



OPINION

'Hit The Wall'

After 50 years of ever larger harvests, the world's farmers are finding it more difficult to keep pace with the growth in demand as they face 80 million more hungry mouths each year.

From 1950 to 1990, the world's grain farmers raised productivity of their land by 2.1 percent a year, but since 1990 the growth slowed to about 1 percent.

"An acceptable balance between food and people may depend at least as much on population policy and family planners as on agricultural policy and farmers," said a Worldwatch Institute official who opened the annual conference of three agricultural societies.

The two traditional ways of expanding food production — cultivating more land and raising productivity — seem to have reached their limits worldwide, according to Lester Brown, president of Worldwatch Institute, Washington, D.C.

Brown recently presented the keynote address at the annual meeting of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) and the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA).

Pointing to the slower growth in production since 1990, Brown questioned a recent World Bank projection of surplus in the world agriculture market. He said the World Bank had based its predictions on historical growth.

World Bank economists base their projections on simple projections that continue an average yield increase based on the past 40 years, he said. "In contrast to the robust rise of 2.1 percent a year between 1950 and 1990, yields rose only 1 percent a year between 1990-1995."

Although it's too early to establish a clear new trend in production growth, Brown said raising productivity to offset the shrinkage in crop land area per person "may be one of humanity's greatest challenges."

Brown warned that world grain stocks dropped to record lows during the 1990s. Bumper harvests in the mid-1980s boosted carryover stocks for 1987 to more than 100 days of consumption. Since then, they have dropped below 60 days.

He said stocks of at least 70 days are needed for minimal food security.

Brown said plant breeders using traditional techniques have largely exploited the genetic potential of what the photosynthesis process can put into the seed of the plant. The best hope for increasing yields is for biotechnologists to increase the efficiency of the process of photosynthesis itself, he added.

Further advances in production will rely on use of inputs like fertilizer and irrigation or fine-tuning agronomic practices such as plant densities and pest control. But farmers are finding optimal levels for those inputs and practices.

While farm productivity is a major factor in keeping pace with world food demands, Brown cited several other factors that influence the world food supply:

- **Rising affluence** — As consumers use additional income to diversify their diets, they buy more meat, milk and eggs. In China, for example, increased demand for livestock products has accounted for two-third of the country's growth in demand for grain during the 1990s.

- **Water supply** — Farmers are facing cutbacks in irrigation as aquifers are depleted. Brown said China, Egypt, India, Iran Mexico, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are all likely to offset irrigation water losses with more grain imports.

- **Loss of crop land** — Population growth in cities, often located in fertile agricultural regions, will take up valuable crop land. As incomes rise, leisure activities like golfing will use additional land. Soil erosion, particularly in developing countries, also cuts usable crop land.

Maybe we really have "hit the wall" in raising food for a growing population.



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Develop Business Side of Farm

Every business has two sides. The technology side and the business side. To be successful today you need to develop both sides. The technology side produces the products that we sell to generate profits. Thus, we must be the best at what we do.

However, the business side must also be equally developed in order to insure success. The business side involves organizational structure, supervising employees, developing and monitoring budgets, controlling costs, marketing products, keeping records and pro-

Berks Dairy Day, Berks County Ag Center, 9 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
Act 6 Nutrient Management Certification and Plan Writing Seminar, Gratz Comm Center, exam Jan. 12.

Fulton County Conservation District Agribusiness Breakfast, McConnellsburg American Legion Post 561, 8 a.m.-9 a.m.
Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, judging 1 p.m.

Wednesday, January 6

Bucks-Montgomery Dairy Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia.
Farm\$Risk\$ and Management Seminar, Penn State Campus, Fogelsville.

Thursday, January 7

Mercer County DHIA Banquet, Mercer County Extension, 11:30 a.m.

Schuylkill County DHIA Banquet, Dairy Days.

Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman Community Center, 9 a.m.-2:45 p.m.

Dairy Facilities Tour, Dave Stuck Farm and Irvin Hostetter Farm 10 a.m.-Noon.

Northeast Tomato Growers' Meeting, Thompson's Dairy Bar, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Vegetable Growers' Association of Delaware 1999 meeting, Jan. 7 Kent County Cooperative Extension, Dover, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.;

Jan. 8 Carlisle Fire Company, Milford, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.;

Jan. 9 Laurel High School Auditorium, 8:30 a.m.-Noon.

Computer Basics for Farmers, Fulton County Extension Office, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Kutztown Produce Study Circle, Kutztown Produce Auction, 7 p.m.

Pesticide Certification Exams, Luzerne County extension office, W. Pittston, 9 a.m.

Friday, January 8

Feeder School, Ja-Lene Farm, John and Todd Ishler Farm, Spring Mills.

Horse World Expo, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, thru Jan. 10.

(Turn to Page A30)

viding benefits to employees and community.

As in any business you must develop each side of the business equally. As we start the new year make sure you are developing both sides of your businesses equally.

To Focus On Priorities

With dairy profit margins now being tight, it is time to focus on priorities, according to Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent. One area to focus on is cost control.

