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1997 Ends As Perplexing Year For Producers

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EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) —

For many producers, 1997 will go into the books as a confusing, perplexing year. For others, 1997 will prove to be a year that provided the first fruits of burgeoning technology and expanding markets.

Pork and beef products are sell-

ing at a brisk pace in Japan, the major buyer of U.S. pork. Exports of broilers in 1997 will total 4.6 billion pounds and should increase to 4.7 billion this year (with Russia a big growth market for U.S. chicken). Other products will see increasing demand from overseas, apparently with no end in sight.

At the same time, producers in a large part of the state saw their

crops drastically reduced by a persistent, unbreakable drought throughout the summer of 1997. In July, it was announced that a drought watch was declared for 34 counties in the Susquehanna River basin.

Corn silage harvests were down drastically, as much as 35 to 40 percent in some areas. The USDA yield estimate for Pennsylvania,

according to Penn State experts, is 85 bushels per acre compared to 119 bushels per acre in 1996 — a substantial decrease.

But for as much as the crop endured, some producers achieved high levels of production from their fields. Many agree that growing successful crops of any nature is a perplexing, confusing business at best, even in an ideal year.

To illustrate the nature of this dual-personality year filled with droughts and broken expectations, the 1997 corn harvest is still pegged at about 9.27 billion

bushels, about the same as last year's crop. It's the fourth largest crop on record, according to the USDA. Carryovers will create only a six-week supply of corn at the time of this year's harvest.

But the livestock and poultry industries continue to use corn at a record level despite the small carryovers.

Producers had other news that created questions about ag's future and the role of a progressive farmer in it. In a year of large mergers (Atlantic Dairy Cooperative and

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Bob and Diane Miller, with sons, Matt, 5; Wesley, 8; and Ben, 2, have been honored as Maryland Outstanding Farm Family for 1997.

Millers Named Outstanding Maryland Farm Family

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Managing Editor

NORTH EAST, Md. — For the farm family that has been recognized by both Land O'Lakes and Farm Bureau as outstanding Maryland young farmers, Bob and Diane Miller and their three sons, Wesley 8, Matt 5, and Ben 2, look at their operation as both a heritage and a business.

The heritage part comes from a long line of ancestors who have lived on their farm located just south of the Pennsylvania/Maryland line. Not only do they enjoy their work, the family partnership between them and Bob's father and uncle provide a rewarding atmosphere to rear the boys.

The business attitudes focus on

obtaining expert professional management help from accountants, feed nutritionists and crop consultants.

"Any young person who wants to farm should consider what he/she wants out of life," Bob said. "If he wants to make a lot of money or have short hours, he will not find this on the farm. But if he wants to be self-employed, enjoy his work, and have a good place to rear a family, he should consider it."

"But he/she definitely should consider obtaining professional management help," Diane adds. "And he needs to find time to get away so he can look at the operation from a different perspective and come back with a more positive attitude."

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Farm Show Special Issue Next Week

Our special Pennsylvania Farm Show Issue will come to you next week. An extensive resource to help you get the most out of your visit to the Farm Show, this publication will be filled with the Farm Show schedule and building layout, special interviews with farm families who plan to show their home-grown items, and advertisers' messages to help you choose products and services. In fact, to help you get a head start on your planning, the building layout and show schedule is included in this issue, starting on page B17.

Please note that to get the paper out to you on time next week some of the news and advertising deadlines have

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Mid-Winter Plowing Brings Hope For A New Year

In many places the ground sleeps under a deep, soft blanket of snow. But in Lancaster County, the ground was open. And early Monday morning, before the the storm came up from the South, this Amish farmer was getting a running start on spring plowing. The scene along West View Drive, east of Intercourse, seems out of place in the middle of winter. And yet, what better symbolic activity could explain the eternal hope that lies within the heart of every true farmer? As we ring in the new year, this hope causes us to believe the blessings of nature will give us yet another good growing season full of bountiful harvest and the spiritual blessings associated with the calling to be a farmer. Photo by Everett Newswanger, managing editor.