Insurance Company, operating in eight Northeastern states and Kentucky, posted its fourth consecutive profitable year, he reported.

"Agway Energy Products turned in a respectable profit and added customers despite the third warmest winter on record," he said. "AEP has a strong market presence. And our Country Products Group, a diversified collection of independently operated specialty and value-added businesses spanning the country, is profitable."

While Curtice Burns Foods was sold to Pro-Fac Cooperative during the year, Cardarelli explained the failure to also complete the sale of H. P. Hood in fiscal 1995 triggered a significant year-end write down to reflect Hood's market value. That, added to staff reduction costs at both Hood and Agway, contributed to a loss of \$15.9 million on consolidated

sales of \$2.1 billion.

"By making these difficult but necessary changes, we will have a smaller, more efficient workforce and lower operating costs in future years," Cardarelli told the cooperative's members.

"Serving farmers is our primary mission," he said. "We have made bold changes in how we run these businesses. By putting our agronomy, feed and farm store operations together as one business, we are now better focused on serving farmers in geographic markets that make sense."

"I am very excited about the future of our cooperative," Cardarelli concluded. "We have made many difficult decisions needed to move us ahead. We have put in place a structure to allow us to respond quickly to customer needs, and we are changing in ways that will add value to your membership in Agway."

Ralph H. Heffner of Pine Grove, and Robert L. Marshman of Oxford, NY, chair and vice chair of the Agway board of directors, presided at the annual meeting and the Agway Council meeting that followed. This is the last of a series of three meetings sche-

duled. New York Agway members and committee leaders met November 29-30 in Syracuse, NY and New England members met December 4-5 in Springfield, MA. The Agway Council includes farm leaders of 95 advisory committees representing various geographical areas in the Northeast.

Charles C. Brosius, Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture and former Agway board vice chairman, was the featured guest speaker. He discussed expected farm policy changes resulting from the balanced budget efforts in Washington and the implications for Northeast agriculture.

Barbara Shinn of Jobstown spoke to the meeting representing young farmers. She and her husband, Paul, own and operate 575 acre Toyland Farms. Prior to the meeting, the Shinn's joined 60 other young farmers and farm couples for a tour of the Agway Farm Research Center in Tully, NY. They discussed farming trends with Agway managers and research directors as guests of Agway. More than 1,000 young farmers have participated in Agway's young farmer program since 1979.

Five farmers have been elected to three-year terms on the 17-member Agway board of directors. They include Keith H.

Carlisle, Greenwood, DE; D. Gilbert Couser, Pine Bush, NY; Andrew J. Gilbert, Potsdam, NY; Thomas E. Smith, Greenville, and William W. Young, Clifton Springs, NY. Carlisle replaced Brosius, a West Grove, PA mushroom grower, who resigned from the board when he was named PA Secretary of Agriculture in early 1995.

Three directors retired from the Agway board. Stephen P. James of Middlebury, VT, John H. Ross of Lowville, NY and John H. Talmage of Riverhead, NY had served a combined total of 58 years.

Agway is a farm supply cooperative owned by 87,000 farmers in 12 Northeastern states. Its 4,580 full time and 1,700 part time employees and franchised dealers provide rural and suburban customers with production supplies for farm and home, energy products, leasing and insurance programs, and natural state food packaging and marketing services. Agway facilities are located in hundreds of communities throughout the Northeastern states. It also operates specialized food packaging and seed facilities in several other states. Agway maintains headquarters and offices at several locations in Syracuse, NY.

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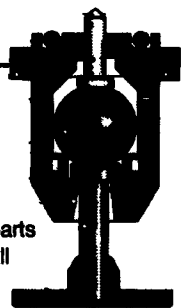
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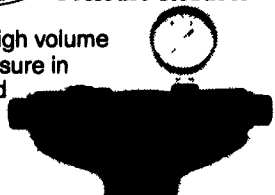
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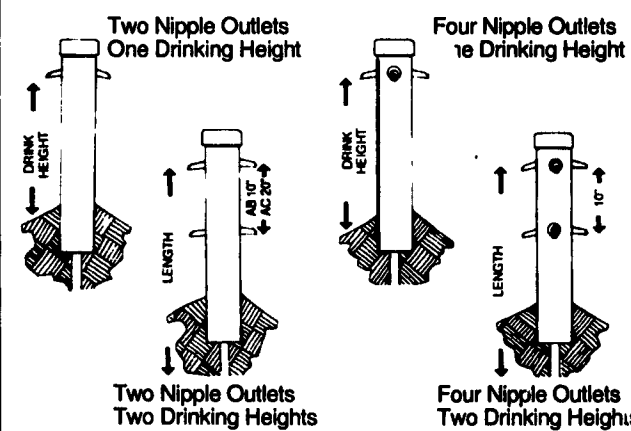
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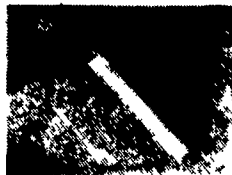
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