



OPINION

Ag Education Provides Foundation For Life

If you are an ardent reader of Lancaster Farming, it is assumed that you already know that we hold agricultural education to be a much broader and encompassing topic than what non-agricultural people may refer to as, "That stuff the farm kids do instead of regular school work."

Agricultural education is cultural education.

It is not a religion, but it is a way of life. That's what a culture is.

When people ask, "What culture are you?" they frequently are referring to the birth place of a person's ancestors. That isn't quite all of it.

A "culture" is the body of information and skills that a group of people hold in common, and from which they draw upon to make decisions, not only to survive, but also to determine appropriate clothing, food, entertainment and thought.

The culture is the context within which a people communicate, think, and conduct their day-to-day lives, as well as their special moments.

For us, agriculture is a culture with a specific context — nurturing life.

(If the basis of a culture isn't agricultural, then the basis is predation.)

But how can we spread the word that agricultural education must be expanded; infused once again, though in modern terms, as the context for the individual academic disciplines?

We must, apparently, be candid, enduring and staunch.

Even while patiently explaining that this great capitalistic democracy we enjoy, this best-place-on-earth-to-live, all happens because it was and continues to be built upon a foundation made of blocks of agricultural endeavors.

State Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes Jr. recently talked to a group of agricultural education leaders from five states participating in an agricultural education outlook consortium in Hershey. It was sponsored by the FFA Foundation Inc. with a grant from the Kellogg Foundation.

The purpose of the meeting was for ag education leaders to attempt to envision the future of agriculture and how agricultural education can remain relevant and what the ag ed system would have to change in order to deliver the education that people need.

Part of the challenges identified was figuring out how to educate the nonfarming majority of people to their own agriculture.

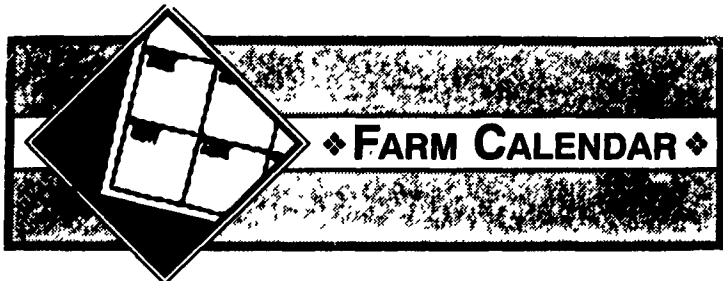
From there, it would seem to be easier to convince them of the truth — that farming and agriculture are essential to create and maintain a safe, secure and prosperous community of people.

"We must not let agriculture become an offshore enterprise," Hayes said.

Why? For several reasons, not the least of which is security — it is vital that for any form of government to stand up to challenges, it must be able to defend itself; it can't defend itself if it doesn't control its own food supply.

Secretary Hayes said he considers agriculture an essential element of national defense; as well as Pennsylvania's greatest economic hope.

We agree. But we would add, and we are sure he agrees, it is an essential element of everything we are and want to be — nurturers of life.



Saturday, August 16
Pa. Holstein Central Championship Show, Huntingdon Fairgrounds, 6 p.m.
Warren County Holstein Sale, Fairgrounds, Pittsfield, noon.
Ephrata Area Young Farmers Ice Cream Social, Woodcrest Retreat.
Southeast Regional Cattlemen's Association Farm tour to York County, meets at Hoss's Steak House, Lionville, 8 a.m.
Northeast 4-H/FFA Dairy Show, Potter County Fairgrounds, Millport.
Fourth Annual Olde-Tyme Peach

Festival, Middletown, Del., 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Crawford County Fair, Meadville, thru Aug. 23.
Chester County 4-H Dairy Show, Romano 4-H Center, 10 a.m.
Sunday, August 17
Cameron County Fair, Emporium, thru Aug. 23.
Franklin County Fair, Chambersburg, thru Aug. 23.
Fulton County Fair, McConnellsburg, thru Aug. 23.
Somerset County Fair, Meyersdale, thru Aug. 23.
Transfer Harvest Home Fair, Transfer, thru Aug. 23.
Monday, August 18



Now Is The Time
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Look At Feed Supplies

According to Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, the recent rains came just in time to save many of our feed crops. Even with these rains the drought has already left its impact. Hay and pasture yields have been reduced greatly. It looks like corn yields will be reduced by 25 percent or more. Hay crop silage and corn silage is in short supply or depleted on many farms. Fortunately though for farmers feeding grain, feed grain prices are lower than last year. Now is a good time to lock in grain supplies and prices. If you can find good quality forages and alternative feeds consider locking them in. Work closely with your lender and with your nutrition and financial advisors.

To Feed Your Good Cows

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, advises to take measures to stretch your feed supplies. Feed the best feed to the best cows. Sell unprofitable cows and excess heifers. The worst mistake you can make would be to underfeed your good cows, your dry cows and your bred heifers. Many dairy farmers need to produce 40 to 60 pounds of milk per cow per day to break even. The milk you produce above this break-even level is the cheapest milk you will produce. This is a result of all the overhead and basic operating costs being paid for by the first 40 to 60 pounds.

