

# Historic Extremes

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to collectively add value to the historically top cash crop of the region.

In a similar, though seemingly unsuccessful effort, a series of meetings were held by people attempting to create and organize an effective national milk pricing organization.

Calling itself the American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association, its leaders compared itself to the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA) which attempted to secure appropriate payment of premiums to farmers.

RCMA's weakness appeared to be its lack of control of product supply, its regionality, and a reluctance on the part of dairy processors and buyers to welcome the agency.

Continuing along dairy lines, established dairy farmer cooperatives continued to merge and enter into joint ventures with domestic and foreign-owned businesses, as the cooperatives continue to work to control supply, production and product quality in an attempt to control profit.

The 22,000-dairy farmer mem-

ber Dairy Farmers of America Inc., one of the bigger national cooperatives with joint ventures in New Zealand and Europe, recently announced another merger, this one with the Independent Cooperative Milk Producers Association out of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Land O' Lakes Inc., a competing large dairy and agricultural supply cooperative recently announced its own labeled line of dairy production cleaning and supply products.

Dean Foods Inc. continued to pursue purchases of small dairy processors across the nation and locally purchased Wengert's Dairy, a highly respected long-time family owned operation noted for its top quality milk and dairy products.

The Middle Atlantic Milk Marketing Association (MAMMA) technically still exists, though on paper only. In effect it merged with two smaller milk promotion organizations. Legally it can't.

MAMMA, a dairy promotion and marketing organization funded by dairy farmers, in June announced it had concluded a

"consolidation of operations" with two newly merged dairy councils — Dairy Council Inc. and the Dairy Council of Greater Metropolitan Washington, D.C.

The Pennsylvania Poultry Federation held its last banquet this year as it merged into the Penn Ag Industries Association (PAIA), a full-spectrum umbrella agribusiness industry association.

The Poultry Federation joined some other major business sector groups in becoming a "council" within the PAIA, which also serves as a sort of roundtable for agriculture.

For those concerned with rural health, the merger of the Penn State health system with the Geisinger health system was officially approved by the state attorney general, who declared that the new organization is set to provide better access to health services for more people.

In other business news, the leadership for Lancaster Farming changed hands.

One of the original founders and former owner of the newspaper, after almost 43 years, Robert Campbell retired in June as general manager, and was replaced by William Burgess.

In animal health issues, in

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, January 2, 1999-A27

March avian influenza was confirmed on two farms in Lancaster County, although there were no other reports for the year.

That came as welcome relief following more than a year of the troublesome disease cropping up occasionally on different farms, mostly in Lancaster County.

The state Department of Agriculture held its first Avian Health Symposium in January, an event expected to be repeated as the industry seeks ways to prevent and fight disease, and also discover methods for recovering losses due to communicable disease condemnations.

Also announced was a statewide pseudorabies control program with the goal of eradication by 2000.

John Enck Jr. was hired to fill the directorship of the state Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Service, left vacant with the retirement of Dr. Max Van Buskirk.

The state also had several programs initiated this past year in an attempt to provide better service and government.

PennDOT and other agencies collaborated to offer a Dirt and Gravel Roads program whereby a series of seminars were offered to the state's roadmasters who deal with the state's 27,000 miles of dirt and gravel roads.

These roads are key sources of

sedimentation and storm water pollution of critical and sensitive tributary streams across the state. The educational program offered support and technical resources for those seeking to comply with regulations and rebuild or maintain their roadways for durability and efficiency, as well as environmental compatibility.

Continuing along environmental issues, Maryland's political leaders — apparently reinforcing the observation that perception is reality in politics — reacted strongly to an unscientifically made relationship between the farming nutrient phosphorus and an aquatic organism in the Chesapeake Bay.

The result is Maryland's governor proposing and the Maryland Legislature approving perhaps the toughest nutrient management regulations in the country, focusing on phosphorus as well as nitrogen, and calling for the shipping of manure out of areas where soil levels of nutrients are high.

The organism (pfiesteria) that killed some menhaden in late summer 1997 is suspected in causing memory loss in watermen exposed to the same waters in the Bay.

However, the pfiesteria problem was somehow linked to phosphorus levels in the Chesapeake.

Concern about some other pfiesteria problems in the Carolinas and with water problems in the Mid West where the building of confinement hog raising operations has exploded in recent years were included in the "better safe than sorry" reasoning for the Maryland legislative reaction to a fairly unsubstantiated environmental assumption.

However, the effect of phosphorus concerns didn't remain in Maryland.

The federal government, especially the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, issued new rules for states for complying with the national Clean Water Act and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, whereby permits are required for concentrated livestock operations, called concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The permits effectively would call for nutrient management planning.

The USDA and EPA later in the year issued a Unified Joint Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations. In short, the strategy calls for all livestock operations to develop and implement nutrient management plans.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act regulations have been under consideration for revision in order to comply with the EPA CAFO requirements.

In testimony, environmental groups are now pressuring for national nutrient management plans that would limit manure

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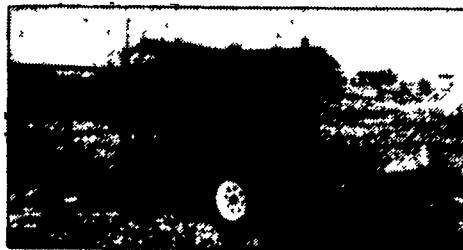
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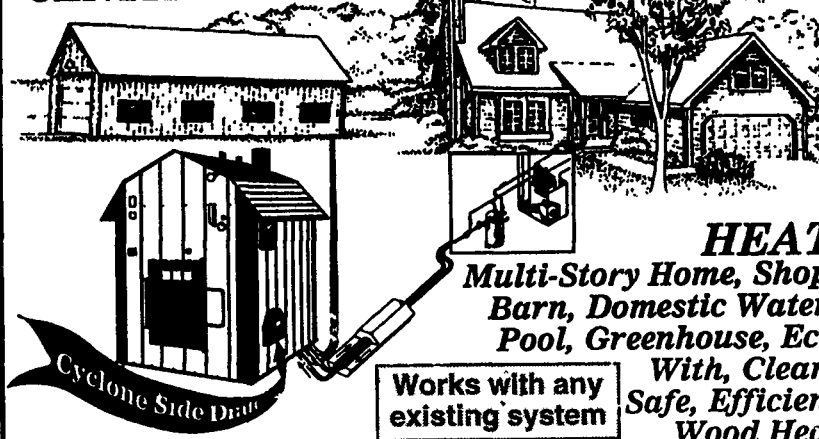
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