

Farmers Met Congressmen In Washington

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) Farmers from across the state traveled to Washington, D.C. this week to meet with their congressmen and United States senators, to discuss key legislative items affecting agriculture.

About 200 farmers were to have taken part in the annual Washington tour conducted by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB). The participating farmers were all members of county farm bureau national legislative committees.

Congressmen will be heard how some of the laws and regulations coming out of Washington affects farmers back in their home districts, said Guy Donaldson, president of the statewide farm organization.

PA Farm Bureau represents 25,247 families in 54 county farm bureaus. It is affiliated with the nation's largest general farm organization, the 4.8-million member American Farm Bureau Federation.

PFB farmers recommend legislative action based on policies developed from the grass-roots level of the organization, Donaldson said.

Among top issues Farm Bureau members discussed were:

Approval of fast-track trading authority - This is Farm Bureau's top priority issue for 1998. Pennsylvania exported an estimated \$557 million in agricultural products in 1996. If Pennsylvania farmers are to compete successfully for export opportunities, they need free trade and fair access to growing global markets. AG exports have been increasing rapidly in recent years. Fast-track authority, which allows the President to negotiate a trade treaty which Congress must later approve or reject without amendment, would open up new markets for continued export growth by American agriculture. Ninety-six percent of the world's consumers live outside U.S. borders.

Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility - The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is designed to help working people with low incomes. Many dairy farmers depend on it to help make ends meet. But, as the result of recent

welfare reform changes, some low-income dairy and livestock farmers are being declared ineligible for the EITC because of income received from capital gains. The problem is, IRS considers the sale of dairy cows or breeding stock at the same as the sale of an investment when calculating capital gains. Farm Bureau supports passage of S. 775 and H.R. 1800 to correct this situation.

Self-Employment tax clarification - In 1996, IRS broadened the Self-Employment tax for farmers in partnership to include cash rental income from farmland. Before that farmers only paid self-employment taxes on income from labor and employment. Farm Bureau is supporting S. 529 and H.R. 1261 to restore the tax to its proper imposition.

Agricultural Guestworker Program - There are over 20,000 migrant and seasonal workers in Pennsylvania during peak harvest seasons for fruits, vegetables, mushrooms and Christmas trees. It's nearly impossible to recruit local workers for temporary hand-harvest work and the Immigration and Naturalization Service continues to reduce the number of illegal aliens. As a result, many farmers are finding it more and more difficult to get adequate numbers of good workers. The current agricultural guestworker program to bring in foreign workers on a temporary basis during labor shortages is not used by farmers because of burdensome requirements. Farm Bureau supports S. 1563 and H.R. 2377 to set up, on a two-

year pilot program basis, a new guestworker program capable of responding more, quickly to emergency labor shortages.

In addition to these priority issues, the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members asked members of Congress to:

- Oppose OSHA's proposed ergonomics rules.
- Pass a national highway repair funding bill.
- Reauthorize the agricultural research funding title of the farm bill.
- Reauthorize and reform the Clean Water Act and clarify wetlands regulations.
- Reform the Endangered Species Act to protect property rights.
- Reform the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker

Protection Act.

- Prevent the loss of key pesticides under the new Food Quality Protection Act.

- Oppose attempts to implement the Global Climate Change Treaty piecemeal through administrative procedure and legislation.

- Make sure EPA's new Air Quality Standards aren't used to penalize farmers.

- Reform taxes by repealing estate taxes, speeding up the 100% health insurance premium tax deduction by the self-employed and lowering capital gains tax rates.

- Make permanent the income-averaging provisions contained in last year's tax cuts.

- Create a special risk management savings account for farmers.

Group Offers Farm/Emergency Training

ALFRED, N.Y. - The board of directors of AGRIMERICA recently made a substantial contribution to FARMEDIC Training, Inc. to continue their work of training emergency providers as well as farm family members and employees to be better prepared to manage farm-related emergencies.

The contribution will be used to attract new FARMEDIC instructors throughout the United States through a scholarship plan developed by FARMEDIC.

The plan is designed to encourage newly trained FARMEDIC instructors to teach fire, rescue, and EMS providers the FARMEDIC agricultural rescue course and farmers, their families, and employees the First-on-the-Scene course.

FARMEDIC was founded in 1981 in New York State to train emergency providers and farm family members to respond to agricultural emergencies. Its unique train-the-trainer method or program delivery has enabled FARMEDIC to receive a national reputation of setting the standard for agricultural emergency training.

Over 800 FARMEDIC instructors have trained over 17,000 emergency providers out of the National Training Center located at Alfred State College.

"This training has made a

tremendous impact at saving farmers' lives by teaching fire, rescue, and EMS providers how to be better prepared to respond to and manage a farm emergency," said Dave Hill, executive director of FARMEDIC.

"By understanding the hazards and mechanics involved in a farm-related emergency, rescuers will perform their jobs more efficiently, thus providing better care to the victim," Hill said.

Several years ago, FARMEDIC noted that there was a void in the effort to reduce the numbers of farm deaths and disabling injuries.

That void was the care that was being given by the people who discovered the accident. The First-on-the-Scene program was developed to address this void.

Farmers, their families, and employees are taught what to do and what not to do when they discover an emergency on the farm.

"Life-saving measures often need to be implemented prior to the arrival of trained rescue personnel and the First-on-the-Scene program teaches these measures," Hill said.

AGRIMERICA is a non-profit multi-state association that was founded on the principal of bringing the same advantages and services enjoyed by people in industry to individual agricultural producers.

As a member association, a major mission of AGRIMERICA is to improve the health and safety of the agricultural community through education and benefit plans. The association has been active in various endeavors and organizations in its effort to promote health and safety.

Besides FARMEDIC, others include NYS Agriculture in the Classroom, NYS Rural Health

and Safety Council, Empire State Council of Agricultural Organizations, NYS Farm City Council, and endorsements of various insurance plans.

All insurance plans endorsed by AGRIMERICA are fully insured by major insurance companies and are administered by Mutual Health Agency.

To learn more about how to deliver the FARMEDIC agricultural rescue courses and/or the First-on-the-Scene program in your community, contact Dave Hill, executive director: FARMEDIC National Training Center, Alfred State College, Alfred, NY 14802; or call 1-800-437-6010.

Public Auction

GILBERT (Monroe Co.) - The 2nd Annual Pocono Old-Tyme Farm Equipment Associations Public Auction will be held here at West End Fairgrounds on Saturday, March 28, beginning at 10 a.m.

Zettlemoyer Auctions will be the auctioneer. All proceeds benefit Pocono Old-Tyme Farm Equipment Association, whose objective is to preserve the history of farming in the Pocono

Mountains area.

They are accepting consignment items for a fee of 10 percent of sale price. Donated items are appreciated.

Please drop off donated or consignment items at West End Fairgrounds on Friday, March 27 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, March 28 prior to auction. For additional information of the auction, call (610) 681-5419.

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