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The John and Betty Herbst family farm, run by John and son David, is a Maryland Agricultural Hall of Fame inductee. Their Misty Meadow Farm was recognized for its conservation efforts and nutrient management. From the left are John, Betsy and David and children Andrew, Jenny, Katie and Kimberly, and Betty Herbst. See story on page A34.

Dr. Beegle Clarifies Phosphorus Report

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UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — I am writing in response to an article in the March 14 edition of Lancaster Farming, "Nutrient Management Proposals Challenge Future of Farming."

Part of this article was based on a presentation that I made to the (State Conservation Commission) Nutrient Management Advisory Board at their meeting in Harrisburg on March 10.

I was asked by the Nutrient Management Advisory Board to give them an overview and update on the technical background on the phosphorus issue to help them to evaluate the implications of this issue for nutrient management in Pennsylvania.

This was prompted by the intense media attention that has been focused on phosphorus

recently and the legislative action that has been taken in Maryland.

I would like to clarify what I believe was a misinterpretation of what was discussed.

This presentation was not, as implied, an announcement of a major policy change or release of surprising new findings on this issue.

The article stated that what I presented was a "complete turnaround on what had been considered scientific fact" in regard to the issue of phosphorus and nutrient management.

It was also stated that "the switch to emphasizing phosphorus as the nutrient of equal or most concern has been sudden and unexpected."

Because the nutrient content of manure does not match the nutrient requirement of most crops, it is necessary to make a decision on which nutrient we will balance in

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York Farmers File Property Tax Lawsuit

YORK (York Co.) — Like the Colonial settlers who rose up against what they felt was unfair taxation by the ruling government, York County farmers and landowners are participating in a 1990's form of tax revolt.

They've filed a class action lawsuit to buttonhole tax monies from public use.

The Fair Reassessment of York County (FRYC) committee is urging property owners in Clean and Green preferential tax valuation to pay their taxes "under protest." The FRYC group is a sub-committee of the York County Farm Bureau, which has taken the lead in protesting the 1997 county tax

reassessments and methods used in valuing properties.

Sent in early March to several thousand owners of Clean and Green preferentially valued property was a second mailing encouraging affected property owners to participate in the tax protest. With that mailing went a sample "tax protest letter" which the committee is encouraging recipients to file with their spring tax payment, as well as copy and share with others similarly affected by the reassessments.

According to Bill Buser, York grain farmer chairing the FRYC committee, under certain circumstances, when a tax payment is

made "under protest" in Pennsylvania, 25 percent of the tax payment must be put in a special escrow fund and held until the tax dispute is resolved. The FRYC committee is hoping that many of the county's affected owners of Clean and Green tax valued land are aggravated enough with their increased tax bills to make the effort to file their spring tax payments "under protest" and thus escrow from governing bodies' use significant amounts of tax dollars.

And, Buser notes that, even if property owners have already paid their tax bills, they can follow up and participate in the protest by

filing with their tax collector a completed copy of the tax protest letter.

Earlier this year, the FRYC had filed a class action appeal to the Assessment Board for reconsideration of Clean and Green land values following county real estate reassessment last year. Since the class action activity first

step was an appeal, the escrowing of tax protest funds was initially disputed by the Assessment Board. By Pennsylvania law, tax protest funds monies need only be escrowed if the dispute has reached the courts.

On March 12, the FRYC, with two individuals, did indeed file a

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Mid-Am Finishes Business, Celebrates Merger Into Dairy Farmers Of America

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Managing Editor

KANSAS CITY, Mo — Under the banner of "A Vision of Unity," the annual meeting of Mid-American Dairymen's Association, Inc. (Mid-Am) took into account the 1997 year's activities but focused even more on the merger of Mid-Am with the Southern Region of Associated Milk Producers Inc. (AMPI), the Western Dairymen Cooperative Inc. (WDCI), and Milk Marketing Inc. (MMI) that began operation on January 1, 1998, as Dairy Farmers of America (DFA).

Gary Hanman, president and chief executive officer of DFA, presented his annual report to the more than 1,200 dairy farmers in attendance at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center Hotel. Herman said that 30 years ago the leaders of five

dairy cooperatives came together, convinced that dairy farmers could increase their income potential. As time progressed, more than 100 dairy cooperatives seeking similar benefits merged with Mid-Am to make it the largest dairy marketing cooperative in the nation.

Early in 1997, dairy leaders again came together, unified in their desire to find a way to overcome difficult economic conditions. The cooperatives they represented had more members in much larger geographic regions than those who met in 1968. But the challenges of the industry were similar. And out of this latest merger has come Dairy Farmers of America with 22,000 members and marketing and brand recognition in every part of the nation.

According to Herman, milk

prices for 1997 ended the year at \$13.29, up almost \$2.00 from December of 1996, but the average price was \$12.05, down \$1.34 from the 1996 average. Member volume declined slightly, mostly due to members retiring or quitting the dairy business. The cooperative handled 17.2 billion pounds of milk, a reduction of nearly 99 million pounds. Total milk handled, which includes milk purchased from others, was up slightly to 20.6 billion pounds. Net savings of \$26,015 was realized on \$3,861,519 of revenues.

Guest speaker was the honorable Charles Stenholm, U.S. representative from Texas and ranking member on the House Ag Committee. He said in the last farm bill, we in the United States decided

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At the Mid-America Dairymen Inc. annual meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, Monday, Everett Newswanger (left) received the Salute Award from Carl Baumann, the national cooperative's president. The award was given "In recognition of outstanding service to dairy farmers as editor of Lancaster Farming."