When feed is scarce and you need to purchase more feed, make the best use of your feeds. Sell unprofitable cows and contract heifers out to a good grower in order to reduce feed needs. This will also make more feed available for your best cows. Feed a balanced ration, use good feeding techniques and avoid over feeding a lot of expensive feeds and additives.

Take advantage of lower price feed alternatives.

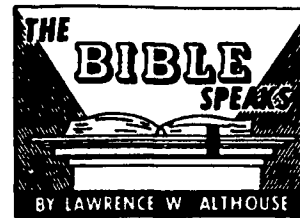
To Manage Cow Investment

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, reminds us of the importance of protecting your investment in cows. They are your income producing base.

Take a good look at your involuntary culling rate, your herd health program, your heifer program and your dry cow program. Take a good look at your management practices. Are you maintaining high production by culling your problems rather than fixing them and preventing the problems in the first place? If so, that is a very, very costly practice.

Instead, focus on the areas that set the stage for good herd health, longevity, good production and conception. Develop and implement programs for good health, good cow comfort, good nutrition, good genetics and for good management of heifers and dry cows.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "Do not just think about it, do it!"



THE WAY YOU CAN TELL

January 3, 1999

Background Scripture:

Mark 12:28-34; Luke 6:27-36;

John 13:31-35

Devotional Reading:

I John 4:7-12

I have just returned from my 50th high school class reunion in Reading, Pennsylvania. It was quite an occasion with nearly 500 of my 800-plus classmates and their spouses attending. There was a sobering moment when we read the list of those who have passed away since our graduation in June 1948. One of the most recent of these passings was a classmate who, when I first met him in high school, rattled my cage with a loud, jarring question. "**LARRY, ARE YOU SAVED?**"

I have never been asked that question before, least of all by someone I had just met. It sounded more like an accusation than a question. My classmate—let's call him "George"—was utterly sincere, however. He really cared about our souls, even though his methodology probably turned-off just about everyone, including me.

I think I answered him with something like, "Well yes, I'm a member of Park EUB Church here in Reading." "But that's not what I'm asking," he replied, "I'm talking about you and the Lord person-to-person." The late-bell for class rang and I was literally "saved by the bell."

STILL UNSETTLING

I have often thought about his question. It can still be a bit unsettling to me. I realize that if George were still living, had attended our reunion and asked me, "**LARRY ARE YOU SAVED?**" He would still not have been satisfied with my most obvious answer: "Well, yes, I'm a retired United Methodist pastor."

So how really can we determine who is or is not a bona fide Christian? George was right; church affiliation is not a suitable answer. Neither is: "Well, I try to live by Jesus' teachings and God's commandments—and I do a pretty good job of it, if I

must say so myself.' No better would it be to cite particular doctrines to which you subscribe or the quarterly statements on your church giving. Even less convincing would be a list of what you are against.

Actually, there is only one way to answer. Responding to a scribe's question about the most important commandment, Jesus replied: "...you shall love the Lord you God...and your neighbor as yourself." One does not have to be a theological scholar or genius to comprehend what Jesus is saying here.

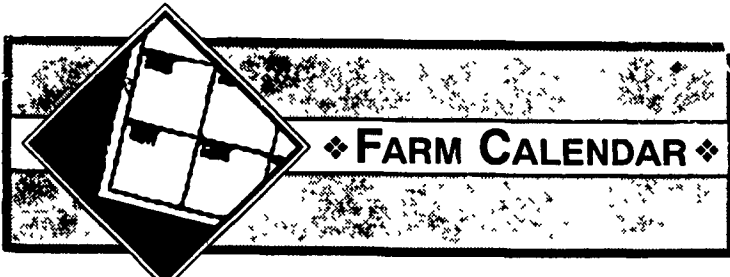
BY YOUR LOVE

In John 13 Jesus makes it even more simple and plain; "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Note that it will not be by knowledge, doctrinal purity, or religious affiliation—but by their love for one another. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you love one another" (Jn. 13:34).

Please note that the 'love' of which Jesus is speaking is a lot more than just 'warm feelings' for others. The love of Jesus is not so much about what Jesus said as about what Jesus did for us. Enduring unjust pain and shame, he lay down his life on a cross for us—the embodiment of what he taught. He said "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). He did exactly that!

This is radical love to which he calls and commands us: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you...Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again: (Luke 6:27-30).

So, this question nags at me: is this kind of love the means by which the world recognizes us as Christians? And, if not, why not?



FARM CALENDAR

Monday, January 4

Tulpehocken Adult/Young Farmer Session, Selecting Hybrids Starts Early, Tulpehocken High School, 7:30 p.m.

Penn State Ice Cream Short Course, Nittany Lion Inn, University Park, thru Jan. 14.

Tuesday, January 5

Solanco Young Farmer Pesticide Recertification, Solanco High School, 7:30 p.m.

Eastern Pa. Turf Conference and Trade Show, Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, thru Jan. 7.

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