

Effort Underway To Revitalize State Direct Marketing Group

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 competing against higher-profit land uses, such as siting residential

and commercial buildings. As with most other small businesses, there are almost

always some obstacles to creating and keeping a smoothly operating business.

Furthermore, many sense that it can be counted upon today, in almost every business, that there will be opposition to conducting business.

Opposition can come from local and/or broader-scale anti-industry and anti-competitive forces, or it can come through unmonitored actions by public officials working with an insufficient understanding of the impact of their suggested actions and policies.

A number of legal and statutory threats to small businesses can come from policies adopted without consideration of those small businesses. In some cases, the small businesses being affected are not represented, much less considered, when policies are being developed.

Developing and adopting policies is politics, and to influence the

outcome, requires political clout.

Clout can only come through good communications, a respected reputation as an industry representative group, and a message that solves problems, instead of exacerbating them.

That is what the people working to re-establish the PRFMA organization want to develop — a mutually supportive organization that can provide a conduit to a spectrum of useful educational materials and programs, timely warnings of upcoming regulations and policy changes, development of a networking system, and respected political recognition.

According to Berry, "(The PRFMA) has not been active for a few years. Now a new group of farmers, men and women, can see some value from a state organization.

"It's main goals are marketing education and, in addition to fellowship, to provide a unified voice for direct markets."

Berry started last year as the multi-county, agri-marketing agent for Berks, Bucks, Lehigh, Montgomery and Northampton counties.

He said that the southeastern region of the state has been growing, and has become much more conducive to direct marketing.

"The urban sprawl has been putting pressure on farmland to make farmland more profitable, so if people can develop direct marketing techniques they can profit on, we would be turning a negative into a positive."

Berry got involved with the PRFMA effort through Larry Yager, a marketing agent in Adams County.

Yager had been previously involved with the organization when it was active, and he co-chaired and coordinated the 1998 Pennsylvania/Mid-Atlantic conference, along with representatives of existing direct marketing associations, agriculture departments, and extension services in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Virginia.

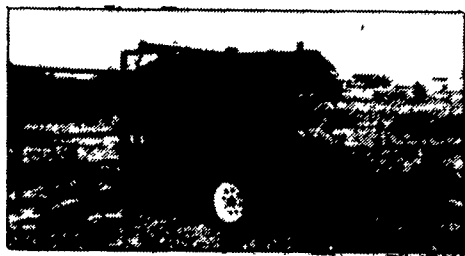
The Pennsylvania contingent on the conference planning committee included a number of farm marketers who had been interested in restarting a statewide association.

Yager said that at last year's conference, he recommended that Pennsylvania growers appoint a steering committee to look into restarting the association. Yager had to be away for a number of weeks and called upon Berry to aid the group.

In that way, Berry was introduced to those interested in bringing the Pennsylvania organization back to life.

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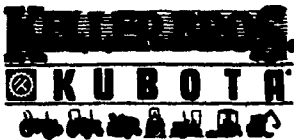
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