

Vegetable Growers To Vote

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. announced this week that a referendum on the continuation of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program began yesterday, March 20.

"Gov. Tom Ridge and I encourage all growers, who are eligible, to vote in this important referendum," Hayes said. "This is an opportunity for growers to express their thoughts on the future of this important marketing program."

Established in 1989, the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program conducts promotional activities at farm markets and retail stores, and funds research projects on vegetable production practices.

All vegetable producers who grow one or more acres of vegetables are eligible to vote, as are all producers who grow vegetables for sale in 1,000 square feet or more of greenhouse area. All criteria must have been met by Oct. 31, 1997.

The referendum will be held from March 20 to April 3. Completed ballots should be mailed or hand delivered to: Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, Room 211, 2301 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408.

Hand-delivered ballots must be received by 4 p.m. on April 3.

Ballots mailed must be post-marked no later than April 3 and received no later than April 8.

For more information, or for a ballot, contact Mike Varner at (717) 787-6901.

Dr. Beegle Clarifies

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standing or a change in position on this issue, but rather the intense public and political attention that has been focused on it by the problems with Pfiesteria in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

This attention has made phosphorus a front-page story in a very short period of time, whether we like it or not.

The purpose of my presentation to the Nutrient Management Advisory Board was not to present a "complete turnaround on what has been considered scientific fact" and suggest a radical change in our position on phosphorus versus nitrogen, but rather to help people understand this emerging issue so that we can make sound, science-based policy decisions.

While some may be uncomfortable with raising the issue, the issue has already been raised, and if we choose to ignore the problem we will not have the opportunity to participate in developing reasonable and practical solutions to the problem before we are forced to deal reactively to outside mandates.

All we have to do is look at what his happening in Maryland and in the federal government as covered in this article to see that there are people ready to impose solutions on agriculture.

Writer's note:

Lancaster Farming apologizes for any perceived misrepresentation conveyed in the March 14 article as to the presentation of Dr. Douglas Beegle to the SCS Nutrient Management Advisory Board.

Dr. Beegle has been, and continues to be, a very respected agronomist and researcher. He was integral in the development of regulations implementing Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act, serving as a consultant.

He also headed up, and oversaw the Penn State role in educating the public about nutrient management. He continues to serve the

Board in an essential advisory role.

We believe the perceived misrepresentation came from the mixing of contexts and the emotional reaction to the subject matter.

The article on the meeting contained information from two different reports, both concerning phosphorus.

While Beegle's report was to update the NMAB on developments in research on the activity of nutrients in soils, the other report was to make the board aware of Maryland's proposed change in nutrient management laws, specifically to make phosphorus the nutrient of most concern.

Beegle in no way suggested that Pennsylvania follow Maryland's lead, nor acquiesce to the knee-jerk reactions connecting phosphorus with toxicity of Pfiesteria that are coming from Maryland and the Clinton Administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

Information on both reports to the board were included in the article because they were made the same day to the same board, and because they were both about phosphorus.

In explaining before-and-after illustrations of the land being studied, Beegle said the researchers were "surprised" that the flow of phosphorus from the research plot did not subside not as much as expected after erosion and sedimentation controls were applied.

It is very clear that there is a distinction between scientific "fact" and scientific "assumption." Assumptions are made before an experiment. Facts are discovered after repeated experiments demonstrably result in repeated outcomes.

In his presentation, Beegle said, "We always assumed phosphorus can be controlled ... however, in soils with high phosphorus levels ... some of our nice assumptions from the past are falling apart."

We apologize for the use of scientific "fact" when scientific "assumption" should have been used.

As Beegle noted during his presentation, the main concern with phosphorus has been that too much can lead to eutrophication of water bodies, which is essentially an over-abundance of nutrients.

To knowledge, in and of itself, phosphorus is not considered an element dangerous to human health.

We regret if the report in any way suggested that Beegle's report indicated that phosphorus-emphasized nutrient management was imminent for Pennsylvania. His report did not, and he did not.

On the other hand, from our perspective, what is happening nationally and in Maryland strongly suggest that a band wagon has arrived and we are certain that anything that can be used against agriculture will be.

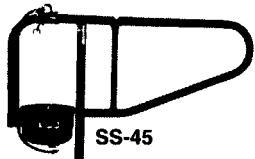
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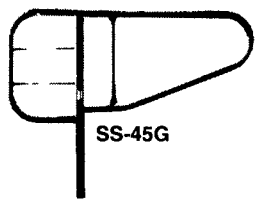
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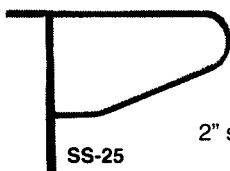
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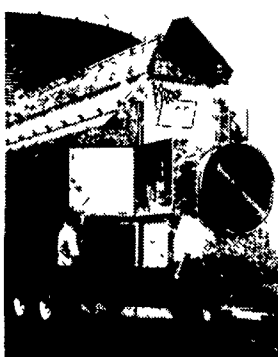
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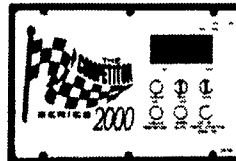


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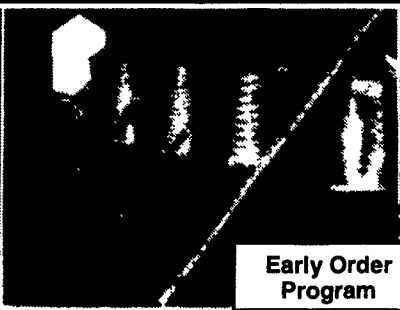
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