

Schuylkill Farm Leaders Urge Support For Property Tax Fairness

SACRAMENTO (Schuylkill Co.) — Schuylkill County farmers face an up-hill battle to achieve fairness in property taxes in the new Countywide reassessment. If fair results are not obtained now, farmers, their families and their children will be crippled by high, unjustified taxes for the indefinite future to come.

Schuylkill County farm leaders, who have been following the reassessment, have identified at least two serious problems in valuation. First, the new Act 319 Clean and Green values to be placed on farmland reflect values at least 15-20 percent too high under a "use value" assessment. Secondly, the homesite base acre, the acre under the home which is not assessed as farmland, is being set at more than double its actual value. Reasons for these overassessments range from the use of outdated numbers for valuation to comparison of farm lots to building lots in residential subdivisions where there is no real comparison

between the two. Other problems with the reassessment include misclassification of property and measurement and description errors.

The battle in Schuylkill County is a virtual repeat of the war that has been waged in Lancaster County, PA, where the County issued farm assessments several times the original assessments on the properties. Farmers in Lancaster County, horrified by the impact of these unjustified increases, fought the County with statewide

support and won. The reassessment was halted in 1995, and the numbers rolled back until the County reviewed them for fairness and accuracy.

Our County farmers need to take action now. Appeals of the informal results have taken place. In July, the formal numbers will be issued. A Schuylkill County Farm Bureau Tax Appeal Fund has been established through the Farm Bureau to challenge the in-

creases, and petitions have been circulated. Support is being sought and obtained from farm owners throughout the County. It has been over 35 years since the last reassessment. The numbers that are put into effect now will form the basis for farm property taxes for generations to come.

For more information, contact: KEITH MASSER, Route 25, Box 210 Sacramento, PA 17968, (717) 682-3709 or (717) 682-9304.

Md. Grain Checkoff

EDGEWATER, Md. — The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) announces the date of the referendum to reaffirm the Maryland Grain Checkoff as August 16. This announcement was made by the president of the MGPA, grain producer Robert Hutchison of Cordova, Md.

The referendum will be held from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the county cooperative extension office. Absentee ballots will be available from extension offices after July 15, or can be obtained by writing to MGPA, 53 Slama Road, Edgewater, MD 21037.

To be eligible to vote a person must be financially engaged in the growing of grain as an owner, tenant, or sharecropper.

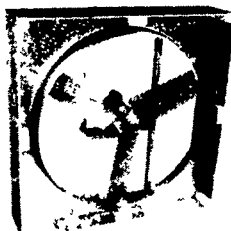
If passed by a majority of those voting who are eligible to vote, the 5-year-old Maryland Grain Checkoff Program will continue for a further five years from October 1. An assessment of one half of one percent will be collected on the net value of each bushel of grain sold. The checkoff will be deducted at the first point of sale on all grain, with the exception of soybeans which is already under a check-off program. Any producer who does not wish to participate in the program can get a full or partial refund upon written request sent to the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board (MGPUB), which administers the program.

For more information, contact Lynne Hoot, (410) 956-5771.



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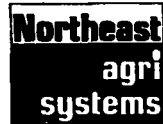
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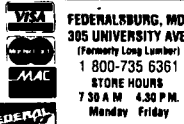
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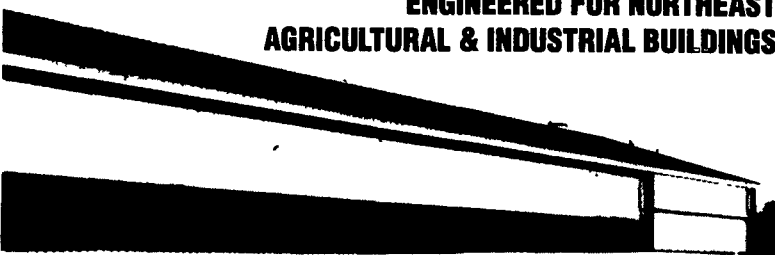
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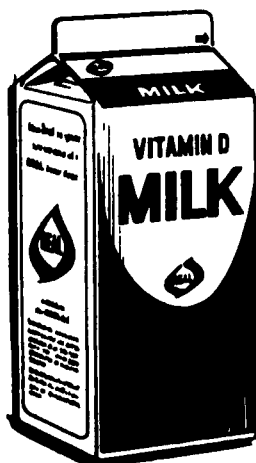
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