About the only cost of producing this extra milk is the cost of the extra feed to produce it. Each additional pound of dry matter intake should generate about two and half pounds of milk. This equates to about \$2.50 to \$3.00

Elizabethtown Community Fair, thru Aug. 23.
Cambria County Horse Leaders meeting, extension office, 7 p.m.
Harford Fair, Harford, thru Aug. 23.
Mountain Area Community Fair, Farmington, thru Aug. 23.
Williamsburg Community Farm Show, Williamsburg, thru Aug. 25.

Tuesday, August 19
Cambria County Roundup, extension office.
Northeast Championship Holstein Show, Tioga County Fairgrounds, Whitneyville.
Chester County Holstein Field Day, Harol and Glenn Ranck Farm, Cochranville, 10 a.m.
Lebanon County Holstein Field Night, Scott and Karen Nolt, Lebanon, 7 p.m.
Fencing Economics and Water Systems, McCullough Angus and Fencing, Mercer, 6:30

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return for each additional feed dollar. When you pull feed away from cows to cut costs, you also pull away those extra pounds of the cheapest milk. That's your profit margin! Protect it. Do not short change the good cows. If you do you will also be short changing yourself.

To Look At The Competition

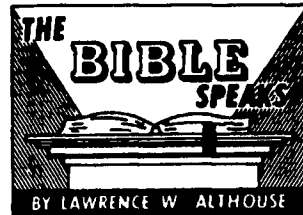
Recent article I read compared dairy production in Pennsylvania to California. There dairy farmers have developed several strategies that have increased profits. Debt structure is a key factor. They base herd size on how cows they can milk in 24 hours. The fixed cost of the most expensive building (milking parlor) is spread over as many income producing units (cows) as possible. They contract

out heifer raising. Contracting is often cheaper than building a heifer barn while increasing the amount of forages available to the milking herd and reducing nutrient management concerns.

California farmers are using hired labor to milk and perform other tasks. This is specialized labor with job descriptions and good pay and benefits.

With more price volatility coming to the dairy industry, farmers will need to keep capital investments low, productivity high, concentrate on what they do best and contract out services that other people can do better at a lower cost.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "As for butter versus margarine, I trust cows more than chemists." - Joan Gussow



SOMETHING BETTER
August 17, 1997

Background Scripture:
Hebrews 11:1-40
Devotional Reading:
Romans 4:1-15

I am a clipper of cartoons. Over the years I have assembled a whole file folder of cartoons that have made me both laugh and think more deeply about life in general and my life in particular.

One cartoon that I have had in my collection for at least 15 years was one from the "Frank & Ernie" series. A man is holding a sign that reads: "THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH!" And Frank says to Ernie — or is it the other way around? — "They'll have to make a better offer than that!"

What makes that cartoon so profound for me is the fact that, unlike Frank and Ernie, there are lots of people who would settle for inheriting the earth. Earthly riches, earthly power, earthly enjoyments — they believe that this is all there is to life: "What you see is what you get."

I call this "materialism" but call it what you like, the reality is the same — very frightening! Why? Because many of those who see nothing beyond the five senses and the power of reason have already sensed that what they see in life is not enough. No wonder the world is in such a moral and spiritual malaise today. We have let material things become our whole world and are discovering that these things are not enough to make life worthwhile. Frank and Ernie are right: "They'll have to make a better offer than that!"

A BETTER OFFER

Many people grow desperate when they begin to suspect that life can't really make a better offer. Essentially, if you live only on the basis of what you can see, life is hopeless and unfair. But Hebrews is telling us that the basis of a meaningful life is to be found in what lies beyond our sight. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). It is our trust in God that empowers us to make sense out of this earthly existence.

This is also what C.S. Lewis tells us, when he says, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next." We function best in this world when

we are convinced there is more to existence than the world. "The Apostles, themselves," Lewis reminds us, "who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven."

Essentially, the question is whether you live by the promises of God. These promises, Hebrews tells us, are things that we cannot see and, in fact, may never see in this life. The writer of Hebrews lists one scriptural hero after another who lived on promises they never saw fulfilled: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gidon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. On the strength of what they hoped for but could not see, they did mighty things for God: "conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" (10:33,34).

BETTER THAN EARTH

Their hope in God's promise gave them the power to do all these things. But although these accomplishments were important, they were not the fulfillment of God's basic promise. That promise was of something beyond their sight. Hebrews says, "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore . . . God has prepared for them a city" (10:16). A celestial city not made with hands and not visible to human eyes. It was the promise of the city of God that gave these saints the power to accomplish what God gave them to do. Theologian John Bright says that this is why the prophet Jeremiah could not believe that the ruin of Israel was therefore the end of Israel. "True, he could see no cause to hope; but he never lost hope because he never lost God."

God promises something better than the earth to inherit. As C.S. Lewis puts it, "Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither."

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