



OPINION

Without Agriculture The People Perish

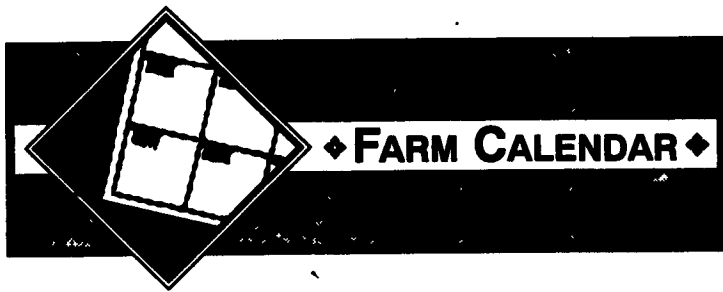
National Agriculture Week is scheduled for March 17-23. This is a good time to salute all farm families who provide us with an abundance of food and fiber products.

Pennsylvania's Governor Tom Ridge made a proclamation to recognize agriculture and encourage all citizens to remember the hard work and dedication "our farmers put forth on our behalf."

Everyone in the nation should know that he/she has food because of the farmer. Of course, the impact of agriculture enterprises go far beyond the food we eat. The economic activity just in Pennsylvania alone is more than \$40 billion annually.

But it is more than just food and economic activity. This year's theme is "Growing Better Everyday...Generation to Generation." This speaks of the family values that are passed along to children and children's children through the process of farming in everyday life. "We are continually passing along to our children what we learned from previous generations," said Charles Brosius, Pennsylvania's secretary of agriculture. "To feed each new generation, farm families have learned to adapt to new technologies just like their consumer counterparts. As a result, one American farmer now produces enough food for 129 people, 97 here in the United States, and 32 abroad."

Agriculture Week is an opportunity to unite the agriculture industry and promote a better understanding about the important role it plays in our culture and economy. Without farming, the people perish.



Saturday, March 16

Trespass, Liability, and Timber Theft meeting, Keystone High School, Knox, 12:30 p.m.-4 p.m.

N.Y. Pasture Association statewide annual meeting, Grazing Conference and Trade Show, Holiday Inn, Auburn, N.Y., 8:30 a.m.

Lancaster Saddle Cinches 4-H Club and Home Center, 9:30 a.m.

Wyoming County Crops meeting, Pa. Dept. of Ag, Tunkhannock, 7:30 p.m.

Backyard Fruit Growers Association Grafting and Peach Tree Grafting Workshop, Berks County Ag Center, noon-4 p.m.

Pa. Emu Farmers' Association, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Bradford County Holstein Club tour, Clair Thrush and Bob Whipple Farms, 11 a.m.

Sunday, March 17 St. Patrick's Day

Monday, March 18

National Ag Week, thru March 23. Lancaster County 4-H Woolies Club reorganizational meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.

Dairyalea informational meeting, Best Western Country Cupboard, Lewisburg, 1 p.m.

MMI informational meeting, Sunset West Restaurant, Pleasant Gap, 1 p.m.

MMI informational meeting, Guthrie Inn, Sayre, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19

South Central Pa. Cattlemen's Association Annual Banquet, East Berlin Fire Hall, 7 p.m.

Pa. Legislative Breakfast, State Capitol Building, Harrisburg, 7:30 a.m.-10 a.m.

EAYFA meeting, sprayer calibration, Hibshman Homestead, 7 p.m.

Dairyalea informational meeting, Ramada Inn, Altoona, 7:30 p.m.

Nutrient Management Workshop, Manure Management, University Park, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

MMI informational meeting, Ramada Inn, Watertown, N.Y., 1 p.m.

MMI informational meeting, SUNY College at Morrisville, Stewart Activities Center, 7:30 p.m.

Young Farmers Leadership Training Conference, Cedar Crest High School, Lebanon, noon-3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 20 Spring Begins

Md. Holstein Carroll County Heifer Sale, Westminster.

1996 Winter Vegetable meeting, Pine View Acres, Pottsville, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Pesticide core credit meeting, Montgomery County 4-H Center, Creamery, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Young Cooperators Awards Luncheon, Willow Valley Resort and Conference Center, Willow Street, noon.

Young Farmers Leadership Training Conference, Berlin Brothersvalley Elementary School, Berlin, 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 21

Lancaster County Conservation District annual banquet, The Country Table Restaurant, Mount Joy, 6:45 p.m.

Pesticide license recertification meeting, Northampton County Extension, Greystone Building, Nazareth, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Twin Valley FFA Ag Day Breakfast, ag rooms, Twin Valley



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Get

Equipment Ready

The spring planting season is just around the corner.

The weather this winter has been rather mild, and as each day passes, the average temperature will increase, according to Robert Anderson, extension agronomy agent.

The rush to have crops planted plus the application of pesticides to control weeds and insect pests will create a lot of activity on local farms. Crop yields are directly related to having the crop planted on time and controlling the variety of pests which work to reduce yields.

It is time to get the various planters, sprayers, and other equipment out of storage and get them ready to plant. One of the first that should be checked is the crop sprayer. It needs to be able to place the correct amount of spray material at a uniform rate.

Calibration of the sprayer is critical in any crop production system. Overapplication of pesticides not only costs money but may result in crop injury or carryover, affecting next year's crop.

To Grow Quality Vegetable Transplants

Dr. Tim Elkner, extension horticultural agent, reminds us that the production of high quality vegetable transplants will result in better field establishment and thus more successful crop production.

The following are some tips to help you produce healthier transplants for this growing season.

