

Scope Of Ag Ed Law Under Scrutiny At Meeting

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— Since the implementation of Act 26 in the state's public schools in 1995, formulated to help educate young Pennsylvanians about the significance of agriculture to the commonwealth and the world, no funds have been put in place to implement the law, according to Carol Ann Gregg, education coordinator for the Agriculture Awareness Foundation of Pennsylvania. Gregg, along with several other agri-industry educators and representatives, testified Wednesday afternoon during a special Agricultural Education Update meeting of the House Education Committee at the state capitol.

The meeting was selected to gauge the effectiveness of the act and what affects it has had on educational sectors throughout the state. It was also held to provide information on corollary programs being conducted to reach out to the schools and to help schools recommend and formulate agricultural education programs.

Gregg noted that the largest project for the Foundation is a summer training program "to provide teachers with the tools to teach their students about the importance of agriculture in their lives and to the economy of our state and nation." Acting simply unlike another "piece to the regular curriculum," the Foundation hopes that agricultural examples should be used in a typical school's regular subjects of science, math, social studies, language arts, and other programs. The Ag In the Classroom workshops have proven largely a success.

Under Section 8 of the law, the act is amended by adding a section to read that the General Assembly declares a purpose of the section to require the education department to "develop and disseminate agricultural education materials" for schools. The key is under section b, paragraph 2, to "provide for distribution" of said materials about

agriculture — and the vagueness of that wording could be under question. In section d, paragraph 1, section ii, it is noted that the secretary of education shall consult with the secretary of agriculture and a cross section of the ag and education communities to "consider the manner in which any funds are used to support agricultural education activities."

"We worked very hard to see that Act 26 became law and were disappointed when the Pennsylvania Department of Education took such a narrow view of the implementation of the law," she said.

Gregg noted the implementation was focused on the "environmental component of agriculture. As I see agriculture, this initiative could have and should have been implemented with science, social studies, or other disciplines involved."

Gregg indicated that a position should have been created at the department of education to liaison with the department of agriculture. "Such a position would bring credibility to agriculture within the department and the education community," she said.

Carol Sizemore, first grade teacher in the Dover Elementary School (who will soon be teaching at the Leib Elementary School in

Dover), spoke about the teacher training workshop and the importance of the materials to the school curriculum.

Sizemore said that many students lack the life experiences that many of those involved in agriculture have. The students believe ice cream cones come from plastic bags and "milk from plastic jugs" that are purchased in a store — and that's as much as they know.

Before, if teachers such as Sizemore wanted to implement ag into their regular classroom activities, she would have to dig up information from books in the library. How much the information was out of date or irrelevant to today's issues was in question.

But the workshops proved to be "an eye-opener for me," said Sizemore, allowing ag experts and educators to share knowledge of the field.

"Teachers need to be given the resources and materials," said Sizemore, to do the work.

In 1996, the Ag In The Classroom Workshop provided enough information for teachers to "easily tie agriculture into practically any topic" being discussed in the schools. The students learn "more from doing activities than by hearing how it's done," she said.

This year, instead of wondering about where french fries and pota-



Carol Ann Gregg, far left, along with several other agri-industry educators and representatives, testified Wednesday afternoon during a special Agricultural Education Update meeting of the House Education Committee at the state capitol. In center is Mimi Lufkin, project director of the Vision for Pennsylvania Agricultural Education Project, and at right is Carol Sizemore, first grade teacher at Dover Elementary School.

to chips come from, students have been growing potatoes in a 10-gallon flowerpot. The marble-sized potatoes gives them some indication of where potatoes come from, and they "didn't know that before," said Sizemore.

Gregg pointed out that some schools use glass aquariums with the seed potatoes up against the glass to show how they root and grow.

Mimi Lufkin, project director of the Vision for Pennsylvania Agricultural Education Project, said, "We all eat food and we are all directly impacted by ag, and we all need to be educated."

She spoke about the broad-

based philosophy of the program, a project of the Solanco School District in partnership with the state departments of education and agriculture, Penn State, and the state vocational agriculture teachers association.

Seven sites were selected to participate in a statewide field test of the process and materials outlined in a program planning and curriculum development handbook. The extent of the program was reviewed in the Jan. 3, 1998 issue of *Lancaster Farming*.

Also testifying at the meeting was Frederick C. Brown, a lobbyist representing the Pennsylvania (Turn to Page A38)

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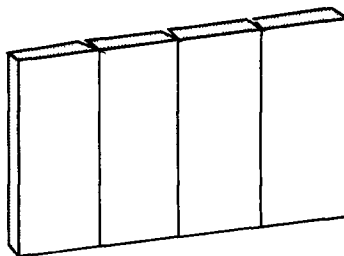
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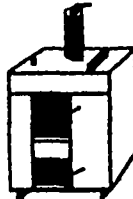
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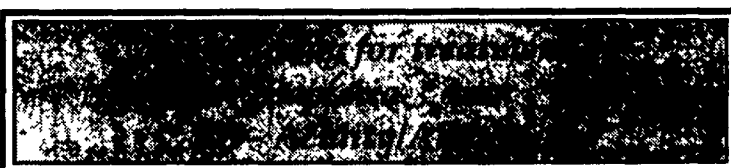


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