



As part of Carl Shaffer's large farming operation, two corn planters are at work along the beautiful mountains of Columbia County.

Carl Shaffer Thrives On Diversification, Ag Awareness

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so he doesn't look at the value of the material for fertilizer.

The state environmental protection department has approved the injection of the waste water in the ground, and Shaffer has a nutrient management plan for each of his farms. A computer program keeps track of all inputs and yields from each field.

While the development pressures are not as extensive as in some other counties, Shaffer still believes one of the economic factors facing farmers is the loss of ground available to rent. With the large capital investment in equipment, you need a large number of acres to cover. Even in this rural area, Shaffer has lost 300 to 400 acres of rented ground to development over the last five years.

The farms are in an ag security area, but Shaffer believes you still need to educate the public about normal farming practices and keep communication open with your neighbors. If the neighbors ask for some corn stalks to decorate the house in the fall, they may take them. And neighbors may walk the fields in search of Indian arrowheads until the crop is planted. Even some beans are picked by the neighbors with the blessing of the farm owner. The few pounds of beans that are lost provide very inexpensive public relations.

But Shaffer is doing more to help farm and city relations. As president of the Ag Awareness Foundation, he has helped to get a set of slides about farming into every extension office across the state. If a farmer gets a request to speak to a civic group, the slide set along with script can be used. In addition, the ag in the classroom program has advanced to the point where 100 teachers are given the opportunity to learn about agriculture each year. A new video has been produced in three segments to fit classroom periods and provide an excellent source of instruction in grades K to six.

Shaffer also serves on the ag advisory board to DEP and the vegetable marketing board.

As for his work with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Shaffer believes the organization has two major roles to fill in legislative affairs. The need to support legislation good for farmers is evident. What is not so evident is working to stop legislation that would be bad for farmers.

Issues such as nutrient management, well head protection, back-hauling, and citizen monitoring of water quality in state streams are all in need of a farmer voice in Harrisburg.

The back-hauling law requires that any farm or agribusiness truck that has hauled anything other than food or feed can never, during the lifetime of the truck, be used for

food or feed. There is no provision for sanitation of trucks. In practical terms, you can not legally haul fertilizer and later haul grain or sweet corn to market.

In the citizen's water monitoring issue, any group of people could become registered to monitor water in Pennsylvania. They can have access to private property along the stream banks. The potential to abuse power and gather unscientific data is obvious. Shaffer sees farm groups like Farm Bureau working to stop bad legislation and helping to forge good legislation for farmers.

Shaffer believes for all farmers, management becomes the key to success. "I still believe diversifica-

tion is necessary. Our profit margins are so small and our capital investment so large, we can't afford several years of drought,"

Shaffer said. "You need to cover yourself in some way. In my operation 30 percent of cash flow comes

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Dairy Farmers Said To Agree On Federal Milk Marketing Reforms

CAMP HILL (Dauphin Co.) — In what appears to be a good sign for the future of Pennsylvania's dairy industry, Farm Bureau dairy producers from across the country recently reached a favorable consensus on how impending reform of the federal milk marketing system should take place.

The 1996 farm bill directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to reform the federal system and consolidate the number of milk marketing orders from 32 regional milk marketing orders into 10 to 14 orders by 1999. The federal order system was established nearly 60 years ago to stabilize market conditions and provide consumers with adequate milk supplies while assuring dairy farmers of a minimum price for their milk, but in recent years it has become "a cause of regional differences," according to American Farm Bureau dairy specialist Ken Olson.

The American Farm Bureau Federation took the challenge of attempting to unify dairy producer interests on federal milk order reform and hosted a meeting last month in Chicago. More than 50 state Farm Bureau leaders attended including Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) representatives Harold Curtis of Warren County, a member of the PFB Board of Directors and chairman of PFB's Dairy Advisory Committee, Joel Rotz, PFB's Dairy Specialist, and Harold Shaulis of Somerset County, a member of the American Farm Bureau Order Reform Working Group.

The Working Group is charged with reviewing USDA's proposal for market order reform and advis-

ing the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors. "There has been a lot of cooperation between all regions of the country," said Shaulis of the Working Group's progress to date. "Everybody is willing to give and take to reach agreement on the issues. That's exactly what we need to be doing at this point in the industry."

The group studied six pricing options, basic formula price plans, milk classifications, and uniform provisions sponsored by USDA. It also heard proposals by dairy coalitions from various regions. USDA is seeking changes that will provide appropriate market signals to producers nationwide, while helping to minimize some of the price volatility the dairy industry has experienced. According to James Hahn, acting milk market administrator for the Chicago region, USDA is looking for consensus among dairy producers, processors and consumers. Equity was the operative word he used in speaking to the Working Group. To achieve equity, compromise is needed, he said.

Dairymen attending Farm Bureau's conference last month in Chicago reached agreement on several milk order issues in line with PFB's goals. On the suggested consolidation of federal orders in the northeastern U.S. the group agreed that the new order should include all areas currently in federal orders 1, 2 and 4, plus all unregulated areas of the northeastern states beginning at the Pennsylvania-Ohio border, including Maryland and extending to the border of Maine.

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Carl Shaffer believes diversification is necessary so that if one enterprise fails during the year, maybe one of the other crops or businesses will pick you up.