First, practice sanitation. Remove weeds from greenhouses before you start seeds to remove possible disease and insect sources. Clean any algae buildups that are a potential breeding site for fungus gnats. Be sure to clean and sterilize transplant trays before each use.

High School, 6:45 a.m.-8:30 a.m.

Adams County Beef Producers annual spring dinner meeting, Carbone's Restaurant, 6:45 p.m.

Friday, March 22

Second annual Farmer to Farmer Workshop, East Berlin Community Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

20,000 Acres Preserved Celebration, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Creating Opportunities For Community Open Space, Holiday Inn-Scranton East, Dunmore, noon-5:15 p.m.

Saturday, March 23

York County Pork Producer's annual banquet, Stewartstown Fire Hall, 7 p.m.

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Second, use good seed. High quality seed results in more even and reliable germination. Uniform seedling age simplifies spraying and fertilization scheduling. Quality seed will also be most likely to be disease-free.

Finally, consider water and irrigation. Water quality is very important in transplant production. You should have your water tested annually to be certain that the pH and EC (salts) are within the recommended range.

Do not overwater your seedlings, particularly early in their development. Excessive water will reduce root growth and slow plant development as well as cause weak, succulent growth. Allow the surface to dry to the touch prior to adding more water.

To Plant Seed Oats

Every year some growers consider using feed oats for seed.

According to Robert Anderson, extension agronomy agent, this is

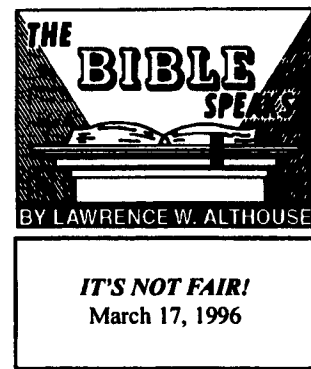
probably not a good idea if seed oats is available even if the cost is higher.

Feed oats often contain weed seeds such as quackgrass, bindweed, and other hard-to-control weeds. Yields from feed oats are usually lower than yields from seed oats.

Keep in mind that the cost of seed is usually the smallest variable cost the farmer has. If you must, use homegrown seed if seed oats are not available. Make sure that it is cleaned, treated with a fungicide seed treatment, and has good germination.

To test germination, wet a few paper towels and spread some seed on them. Then roll the towels around the seed and place in a plastic bag in a warm location. In about one week, count the number of seeds which germinated compared to the total seeds.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "You are only as good as your competition."



IT'S NOT FAIR!
March 17, 1996

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Background Scripture:
Matthew 19:27 to 20:16
Devotional Reading:
Matthew 19:20-30

The merit system is the basis for most everything in our society. The role of valedictorian goes to the student with the highest grade average. The first string slots on the basketball team are awarded by the coach to those who he or she thinks are the best players. The advancement in the company is bestowed on the person whom management thinks is the best suited for the job. If a person wants to eat, let him or her be willing to work for it.

I realize that favoritism, cronyism, and corruption may sometimes defeat the concept of the merit system, but essentially that's how our society is organized. And, for the most part, I think the merit system is best in most human affairs. It is what our concept of fairness is built upon.

But the New Testament tells us that, when we get to the spiritual dimension of life, the merit system gives way to the grace system — and aren't we fortunate that God uses grace rather than merit! The message of the New Testament is clearly that, if God were on the merit system, none of us would experience the kingdom of heaven.

NEEDING MERCY!

Of course we know all this, but on a personal level it often seems patently unfair. We all tend to "grumble at the householder" (20:11) from time to time. That's what the parable of the vineyard workers is all about. This is one of Jesus' most successful parables because it traps us at the level where we are most vulnerable: wanting fairness where what we really need is mercy. I'm reminded of the woman who was sitting to have her portrait painted. "Mind you," she said to the artist, "do me justice." To which he replied, "Madam, what you need is not justice, but mercy!"

When we look at the parable it

is easy for us to side with workers — particularly those who started work at 6 a.m. — instead of the householder. One group started at 6 a.m., another at 9 a.m., more at 3 p.m. and some even at 5 p.m. — but he paid them all the same wage. It wasn't fair! Even if we take into consideration that those who were hired late in the day — through no fault of their own — if they were paid only for the time they had actually worked, wouldn't have enough to take home to feed their families, it still isn't fair!

Is Jesus implying that employers can justify paying their workers on something other than their own merit? No, I think not, for the "householder" in this parable is clearly God — and God is not on the merit system (again, thank God!), but on the grace system. Some scholars believe that the householder is paying all the workers a magnanimous wage — more than any of them deserve. All are getting MORE than they deserve. That is grace, not merit.

GRACE FOR THE GRACIOUS

Realizing that we are on the receiving end of God's grace, not our merits, we are called to be of generous and humble spirits. That we protest, "It's not fair!" shows that we really desire grace for ourselves and merit for others. But a generosity begrudged is a grace rejected. Just as we must forgive if we want forgiveness, so we must be gracious if we expect to receive grace. The workers in the vineyard exhibited pretty much the same behavior as the prodigal son's brother who bitterly complained: "lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make Merry with my friends" (Luke 15:29). In other words, God isn't fair!

Thank God for that!

The Althouses will lead a group to the Holy Land, Oct. 9 to Nov. 2, 1996. Space limited. For information, write them at 4412 Shenandoah Ave., Dallas, TX 75205.

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Lancaster Farming, Inc.

A Stearns Enterprise

Robert G. Campbell General Manager

Everett R. Newswanger Managing Editor

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